EPFLinnovators co-funded by Marie Skłodowska-Curie

The EPFLinnovators programme aims to attract excellent PhD candidates with an interest in entrepreneurship to EPFL and (i) increase their awareness – from the very beginning of their PhD studies - of the possibility to initiate a start-up, (ii) increase the number of PhD candidates who create a start-up and become an entrepreneur/innovator, and (iii) to increase the success of their start-ups once these have been created. To this end the EPFLinnovators programme will bring to excellent PhD candidates the appropriate training, experience, and guidance, to successfully start and develop their own company. A rich and comprehensive training programme is offered in combination with a long stay, of at least 6 months and up to 24 months, in the non-academic sector. The programme will result in a new type of “Industry-oriented PhD” at EPFL.

The young researchers - to be trained in an academic as well as non-academic setting - will become true innovators, enforced with a broad set of scientific, transferable, and business skills.

There will be 3 calls, aimed at selecting 36 excellent PhD candidates, scheduled as follows:

**Call 1:** Opening on **1 November 2017** and the deadline for the submission of applications is **Monday 15 January 2018** (17:00 hr. CET).

**Call 2:** Opening on **1 February 2018** and the deadline for the submission of applications is **Monday 16 April 2018** (17:00 hr. CET).

**Call 3:** Opening on **15 October 2018** and the deadline for the submission of applications is **Tuesday 15 January 2019** (17:00 hr. CET).

Applications must be submitted via the online application platform (The online application form will be available upon opening of the call on November 1st 2017). Selected candidates must start their PhD at the latest on **1 November 2018**.

EPFLinnovators PhD studies may be held in any of the 21 doctoral programmes within the EPFL.

The EPFLinnovator’s remuneration follows the EPFL guidelines for Doctoral student’s salary. The EU contribution to the salary of the doctoral candidate must therefore be completed by the thesis director. (Co-funding cannot come from other projects requiring time keeping).

The duration of an EPFLinnovators scholarships is 48 months (4 years) and cannot be prolonged. Employment after the initially granted time must be financed from other sources.

EPFLinnovators supports gender equality. The Programme strongly encourages females to apply.
1. Eligibility criteria

Applicants must fulfill the following eligibility criteria

In agreement with the Horizon 2020: 2016-2017 Work Programme for Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, applicants to EPFLinnovators must be Early Stage Researchers (ESR): “ESR shall, at the date of the deadline of the co-funded programme's call, be in the first four years (full-time equivalent research experience) of their research careers and have not been awarded a doctoral degree”.

The following eligibility criteria must be fulfilled:

1. Citizens of any nationality may apply. There are no restrictions concerning age, gender, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, political views, language or nationality of the candidates.

2. Applicants must hold a Master's degree (or equivalent)

3. Applicants must fulfil the transnational mobility rules:

The applicant must not have resided or carried out her/his main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Switzerland for more than 12 months in the 3 years immediately prior to the deadline for the submission of proposals. Exceptions to these rules are possible, for women (e.g. in case of maternity leave) or refugees, to ensure equal opportunities are provided to students whose scientific careers have been interrupted. The mobility rules mentioned above are adapted as follows for refugees: the applicant must not have resided or carried out her/his main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Switzerland for more than 12 months in the 3 years immediately prior to the deadline for the submission of proposals, unless as part of a procedure for obtaining refugee status under the Geneva Convention (This is regardless of whether s/he was active in research at that time).

2. Submitting an application

Applications Checklist

Pre-award documents

Diplomas

- Official transcripts of diplomas and grades from all academic institutions of higher education you list in your application (after and not including high-school)
- Certified translations of diplomas and grades into English if not originally in French, German, Italian or English

Statement of objectives

The document (1-2 pages) should clearly explain your motivation for the EPFLinnovators’ programme.
Passport

A copy of your passport or official identity document showing your name in full.

References

Every applicant is requested to provide the contact details of three referees who can supply a recommendation. These recommendations are confidential and will only be accepted if they are received through the electronic application process.

Each recommendation consists of two elements:

- A form to be filled out by the referee
- An additional letter with the referee's comments

Your referees' recommendations are a required part of your application file and, as such, are also due by the chosen deadline. Messages will automatically be sent to referees when you submit your application in the system; they will then be invited to complete their recommendation online. Therefore, submit your application early enough in order to leave your referees enough time to complete this task before the deadline. Please be aware that it is not possible to change your referee details once you have submitted your application.

As a courtesy, you should ask your referees ahead of time if they are willing to supply a recommendation letter to support your application. Doing so will also give your referees time to consider what they wish to say and, if they wish, to discuss your plans with you.

You will be notified by email when each referee has provided her/his recommendation to the doctoral program. The system allows you to send one reminder per referee.

Annexes

You have the possibility to attach other documents relevant to the application in PDF format (e.g. reprints, additional information etc.).

Post Award Documents

Annual reports

EPFLinnovators should provide each year an annual report on the progress of their work to their thesis director, according to the regulations of their doctoral programme to which they are affiliated, as well as to the Office of the programme. Templates for the annual report can be obtained from the doctoral programme’s administration.

3. Preparing an Application

Applications for EPFLinnovators should be submitted via the online submission platform https://isa.epfl.ch/imoniteur_ISAP/farforms.htm?x=edoc
The on-line submission platform will open on 1 November 2017. The deadline for the submission of applications is (1st call) **15 January 2018** (17:00 hr. CET), (2nd call) **16 April 2018** (17:00 hr. CET) and (3rd call) **15 January 2019** (17:00 hr. CET).

For authentication, use your EPFL computer account if you have one, or otherwise you can create a temporary account. This authentication allows you to return to the form to complete it or to observe the status of your candidacy. The electronic submission form makes it possible to enter the data necessary for the application and to upload the required documents.

**The following information should be submitted:**

a) **Indication of application to EPFLinnovators programme by ticking the dedicated box on the online platform**
b) **Personal details and academic background (curriculum vitae)**
c) **Selection of the doctoral program you wish to apply to**
d) **Three (3) reference letters (submitted online by the referees)**
e) **A pdf version of the following documents:**
   - Official transcripts of diplomas and grades from all academic institutions of higher education listed in the application (after and not including high-school)
   - Certified translations of diplomas and grades into English if not originally in French, German, Italian or English.
   - Statement of objectives of maximum 2 pages which clearly explains the candidate’s motivation for the EPFLinnovators programme
   - A copy of passport or official identity document showing full name

Once you have uploaded all these documents and confirmed all the details you have provided, you will be asked to complete and submit your application by validating it. Applications cannot be updated after the submission.

### 4. Evaluation and Selection

After the deadline, the doctoral programme committees (to which the candidates applied) verify the eligibility criteria, evaluate the applicant's level of excellence and decide, based on a scoring system, on the admissibility of the candidate to their respective doctoral programme. The 40 highest ranked applicants from all doctoral programmes are then proposed to EPFL laboratories for the candidate-project matching phase.

Thesis directors interested in supervising an EPFLinnovators fellow contact the candidate and conduct an interview with her/him, with the potential co-director from the non-academic sector.

All successful candidate-project matches are then submitted to the Intersectoral Excellence committee (IEC). The IEC makes a final ranking and, with the approval of the President of the IEC, prepares the final selection of the best candidates for each call.

The Office of the programme informs the candidates on the outcome of their application in May 2018 (call 1), August 2018 (call 2) and August 2019 (call 3).
Evaluation criteria

Applications will be assessed against criteria addressing the candidate’s ability and commitment to research, the quality of the project proposal, the quality and the degree of involvement of the non-academic partner, as well as the synergy between the research proposed and the profile of the candidate. Each candidate’s merits will be judged quantitatively as well as qualitatively. Detailed information on the evaluation criteria is also given in the document ‘Rules and Regulations for EPFLinnovators’.

Both the doctoral programme committees and individual reviewers, members of the Intersectoral Excellence Committee (IEC) are asked to peer review the applications - within the guidelines of integrity of peer review, described in the ‘Directive concerning research integrity and good scientific practice at EPFL’ and to score the candidates measured by the following selection criteria:

| EXCELLENCE | 
| --- | --- |
| **Phase 1** – weight 0.7 / **Phase 2** – weight 0.3 | 
| Academic results | Grades, GPAs, awards, Master project, publications |
| Reference letters | Degree, duration, and nature of the collaboration between referees and candidate |
| | Elements (positive/negative) brought forward |
| | Level of enthusiasm/appreciation |
| Statement of objectives | Independence/originality in research ideas, quality, enthusiasm/motivation for the EPFLinnovators programme |
| Additional achievements | Presidencies of committees, relevant work experience, etc. |

| ENTREPRENEURSHIP MOTIVATION AND/OR EXPERIENCE | 
| --- | --- |
| **Phase 1** – weight 0.3 / **Phase 2** – weight 0.4 | 
| Based on statement of objectives, Curriculum Vitae, reference letters |
| Strong motivation for entrepreneurship | 
| Relevant experience | 
| Any other proof that candidate is skilful as an entrepreneur | 
| Any other proof of independence and initiative taking | 

| CANDIDATE-PROJECT MATCH | 
| --- | --- |
| **Phase 2** – weight 0.3 | 
| Based on EPFLinnovators’ project proposal, EPFLinnovators’ interview report, Curriculum Vitae |
| Degree of matching of the project with the candidate’s background | 
| Educational potential of the project for the candidate | 
| Duration/relevance of stay of the candidate in the non-academic sector | 
| Scientific and societal relevance of the project | 

5. After the Decision

In May 2018 (call 1), August 2018 (call 2) and August 2019 (call 3), the Office of the programme informs the candidates on the outcome of their application. For more details, see the timeline.
The selected candidates can start immediately after they have received the decision letter and the formal requirements for their contract have been organized. EPFLinnovators should start at the latest on 1 November 2019.

EPFLinnovators should provide each year an annual report on the progress of their work to their thesis director, according to the regulations of their doctoral programme to which they are affiliated, as well as to the Office of the programme. Templates for the annual report can be obtained from the doctoral programme’s administration.

The EPFLinnovators fellowship consists of a monthly contribution of 1'855 Euro to the salary of the PhD candidate at EPFL. The remaining part of the salary is provided by the thesis director, in compliance with the EPFL general salary scale for doctoral students. See also the following link: Doctoral student’s salary. (Co-funding cannot come from other projects requiring time keeping).

The duration of an EPFLinnovators fellowship is 48 months and cannot be prolonged. Employment after the initially granted time must be financed from other sources.

Practical information about living in Switzerland can be found on the web-site ‘Just Joined EPFL’.

The EPFL is situated in the French-speaking part of Switzerland where French is the language of daily interaction and of most undergraduate teaching. EPFL is also a high-level international institution: a large proportion of our research and our Master and (post) PhD level courses are conducted in English. EPFL Fellows do not need to be able to speak French in order to begin a postdoctoral stay at EPFL, but for convenience and personal enrichment it is strongly encouraged to learn the language. A language center on the EPFL campus offer language courses in French. Courses are also offered to improve written and spoken English to the high standards required in international research. Courses in two of Switzerland’s other national languages, Italian and German, are also available.

Rebuttal period

All candidates have the right to a rebuttal procedure if they feel that there has been a shortcoming in the way their candidacy was evaluated and that this shortcoming affected the results of eligibility checks or the final decision. This procedure is not intended to call into question the scientific judgement of the external reviewers or the assessment by the IEC, but to address failings in the evaluation process.

A written request for rebuttal must be submitted within 30 days from the decision date to the Office of the programme. The rebuttal request will be reviewed by the Office of the programme to ensure that it concerns a procedural shortcoming rather than a judgement on the scientific evaluation conducted by the experts. If the rebuttal request is valid, it will be transferred to the IEC for further review and decision.

The candidate will be informed of the outcome of her/his rebuttal request within six weeks after the reception of his request by the Office of the programme. Only one request for rebuttal per proposal will be considered. All requests for rebuttal will be treated confidentially.