

Else Kröner-Fresenius- Stiftung

Information for First and Second Applicants

Status: May 11th, 2026

1. Targeted objective and focus of project funding

The targeted objective of this call for applications is to establish the opportunity toward scientific independence at an early stage for outstanding young scientists in medical research employed at German research institutions. The self-reliant conception and implementation of a promising research project is intended to lay the cornerstone for a viable research profile and an own work group.

First and second applications can be submitted for all topics involving medical research. The selection of projects occurs on a competitive basis in an internal (Scientific Commission at EKFS) and/or an external peer review process. This process recognizes both previous scientific (and clinical, if applicable) achievements, in particular including the candidate's publication output, and the scientific quality, originality and relevance of the proposed project. As a matter of principle it is not possible to submit application for one's own position.

2. Formal prerequisites

2.1. Applicant

Applications can be submitted by graduate physicians (MD) or scientists working in medical research who are employed at a university hospital, a university or an extramural research institution in Germany.

Applicants must not have reached the age of 36. In justified individual cases, which must be clarified in advance, this age limit may be raised to account for family-related leave (such as pregnancy, parental leave, or caring for relatives), military or civilian service, or similar circumstances.

At least three original publications are required, at least two of which must be as first author. As a rule applicants will have continued their scientific work after receiving their PhD within the scope of a period as postdoctoral fellow or accompanying their further medical training.

However, researchers who, as project leaders, have received **more than one** project grant in peer-reviewed procedures from the DFG (also as PI of a SFB sub-project or a research group sub-project), BMBF, Cancer Aid, EU, etc. are not eligible to apply in this procedure. The same applies to researchers who already **have a first time grant application** funded by the Else Kröner Fresenius Foundation. This restriction does not apply to Else Kröner scholarship holders and fellows of the Else Kröner Doctoral Programmes and the Else Kröner Research Schools.

The acquisition of intramural funding, smaller external project funding or personal scholarships awarded without material resources are not an obstacle to submitting an application.

- 2.2. If you have used artificial intelligence (AI) tools in the preparation of the application, please disclose whether and which generative models you have used, for what purpose and to what extent.
- 2.3. The previous option of having a second (as a rule, more experienced) scientist in a capacity as co-applicant no longer applies for applications submitted as of October 1, 2018. This is intended to underscore applicants' self-reliance and individual accountability within the Funding Line for First and Second Applicants. A letter of support from a scientific or scholastic mentor (e.g. work group leader or department head) can be included as enclosure to the application in the event that this person is not identical to the director of the hospital clinic or institute. This letter of mentorship does not function as a substitute for the obligatory cover letter from the hospital clinic or institute director in charge (see 2.3. below). In special cases and only after prior clarification with the Foundation, an application by two equal project leaders sharing one position is conceivable.
- 2.4. Cover letter
A cover letter from the hospital clinic or institute director in charge is a decisive component of the application (Part C of the application documents). An assessment of the applicant's academic prospects and of the project's scientific potential, as well as binding commitments to the scope of the release from clinical/institutional duties for the work on the project and for the support of the project from resources at the hospital clinic or institute must emerge from this letter. See the information on application submission and application format template, Part C.
- 2.5. Approvals of all studies planned within the scope of the proposed project (in particular animal testing approval and ethics committee vote)
- 2.6. Proof of origin and/or authentication of cell lines used
- 2.7. A power analysis and biometric sample size planning which convincingly demonstrate the expectability of statistically significant findings is prerequisite to reviewing an application.
- 2.8. Cooperation commitments from all cooperating partners critical for the success of the project
- 2.9. In the event that application deals with a clinical study, presentation of the study protocol

- 2.10. If the institution making the application is not a university or an extramural research institution under public law, we request a brief description of the institution (legal form, non-profit status, performance capability).
- 2.11. Applications can be presented in German or English (solely in mother-tongue proficiency, please). Please avoid using mixtures of languages. If your application relates to a field of research that is very strongly networked on a national level, we request an application in English to enable the involvement of foreign reviewers as the situation requires.

3. Application documents

Please structure your application into three separate PDF documents (A, B, C,)

A Project description (the structure specified below is to be adopted, including the subheadings)

B CVs, publications and list of the applicant's current and completed externally funded projects (see below for formats and details)

C Appendices regarding the prerequisites for implementation

- Cover letter from hospital clinic or institute direction in charge
- Approvals (animal testing approval, ethics committee vote)
- Proof of authentication of cell lines planned for use
- Cooperation commitments
- Study protocol

As to A: Project description

The application (including cover letter, excluding appendices) should not exceed 20 pages conforming to the German DIN A4 size format (in Arial 11 pt, single-spaced or comparable font type). Inserted tables and illustrative diagrams are welcome.

1. General information

1.1. Project title

1.2. Applicant and institution

Applicant's postal address and contact data (email addresses)

1.3. Project duration in months

1.4. Resources applied for from Else Kröner-Fresenius-Stiftung (as sum total here; details under 4.)

2. Scientific project description

2.1. Summary

Brief structured summary with introduction, background, objectives, methods and possible results of the project (0.5 pages)

2.2. Research status

Brief outline of the project's scientific context, including an assessment of the competitiveness of the approach being pursued (max. 2 pages)

2.3. Own preliminary work

Summary of own preliminary work and findings underlying the proposed project; if applicable, a statement is to be made regarding the availability of cell lines (i.e. of genetic constructs), mouse lines, animal models, established specific methodological approaches (5 pages).

Cite your maximum 5 most important project-related publications and list them at the end of the section (see Appendix B for method of citation).

2.4. Work plan

2.4.1. Outline of hypothesis/hypotheses and work packages derived thereof

2.4.2. A detailed work plan that clearly and comprehensibly presents the experimental trial or study design, including biometric planning (overview of experimental trial groups, derivation of sample size figures) and analysis, as well as materials, methods, experimental trial or study workflow. This is the core of the application. (10 pages)

2.5. Schedule

The schedule ought to include the most important work steps and – if possible – milestones and defined outcomes.

2.6. Significance of the project for the specialized field and for application of the findings in practice

Description of the project's potential scientific and clinical significance and/or of the expected outcomes. (0.5 pages)

2.7. Literature regarding the application, please using complete quotes, applicant bold; quotation marks in text: Rakoff-Nahoum et al. 2015

Format template:

Rakoff-Nahoum S, Kong Y, Kleinstein SH, Subramanian S, Ahern PP, Gordon JI, **Medzhitov R (applicant bold)**. Analysis of gene-environment interactions in postnatal development of the mammalian intestine. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A* 2015;112:1929-1936

3. Organizational prerequisites

3.1. Description of work group, allocation of responsibilities within project and available scientific infrastructure

Allocation of roles and responsibilities and, to the extent possible, naming of all persons collaborating on the project:

- applicant, including indication in % regarding the average proportion of weekly work hours which shall be utilized for the project in the event of funding approval. On average, this should amount to at least 25% of the weekly working time.
- specification of the term of the current employment contract
- specification if the applicant's position is covered by institutional or third-party-funds
- other institutionally funded contributors, including binding indication in % of the proportionate share of working hours which they are able to be available to the project
- staff to be financed from this foundation's resources

Justification for personnel positions specifically applied for is to be given here with an eye to project implementation. As a matter of principle the applicant's own position cannot be applied for.

4. Planned project funding

4.1. Planned total expenditure for the project

4.2. Breakdown of total costs

- Resources provided from the institution's basic funding; approx. 1/3 of the total costs are to be covered by institutional funds
- External funding applied for from or granted by another entity (please enclose copies of funding approvals)
- Funding applied for at Else Kröner-Fresenius-Stiftung (sum total in EUR)

4.3. Breakdown of resources applied for at EKFS

4.3.1. Personnel resources (in EUR)

Indication is to be made of the intended period of employment, the pay scale structure (e.g. concrete definition as per the German "TVöD" [public service collective bargaining agreement] or "TVL" [public service collective bargaining agreement for federal states]), as well as social security contributions etc. usually attributable to the employer. Only precise disclosures of personnel expenses enable an estimation of resources which are potentially to be approved. Positions for doctoral candidates are allowed to be estimated at up to 65% of an academic position (postdoctoral).

As a rule, grants-in-aid as envisaged by German collective bargaining legislation for public service employment are not granted. At most, the assumption of 50% of health insurance premiums comes into question, however no more than up to 50% of the respective AOK premium (major German health insurer for employees).

4.3.2. Resources for equipment investments (in EUR)

The only equipment investments that can be financed from this foundation's resources are those which are exclusively project-specific and not to be attributed to basic equipment.

In the event that project-specific equipment has to be applied for, the applicant should audit the equipment available on the market in terms of its adequacy prior to formulating the application and justify the choice made (type of equipment and accessories). In the case of equipment with individual acquisition costs of over EUR 2,500, wherever possible several detailed cost estimates ought to be presented.

Investment resources being applied for (prices including VAT, transport costs, etc.) are to be presented broken down in clearly arranged form. If large-scale equipment with acquisition costs of over EUR 25,000 is being applied for, the applicant is to equally present price quotes via leasing or rental of the equipment for the duration of the application period.

4.3.3. Consumables (in EUR)

The need is to be specified as precisely as possible, stating the costs and compiling them in detail.

4.3.4. Other costs (in Euro)

This includes for example publication costs

4.4. Cost schedule

Preparation of a cost schedule from which it is clear when installments are required for which quarter in which amount.

4.5. Disclosures pertaining to follow-up financing

Outline the planning for the further course of action beyond the scheduled term of project.

5. Declaration

Declaration as to whether the project application presented or a similar project application has previously been submitted to another funding entity. In the event of a preceding rejection of the project application by another funding entity, please submit the following documents: notification of the reasons for rejection or of the reviewers' votes, a point-to-point-reply on the points of criticism and the previous application. . This request has no prejudicing influence on the project's chances of funding. It is merely intended to optimize our information status and relieve the burden on the expert reviewer system.

By signing, the applicant and co-applicants obligate themselves to comply with the "Recommendations for ensuring good scientific practice" (*Empfehlungen zur Sicherung guter wissenschaftlicher Praxis*) issued by DFG (German Research Foundation) as revised in 2019.

6. Signature of the project manager

As to B: Applicant

For the applicant and for personnel to be funded from EKFS resources (insofar as the persons are known by name), please enclose separately for each one:

1. CV (max. 3 pages) without photo; please state your date of birth
2. Complete list of publications in accordance with the template on the home page (no enclosure of publications or manuscripts)
As is usually the case, only publications are to be cited which have been published or are in print.

Download [website](#)

3. List of currently ongoing and concluded third-party funding and personal scholarships awarded for financing your own position in accordance with the template on our [website](#). Please include copies of the funding approvals.

If the title of an ongoing funding is similar to the project applied for, please comment on the differences between the projects.

Please also indicate in the event that you have not acquired any third-party resources.

As to C: Appendices regarding prerequisites for implementation

1. Cover letter

An accompanying cover letter from the hospital clinic or institute director in charge is a decisive component of applying (Part C of the application documents). The following questions ought to be answered in the letter:

- Does a successful academic career as *Clinician Scientist* or scientist within medical research appear to be emerging for this candidate?
- What does the candidate's medium-term development perspective at the hospital clinic or institute in question look like?
- What kind of significance does the proposed project have within the context of research at the institute or hospital clinic?
- What kind of significance does the project have for the candidate's personal development?
- Confirmation that the applicant will be released from patient care or institutional responsibilities for at least 25% of his/her weekly working hours on average to carry out the project. Confirmation that funding of the applicant's position is guaranteed for at least the period of funding
- Can 1/3 of the project's total expenditures be allocated from the institutional funding in the form of human and non-monetary resources?

2. Approvals (animal testing approval, ethics committee vote)

Animal testing approvals as well as ethics committee votes for all experiments or studies planned within the project must be obtained prior to application submission.

Applications not accompanied by a positive notification or at least proof of an ongoing application to the ethics committee or the German state authority responsible for animal testing (confirmation of receipt along with file reference number) shall not be processed. A statement issued by an internal animal welfare officer does not suffice.

3. Proof of origin and/or authentication of cell lines used

When, where and how were the the cell lines used authenticated? In the event that the cell line has been used for more than 6 months at the applicant laboratory, re-authentication is required (Leibniz Institute DMSZ – German Collection of Microorganisms and Cell Cultures GmbH in Brunswick [German: Braunschweig] or ATCC Deutschland, LGC Standards, Wesel)

4. Cooperation commitments

All cooperations that make a concrete contribution to project implementation must be substantiated via a certification of cooperation.

5. Study protocol in the event of clinical studies

EKFS Newsletter:

The EKFS Newsletter offers a glimpse into our work and informs you about funding projects, calls for proposals, award ceremonies, and all the latest news about the Else Kröner-Fresenius-Stiftung. You can subscribe to the newsletter at

<http://www.ekfs.de/newsletter>