

Information sheet for International Max Planck Centers

1. Max Planck Centers

Max Planck Centers are a core element of the Max Planck Society's international strategy. They allow their members to flexibly combine various instruments for international cooperation, to pool scientific know-how and to generate synergies. International Max Planck Centers constitute platforms for collaboration far beyond a standard bilateral cooperation project, thus significantly increasing the added value of the collaboration, raising its overall visibility and attractiveness and enhancing its scientific potential. As Centers of Excellence with a duration of maximum 2 x 5 years, Max Planck Centers aim at promoting scientific cooperation at the very highest level between Max Planck Institutes and world class partners outside Germany.

The added value can be generated in a number of ways. Max Planck Centers

- take collaborations to a new level, where the cooperation is on a broader thematic basis within the framework of a structured program;
- support unique, multilateral collaborations between partners which did not previously exist to this extent and with this visibility;
- increase international competitiveness by establishing sustainable structures for excellent research;
- help establish clusters of excellence and the sharing of new technology & infrastructure;
- lead to joint high level publications.

The added value results in

- an increase in the attractiveness of research locations to attract excellent scientists on all levels;
- an increase of the talent pool: jointly educating more junior scientists;
- brain circulation instead of brain drain;
- the establishment of a network by bringing together leading scientists of the field with highly motivated junior scientists;
- an increase in both regional and international visibility;
- an increased leverage of funds.

Some examples of instruments that might be used to set up a research programme with a Max Planck Center are exchange of researchers, PhD training in International Max Planck Research Schools, postdoctoral training programmes, research groups, Max Planck partner groups, workshops, conferences, summer school, joint use of infrastructure etc..

2. Organisational questions

Duration:

Max Planck Centers are established for a fixed period of five years with an option for a one-time extension of five years after successful evaluation

Partners:

The establishment of a Max Planck Center requires the involvement of a lead Max Planck Institute together with minimum one other Max Planck Institute and one research partner from abroad. The inclusion of more than one international research partner is desirable.

Funding:

The Max Planck Society and the foreign partner each carry 50% of the costs up to a maximum of 0.5 million Euro per party. 30% of the share of the Max Planck Society is covered by the participating MPI through their core budget. Cost structures in the partner countries may vary from those in Germany. This should be taken into account and reflected accordingly in the budget.

Additional funding in budget can be made available by the participating Max Planck Institutes and the partner institution.

Legal capacity:

A Max Planck Center does not have legal capacity in its own right. A Center is set up solely on the basis of an agreement regarding the research programme, the measures to be implemented, the financial, personnel and infrastructure resources available to the partners and other details to be specified (see below for more details on the joint preparation of the agreement).

Organisational structure:

Each Max Planck Center is headed by a scientist from the Max Planck Society and a colleague from the foreign partner institution, so called Co-Directors. The two Co-Directors form the “leading team”, which constitutes the decision making body of the Center.

Minimum one scientific coordinator should be appointed to support the “leading team” in its daily business. He or she provides administrative support for the collaboration of the Center partners and deals with organisational issues.

Location:

Max Planck Centers always have two locations: At the lead MPI and the partner institution abroad.

Implementation of the scientific programme:

The Co-Directors are free to decide on how they will implement the joint scientific programme. They are expected to encourage the joint training and exchange of junior scientists, to organise workshops and conferences, to attract leading scientists either through fellowships or as associated partners, to jointly submit funding applications to third-party funds and to grant mutual access to their research facilities, equipment etc..

3. Application

The director of the lead Max Planck Institute submits the proposal (in English) to the President of the Max Planck Society.

The proposal should contain the following information:

1. A detailed research programme together with a description of the expertise and contributions from each partner.

2. A description of the tools to be implemented, e.g. through exchange of PhD students and/or Postdocs, creation of group leader positions, joint training, e.g. through IMPRS, etc.
3. A description of the expected synergies and the added-value for both partners.
4. A description of the actions taken to raise the awareness and the visibility of for the Max Planck Center and its umbrella organisations in the global research landscape, e.g. through the creation of a website of the Max Planck Center, acknowledgements in publications, creation of its own logo, etc.
5. A detailed plan with the financial contributions of the each partner and the expected distribution of funds.
6. A list of names of minimum six experts (minimum three from abroad) in the field of research concerned. These experts may be approached as reviewers for the proposal.

Please also provide information regarding the measures below if relevant:

7. Granting access to research facilities and infrastructure to the individual partners within the framework of the Center thus creating scientific added-value.
8. Plans to jointly apply for third party money.
9. Plans to establish an advisory board to regularly accompany the scientific work of the Center and to give advice if necessary.

A deadline for the submission of proposals will be announced.

4. Review of the proposal

The proposal is reviewed in accordance with the standard review procedures of the Max Planck Society. Next to scientific excellence a special focus is put on the added value of the Max Planck Center for both parties, which needs to be clearly and well defined in the proposal.

The decision on whether to establish a Max Planck Center is taken by the President of the Max Planck Society on the basis of external reports and after hearing the relevant Section Perspective Commissions and the Sections Vice Presidents.

5. Approval of proposal

Upon the approval of the proposal, an agreement is drawn up between the Max Planck Society and the international partners on the basis of a standard format.

The Center will officially be established from the day of the first withdrawal of the funds made available, which should not be later than one year after the signature of the agreement by both parties.

6. Evaluation

After approximately four years the Max Planck Center will have to undergo an evaluation which forms the basis for a decision to continue the Max Planck Center for another five years (availability of funds provided).

7. Contacts in the Administrative Headquarters

Dr. Michaela Zimmermann
 Programme Officer
 Division for International Relations
 Administrative Headquarters of the Max Planck Society
 Tel.: +49 89 2108 1229
 E-Mail: michaela.zimmermann@gv.mpg.de

8. Overview of the Max Planck Centers already established

France	- Max Planck-Sciences Po Center, Coping with Instabilities in Market Societies, Paris	
Switzerland	- Max Planck-EPFL Center for Molecular Nanoscience and Technology, Lausanne	
UK	- Max Planck UCL Center for Computational Psychiatry and Ageing Research, London	
Denmark	- Max Planck – Odense Center on the Biodemography of Aging, Odense	
India (2)	- Indo-German Max Planck Center for Computer Science, IIT Delhi - Indo-German Max Planck NCBS-Center on Lipid Research, Bangalore	
Israel (2)	- Max Planck-Weizmann Center for Integrative Anthropology & Archaeology, Rehovot - Max Planck Hebrew University Center for Sensory Processing of the Brain in Action, Jerusalem	
Japan (2)	- Max Planck-RIKEN/ASI Center for Systems Chemical Biology, Tokyo - Max Planck-University of Tokyo Center for Integrative Inflammation, Tokyo	
Canada	- Max Planck-UBC Center for Quantum Materials, Vancouver	
Korea (2)	- Max Planck-POSTECH Center for Attosecond Science, Pohang - Max Planck-POSTECH Center for Complex Phase Materials, Pohang	
USA	- Max Planck-Princeton Research Center for Plasma Physics, Princeton	