

9 June 2011

POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS 2011

At its meeting on 9 June 2011, the Research Council for Biosciences and Environment decided to fund 29 research posts as Postdoctoral Researcher. The granted funding amounts to EUR 8.45 million. The Research Council could fund 19 per cent of the applications submitted to the October 2010 call. The Research Council also decided to draw up a reserve list of five persons for cases where an applicant who was granted funding decides not to accept the funding. All applicants will receive an automatic email notification of the decision. After receiving the notification, applicants can log in to the Academy's online services and read the decision on their application.

Before the funds can be paid, the principal investigator and the site of research must confirm that they will accept the funding. The confirmation is done in the Academy's online services. By confirming that they will receive the funding, the principal investigator and the site of research accept the whole funding decision and commit themselves to complying with the conditions set by the Academy for the use of funds.

In the October 2010 call, the Research Council for Biosciences and Environment received a total of 153 applications for research posts as Postdoctoral Researcher. The funding applied for amounted to some EUR 45 million. This was almost as much as in the January 2010 call (148 applications, some EUR 44 million). The majority of applications were submitted in the field of ecology, evolution research and systematics, which was also granted most funding.

In accordance with its performance agreement with the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, the Academy of Finland has since 2009 applied the full cost model to its funding decisions. The Academy's funding contribution of the total costs of the research posts can be no more than 80 per cent. The Academy's research posts are jointly funded and the site of research or some other funding source participates in the costs with a contribution of at least 20 per cent. In the current 29 research posts as Postdoctoral Researcher, the Academy's funding contribution is 70–80 per cent.

During the three application rounds arranged in accordance with the full cost model (2009–2010), the average amount of Academy funding granted to research posts as Postdoctoral Researcher has been EUR 300,000 per project. The Research Council has sought to grant funding according to the sum applied for, if the costs are well justified and in accordance with the funding instrument in question. Postdoctoral Researcher funding is intended only for the researcher's own salary, personal research costs and mobility costs. Consequently, the Research Council had to cut down the costs for seven applicants who were granted funding, because their costs included salary costs for other persons.

Decisions based on international peer review

The Research Council's funding decisions are primarily based on the review of the research plan and the applicant's scientific merits. All applications for research grants are reviewed at the Academy by using international peer review. Normally, a written review report by a scientific expert panel or at least two external written reviews by persons who are esteemed researchers in

their fields are requested on each application. More information on the review principles is available on the Academy's website.

The applications submitted to the October 2010 call were reviewed in February-March 2011 by eight international panels, of which one was jointly arranged with the Research Council for Culture and Society. The panels involved a total of 71 experts from 17 countries (the majority from the UK, Germany and Sweden). Overall, the applications were of a high international standard. All applicants can read the panel reviews on their application in the Academy's online services.

Promoting researchers' independence

Apart from the research plan and the applicant's scientific merits, the panel and Research Council members paid special attention to the researchers' international and national mobility. Once again, mobility was the key science-policy ground for the Research Council's decisions. Young researchers are encouraged to go abroad with a view to gaining independence after the doctorate, or at least to change to another research team when embarking on an independent research career. The majority of applicants who were granted funding had included one or several spells abroad in their research plan. The whole research community can benefit from the competencies and networks the researcher brings with him/her when returning home. International experience is often a requirement to be able to build a successful research career.

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Review of applications: www.aka.fi/en-GB/A/For-researchers/Review-of-applications

Full cost model: www.aka.fi/en-GB/A/For-researchers/How-to-apply/Full-cost-model