

# FAQs Schering Plus Fellowships

## What is the Schering Plus Fellowship?

The Schering Plus Fellowship is an award for academically outstanding doctoral candidates and “early-career” postdocs in the life sciences in Berlin and Brandenburg who are open to broadening their horizons. The program aims to strengthen the creativity and independence of the next generation of scientists and to support their career development.

## Am I eligible to apply?

The most important criteria for the fellowship are:

- **Doctoral candidates:** On the application deadline, you must be able to document that you have been working as a doctoral candidate for at least 12 months.
- **Postdocs:** On the application deadline, you must have received your doctorate no more than two years earlier (based on the official date on the doctoral certificate). Exceptions to this limit are possible, for example in cases of parental leave or prolonged illness.
- At the beginning of the funding period, and ideally throughout its entire duration, you are a doctoral candidate or postdoc. A transition between career phases is possible.
- You are employed at a university or research institution in Berlin or Brandenburg. If your main place of work moves outside Berlin/Brandenburg, the fellowship ends.
- You can demonstrate basic funding through employment, another fellowship, or similar means. Holding another fellowship in addition to the Schering Plus Fellowship does not exclude you from applying.

## What does the fellowship provide?

The funding period is a total of 36 months. Fellows receive flexible funding of up to a total of EUR 12,000 and access to the fellows and alumni network.

### **Which disciplines are addressed?**

Applicants must have a background in the life sciences (e.g., biology, biochemistry, bioinformatics, biophysics, biotechnology, nutrition science, medicine, pharmacy, veterinary medicine) or, based on related fields of study (e.g., chemistry, physics, computer science, engineering), must have been working intensively in the life sciences since at least the start of their doctorate.

### **How is the selection carried out?**

After reviewing the formal criteria and an initial screening by the Schering Stiftung, all suitable applications are evaluated by two external reviewers in a peer-review process. Reviewers are group leaders at universities and research organizations outside Berlin and Brandenburg. Typically, one review is closely related to the applicant's field, while the second is provided by a scientist from a somewhat more distant discipline. A successful application must meet the highest standards of the applicant's own specialist community and also convince colleagues from other areas of the life sciences. Based on the reviews, an expert jury decides on the awarding of the fellowships.

There is no entitlement to a justification of the jury's decision to accept or reject an application.

### **What is the timeline?**

The application deadlines specified in the application portal and the current call for applications apply. The application deadline is usually at the end of February. Funding decisions are made in summer/autumn. No information on the status of evaluations can be provided in the meantime; we kindly ask you to refrain from related inquiries.

Admission to the fellowship program and an initial meeting of the fellows usually take place in November.

### **How detailed should the budget planning be?**

Estimated figures are sufficient. The more detailed your information, the better the jury can understand your project. Depending on the planning stage, you may provide more general information, e.g., conference/research stay X for approx. EUR A, training course on topic Y for approx. EUR B, training course on topic Z for approx. EUR C, hardware, etc. Changes to the originally planned use of funds are possible during the funding period with appropriate justification.

### **Which language is preferred?**

The documents may be submitted in German or English. There is no preference. It is possible to write the motivation letter in German and the project description in English.

### **Can I do a transition from a doctorate to a postdoc during the funding period?**

Yes, the fellowship supports the transition from the doctoral to the postdoctoral phase. However, fellows must be working in Berlin or Brandenburg during the funding period. If they relocate outside the region, the fellowship ends.

### **Can I apply as a postdoc with a contract shorter than the fellowship duration?**

Yes, the fellowship is not tied to a specific contract situation. Transitions between different positions or from a position to another fellowship are possible. However, it is essential to state your current situation and future plans openly in the application, despite any uncertainties. If the future is unclear, ask yourself whether you want to remain in academia and in the Berlin-Brandenburg region: if yes, you are welcome to apply; if not, the fellowship may not be helpful for you in its orientation.

The supervisor's statement can also provide indications of future employment prospects.

### **What happens at the networking meetings?**

At the beginning of the funding period, there is a mandatory initial meeting to get to know each other, focusing on exchange about the fellows' research projects.

Further meetings address various scientific or other topics related to career or personal development. The fellows' wishes and needs are explicitly taken into account.

The meetings take place in Berlin or Brandenburg.

### **Does the fellowship cover my living expenses?**

**NO.** The Schering Plus Fellowship does **not** cover living expenses. These must generally be financed through employment at a university or research institution, another fellowship, or other funds.

It is the applicants' responsibility to ensure that the additional funding provided by the Schering Plus Fellowship is permissible under the applicable regulations of their basic funding or other fellowships.