Applying for a FWO postdoc fellowship
Info session – call 2022
October 2021
Preface

• What you should learn today...
  • to understand the evaluation & selection process
  • to prepare an application that meets the evaluation criteria

• This presentation
  • serves as applicant’s “quick starting guide” (key topics only)
  • more details: postdoc webpages incl. documents & regulations

• DISCLAIMER
  • Official & binding documents: regulations in Dutch
    • English regulations: no legal status

October 2021
Outline

1. FWO mission & key numbers
2. Postdoc fellowships at a glance
3. Evaluation & selection process
4. Preparing your application
5. ... further reading & contact
Welcome to the FWO

• Our mission
  • Funding of *fundamental* & *strategic* research
  • Funding programmes
    • *Individual researchers* (pre-, postdoc, mobility)
    • *Research teams* (projects, *SBO, Odysseus,...*)
  • Research infrastructure
  • Scientific prizes

Principles
• Bottom-up in all disciplines
• Scientific excellence and interuniversity (incl research institutes) competition
• Transparent and *equal opportunities*

Opening new horizons...
The FWO by numbers

Budget 2021: 480 MEUR (incl. EOS and Odysseus)

Fellowships (1 Oct 21)

1581 PhD fellows
769 Postdocs

49% PhD-fellows
51% Postdocs

79% PhD fellows
54% Postdocs

33,0% PhD fellows
22,6% Postdoc JR (180)
22,8% Postdoc SR (89)

Call 2021
The FWO and social media

**How?**

1. Follow us on social media:
   - Twitter
   - Instagram
   - Facebook
   - LinkedIn
   - YouTube

2. Use
   - hashtag: #FWOVLANDEN
   - tag: @fwoVLandenden
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FWO Postdoctoral fellowship at a glance

- **Target group**
  - young researchers developing independent, international research career
  - *parallel* calls junior/senior: 0-3 resp. 3-6 years after PhD
  - All PhD’s & nationalities

- **3-year grants**
  - start Oct 1, 2022 (*or* Nov 1 2022)
  - 2021: 180 junior / 89 senior fellowships
  - Additional fellowship ‘Meise Botanic Garden – FWO’

- **fundamental research**
  - > < Innovation mandates (PhD exploitation & utilization: @VLAIO)

- flexible bench fee 4 – 10 k€/year
  - Fund Suzanne Duchesne (King Baudouin Foundation): special bench fees oncology research

- **Key dates**
  - Dec 1, 2021 Submission deadline
  - May 31, 2022 Selection results
Eligibility window

**PhD:**
- Oct 1, 2016
- Oct. 1, 2019
- June 1, 2022

- **Senior:** min. 2 years postdoc researcher seniority required *(on Oct. 1, 2022)*
  - *declaration* by host organisation needed (not if previously junior FWO postdoc)

- **Junior**
- 1 year extension: maternity-, parental-, sickness leave > 3m
  - *No eligibility window ‘senior’ if directly following FWO junior postdoc fellowship*
  - 2nd application: window does apply!

- **Extensions eligibility window:** regulations Art 6
  - 1 year extension: maternity-, parental-, sickness leave > 3m
  - *No eligibility window ‘senior’ if directly following FWO junior postdoc fellowship*
  - 2nd application: window does apply!
Eligible host organisations

- **Main host organization** *(affiliation)*
  - Evangelic Protestant Faculty Leuven - Faculty for Protestant Theology in Brussels
  - Antwerp Maritime Academy
  - Vlerick Business School - Antwerp Management school,
  - Institute for Tropical Medicine

- **Additional host organization(s)**
  - Flemish/federal research institutes *(collaboration / research location)*
  - Limited list: pick list in application form

- **Main supervisor** @main host organization
  (→ recommendation letter on invitation by FWO)

  - If applicable: Co-supervisor(s) @ main host organization
    additional host organization(s)
    other organizations
**Additional fellowships / bench fees**

- **“Meise Botanic Garden – FWO” fellowships**
  - 1 extra postdoc fellowship funded by Meise Botanic Garden
  - Agreement on being additional host institute (before submitting application)
  - Grant: FWO contract + collaboration agreement Meise Botanic Garden & main host institute

- **King Baudouin Foundation – special bench fees cancer research**
  - Fund Suzanne Duchesne, managed by the King Baudouin Foundation -> 80,000 euro
  - Med4 panel: best ranked candidates (jr-sr) resp. k€ 30, k€ 25, k€ 25
  - Project outline: additional paragraph motivating use of special bench fee
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Evaluation & selection process
Submission to expert panels

• Panel structure fundamental research
  • ‘Fellowships’ panels (PhD/postdoc)
  • 31 panels: 30 in 5 scientific domains + interdisciplinary panel (cross-domain)
  • Updated panel members list: published Jan 2022
    • 12 members incl. scientific chair
    • >50% members with non-Flemish affiliation
    • FWO: administrative chair

• Choose panel that best fits your application!
  • Check panel scopes
    • motivate choice
    • “out-of-scope” = application rejected
  • Interdisciplinary panel?
    • Combining 2 or more scientific domains
    • Follow acceptance criteria decision tree
Single submission 2-step evaluation & selection process

**Step 1**
- Remote assessment:
  - 2 ext. reviewers + 2 panel members
  - -> synthesis by panel rapporteur
  - (online) panel meeting consensus scoring & ranking

**Rejected proposals**

**Selected for step 2 interviews**

**Step 2**
- Panel meeting: interviews consensus scoring & ranking

- Rejected proposals
- Selected candidates
- Feedback by rapporteur (all candidates)

October 2021
Info session postdoc fellowships FWO
Evaluation criteria “candidate” & “project”

- **Criterium ‘candidate’**
  - Attention to *various researcher profiles and research results*
    - Away from one-sided focus on ‘classical output’
    - Towards broader view on scientific accomplishments
    - *Research career*: range of scientifically relevant activities, skills, experiences and achievements
    - Adapted application form and evaluation criteria
  - *Senior* postdoc: *scientific independence* as an asset
    - Publications/achievements without PhD promotor
    - *(Inter)*institutional mobility since PhD
    - Other evidence
Evaluation criteria “candidate” & “project”

Step 1 preselection

Scientific contribution
- range of scientifically relevant activities and achievements
  - Quality & impact publications
  - Other meaningful scientific output
  - Impact (soc./econ./...) beyond publications
- Emerging reputation & upward trajectory
- (sr) Developing scientific independence

Relevant competences & motivation
- Scientific background and competences
- Motivation & research vision on career development
  - Variety of activities, skills & experiences
  - E.g. networks, collaboration, mobility, R&D services, training...
  - (sr) Supervision & mentoring, other responsibilities

Scientific quality, relevance and challenge, originality
- Originality / contribution state-of-the-art
- Risks and challenges

Quality research approach, feasibility
- Methodology
- Feasibility, risk mitigation

Total score: 50% 50%
Evaluation criteria “candidate” & “project”

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<td>Unacceptable</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Fair/Reasonable</td>
<td>Good/Very good</td>
<td>Excellent/Outstanding</td>
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Step 2 interviews
focus shift to assessment of (potential) *competence candidate*
  * implicitly also based on findings from preselection
  * ‘content’ (≠ ‘performance’) pitch and interview

Competence as postdoc researcher
  * **Expertise/knowledge** in own research field
  * Insight in project approach and positioning
  * Reasoning skills and critical **scientific mindset**
  * Clear **vision** on professional future and motivation

Scientific quality, relevance and challenge, originality
  * Originality / contribution state-of-the-art
  * Risks and challenges

Quality research approach, feasibility
  * Methodology
  * Feasibility, risk mitigation

Total score: 50% 50%
Uniform evaluation: scoring descriptors
Score grids preselection / interview

| POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP EVALUATION/ score grid with scoring descriptors - PRESELECTION |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Score** grids preselection / interview |

### 1. Assessment of the candidate

<table>
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<tr>
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### 2. Scientific contribution of the candidate

- The candidate's scientific work is limited to a specific field of research.
- The candidate's research outputs have not led to significant advancements in the field.
- There is a lack of evidence of original research contributions.

### 3. Relevance and quality of the research project

- The research project is not well-defined or lacks clear goals.
- There is a lack of coherence in the methodology used.
- The project's potential impact is not clearly articulated.

### 4. Intellectual capacity and critical thinking

- The candidate demonstrates limited analytical skills.
- There is a lack of critical thinking in the candidate's responses.

### 5. Communication and presentation skills

- The candidate's written and oral communication skills are limited.
- There is a lack of clarity and precision in the candidate's responses.

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### 6. Conclusion

- The candidate's overall performance does not meet the standards for the Fellowship.
- Further research and development are required before the candidate can be offered the Fellowship.

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**Note:** These guidelines are subject to the discretion of the evaluation committee.

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**Postdoctoral Fellowship Evaluation/ score grid with scoring descriptors - INTERVIEWS**

| **Score** grids postdoc call 2022 |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
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Selection process

Available fellowships -> panels
90% -> proportional distribution over panels (~ #candidates in panel)
(quote per panel)
10% -> assigned to ‘best remaining candidates’
(‘wild cards’ ranked over all panels)

Step 1 – preselection
- (quota x 2) best ranked candidates invited to interview
- Rejected applications

Step 2 – interviews
- (quota) best ranked candidates score ≥4 for Candidate and Project
- best remaining candidates’: ranked over all panels
  - assignment of remaining 10% fellowships
  - Meise Botanic Garden fellowship
- rejected applications

(e.g. 15 candidates and Q=3)
Feedback to candidates

• All feedback AFTER selection decision Board (≥ June 2022)
  • Compiled by panel member (‘rapporteur’)
  • Including comments based on panel consensus decision and scores
  • Template per criterion (Candidate, Project)
    • “Strengths”
    • “Weaknesses”
    • “Comments and suggestions for improvement”
  • No further correspondence on feedback

• Do NOT contact panel members!

1 Out in step 1
- Scores preselection
- Panel comments

2 Out in step 2 or Grant
- Scores interview
- Synthesis panel comments step 1 & 2
2022 call: timeline evaluation & selection

- Submission: Dec 1, 2021
- Eligibility: Dec 2021
- End preselection: Early April 2022
- Interviews: 25 Apr - 20 May 2022
- Selection: 31 May 2022
- Feedback: June 2022
- Start contracts: Oct - Nov 2022
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Preparing your application – e-portal

Direct access: [https://fwoweb.fwo.be](https://fwoweb.fwo.be) or via [www.fwo.be](http://www.fwo.be)

Or first: register in time! -> FWO Validation /48hrs
Preparing your application – personal details
Some hints in filling in form

- **General:**
  - National registration number
  - Also non-Belgian applicants with Belgian ID card
  - ORCID registration [https://orcid.org/](https://orcid.org/)

- **Diplomas & posts/career**
  - Correct, complete & up to date!
  - PhD future date (<1 June 2022): “Stud. PhD” + provisional date
  - keep FWO updated!

- **Disciplines**
  - Use level 4

- **Publications**
  - Complete list as on Dec 1, 2021
  - Published or accepted for publication
  - categories A.1.1 & A.1.2 merged to A.1

- **Addresses**
  - (future) ‘Belgian service address’!
  - Legal domicile address
    - Non-Belgian domicile in EU: add TIN code (tax identification number)
Preparing your application - publication list

Merge A.1.1 and A.1.2 -> A.1 ‘peer reviewed articles in journals’
  • No distinction between WoS, VABB-SHW a.o.
  • A2 ‘non-peer reviewed articles in journals’
  • Publications previously in A.1.1 and A.1.2: merged in chronological order
    – Your responsibility - > Check carefully!
  
• Adding publications
  • Import XML (Flemish universities bibliography) – A1 -> C1 only
  • Other publications: add manually
  • Only if published or accepted for publication

• Postdoc application: situation as is on submission (1 Dec 2021)
  • No updates sent to panel
  • Mention new publications during pitch/interview
Checklist before starting new application

- Gender
- Place of birth
- Nationality
- **ORCID iD** *(Open Researcher and Contributor ID)*

- Domicile address (in Belgium or abroad)
- (Future) service address

*no access to new application* before these 8 items are completed…
Starting new application

Application type selection

- Fellowships
- Postdoctoral Fellow

Eligibility window

- Postdoctoral fellowship junior: PhD obtained between Oct. 1, 2019 and June 1, 2022.
- Postdoctoral fellowship senior: PhD obtained between Oct. 1, 2016 and Sept. 30, 2019 AND min. 2 years postdoctoral research experience on Oct. 1, 2022.

Eligibility window extensions may apply: Postdoc programme regulations, Art. 6.

Working title (optional)

Define a working title for your application so you can easily identify it later. This title is not a part of the application itself and can be changed later on.

Dirk Postdoc sr

Create application
Application form: general

- **Start date if granted** (*default Oct 1*)

- **(sr.) Declaration of seniority** (*if applicable*)
  - Template – signed by host institution

- **Title of your research proposal** (*NL-EN*)
- **Abstract**
- **PhD** (*NL-EN*)
- **Up to 5 scientific disciplines fitting proposed research.** -> *Personalia*
- **up to 3 free-text keywords or concepts**
Application form: personal data

• Explain any career breaks

• **SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTION**
  • (up to 5) main achievements/publications

  • Other scientific output and impact
    • apart from publication list
    • Impact: scientific, societal, economic...

• Scientific awards

• **MOTIVATION AND COMPETENCES**
  • Motivation statement
    • Personal motivation, research interests and research vision (career)
    • Fit scientific background and competences vs. proposed research project.
    • Expertise/skills built up & to be (further) acquired

  • List career building activities
    • education, supervision, institutional responsibilities, memberships ...
    • networks, collaborations, R&D services ...

• Past mobility (research stays)
• Mobility plans: research stays in another organization

  *Concrete invitations may be uploaded (tab PROJECT)*
Application form: host institution - supervisor

- **main Flemish host institution**
  - Main supervisor
  - *Optional co-supervisor(s)*

- **Additional host institution: Flemish or Federal scientific institution(s)**
  - = collaboration/research location
  - *Pick list*
  - *Co-supervisor(s)*

- **Other organization(s) / co-supervisor(s)**

- **Do not add recommendation letters!**
  - *FWO will invite main supervisor only to provide recommendation*
Application form: project

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Download template

Project description – **WORD template ≤10 pages**
- Improvements w.r.t. 1st application
- Rationale and positioning w.r.t. the state-of-the-art
- Scientific research objective(s)
- Research methodology and work plan
- *Med4: 1§ motivation special bench fee Fund Suzanne Duchesne*
- references

Upload

OTHER FUNDING

PROJECT POSITIONING AND EMBEDDING

SCIENCE COMMUNICATION
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

OTHER FUNDING
- proposal content submitted before AND funded or funding decision still pending? potential overlap, complementarity, added value...
- Update FWO on pending evaluations!
- Be open and transparent!

PROJECT POSITIONING AND EMBEDDING
- fit into the research activities of the host institution(s)
- Position the project in a national and international context
- Gender and diversity issues
- Work with societal actors

RRI: responsible research and innovation

SCIENCE COMMUNICATION
- Communication of results to a non-expert audience
Application form: bench fee / peer review

**BENCH FEE**

Requested bench fee (per project year)
- Default € 4,000 per year
- Max. € 10,000 per year (to motivate)

**PEER REVIEW**

**INTERNAL PEER REVIEW**
Scientific field -> dedicated panel
INTDIS: Specify at least 2 sub scientific fields
Motivate your choice of expert panel

**EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW**
(request to) exclude ≤3 experts
Motivation:
- □ Conflict of interest
- □ May use content for other purposes

Additional substantiation
Application form: ethics / DMP / Consent

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<td>• General (including GDPR)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Declaration that all personal data info is accurate and up-to-date.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Research Integrity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Read the detailed information and the RI Clause</td>
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<td>Every applicant and beneficiant is expected to know the rules and what (s)he will be committed to</td>
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I agree
Covid-19

Crisis impacted your life, your research, your career...

• restricted access to research facilities
• taking care of children during lockdown
• increased commitment to teaching or healthcare, ...
• standstill international mobility
• ...

... and your Postdoc fellowship application...

-> mention influence on quality of your application
    use ‘career breaks’, ‘personal statement’, ‘research stays’, project description file...

-> FWO instructs expert panels to take this into account in assessment

Check measures taken by FWO:
measures-coronavirus

October 2021
Info session postdoc fellowships FWO
Application form: submit

- October 2021
- Info session postdoc fellowships FWO

< December 1 2021 – 5:00 pm CET

- automatic confirmation follows
- registration number sent
- eligibility check: Q&A with FWO admin
Making it to step 2: interviews

- **Invitations** and instructions early April 2022 (end preselection)
- **Interviews** 25 April - 20 May 2022
- **@FWO (Brussels)** ‘Physical’ presence recommended
  - ‘remote’ interview: to be motivated
- **Interview format:** pitch (5’) + interview (15’)
  - Interview instructions and guidelines will be available
  - Opportunity to mention realizations since submission date
- **Evaluation criteria different from preselection** (criterion ‘candidate’)
  - **Score grid interview**
  - Focus on ‘competence’ as postdoc researcher
  - Implicitly taking into account findings from preselection phase
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Further reading & contact

• Programme webpages junior NL - EN / senior NL - EN
  • Regulations (legal version: Dutch)
    - General / Postdoc programme / bench fee / peer review
  • Supporting documents
    - This presentation / Screenshots e-application junior / senior
    - Scoring grids preselection / interview
    - Instructions and Guidelines interview – v.2022 to be published later

• Help! Who to contact
  • Your host organization’s research co-ordination office
  • FWO additional info & specific questions
    • FWO file administrators per domain
    • Dirk Otte, programme manager fellowships
  • FWOhelpdesk@fwo.be
    • (e-portal/IT problems only)
Thank you for your attention

...and good luck!