

The
Branco Weiss
Fellowship
Society in Science



Fast Facts for Applicants

The Branco Weiss Fellowship is a postdoc program for exceptionally qualified young researchers. The fellowship consists of a personal research grant that enables the fellows to work on their projects anywhere in the world, for up to five years.

A Branco Weiss Fellow is expected to work on a research project, which blazes new trails and profits from the unique freedom offered by the fellowship. A successful fellow also demonstrates the willingness to engage in a dialogue on relevant social, cultural, political, or economic issues across the frontiers of their particular discipline.

Branco Weiss Fellows belong to a diverse, dedicated, and intellectually stimulating group. They meet at least once a year to present and discuss their research projects.

The Branco Weiss Fellowship was initiated and financed by the Swiss entrepreneur Dr. Branco Weiss. The program is domiciled and run by ETH Zurich.

Eligibility

The Branco Weiss Fellowship is designed to support postdoctoral researchers after their PhD and before their first faculty appointment. Those in current postdoctoral positions are also eligible. The ideal applicant has the competencies to design a surprisingly novel and scientifically rigorous research project which blazes new trails, profiting from the freedom uniquely offered by the fellowship.

You are eligible for the 2018 campaign if:

- You officially hold a PhD on January 15, 2018
- Your research departs significantly from mainstream research in your discipline
- You have a record of outstanding scientific achievement
- You demonstrate in your proposal a willingness to engage in a dialogue on relevant social, cultural, political, or economic issues across the frontiers of your particular discipline

Your application will not be forwarded for evaluation if:

- Your PhD was awarded before January 15, 2013
- You were born before January 1, 1984
- You already have or have held a faculty-equivalent position (e.g. assistant professor or lecturer)

Duration

The five-year fellowship is awarded in two installments:

1. The pioneer phase: the first two years of research

2. The exploitation phase: the remaining three years

At the end of the pioneer phase, a review is conducted. This evaluates the project, its continued originality, and the productivity of the fellow. Branco Weiss Fellows are encouraged to seek faculty positions during their exploitation phase; success hereby will not terminate the fellowship.

Funding

A Branco Weiss Fellowship consists of CHF 100,000 per year. It may be used to cover all legitimate costs of research (i.e. salary and/or equipment, travel expenses, consumables, personnel, etc.).

Application Materials

You need to prepare the following material for your application:

- Letter of motivation including a statement explaining why your research differs from the mainstream (max. 1 page)
- Your proposed research project (max. 4 pages, plus references)
- Your CV (max. 4 pages)
- Copies of your three best publications
- Application template, including a reasoning of why you believe that you are a perfect candidate for a Branco Weiss Fellowship (max. 1000 characters)

Please note that letters of support, timelines and budgets do not have to be submitted upon application. In preparing the description of your intended research, you may wish to give emphasis to the idea or concept forming the heart of the work, the methods you are planning to use, and the potential impact of the outcome both for your own subject and for other disciplines. You should also seek to

present links between society and science that you wish to explore and promote. All documents must be submitted as PDF files.

Timelines

Every proposal is evaluated by the directorate, selected faculty members of ETH Zurich, and external reviewers. Short-listed candidates are invited for personal interviews, to be held in Zurich, Switzerland.

The following timeline applies for the 2018 fellowship intake:

- January 15, 2018, 11.59 p.m. CET: final deadline for applications via the online form
- April 2018: notification and invitation for a personal interview sent to final selection of candidates; notification sent to candidates whose application has been rejected
- June 2018: candidates interviewed by a panel in Zurich, Switzerland; final selection of fellows
- September 1 to December 31, 2018: fellows commence research projects



Frequently Asked Questions

What is The Branco Weiss Fellowship, and what are its main goals?

The Branco Weiss Fellowship is a worldwide fellowship program, founded in 2002 and coordinated by ETH Zurich. It provides a platform for exceptionally qualified researchers from all disciplines demonstrating a willingness to engage in a dialogue on relevant social, cultural, political, or economic issues across the frontiers of their particular discipline. The fellowship is international and transdisciplinary in nature.

What is unique about The Branco Weiss Fellowship?

By comparison with other fellowships, The Branco Weiss Fellowship is unique in several respects.

Branco Weiss Fellows are expected to present novel approaches in their research, departing from the mainstream. The selection of the institute or research unit best suited to conduct the research rests with the fellows. Fellows may undertake their research anywhere in the world at any institution, even at multiple locations.

Who is behind The Branco Weiss Fellowship?

The fellowship is financed by the late Swiss entrepreneur Dr. Branco Weiss and administered as a fund by ETH Zurich. The directors of the program, responsible for all scientific and operational aspects, are Professor Heidi Wunderli-Allenspach, former Rector of ETH Zurich and Deputy to the President; Angelika Steger, full professor of Computer Science at ETH Zurich; and Josef Zeyer, former full professor of Environmental Microbiology at the Institute of Biogeochemistry and Pollutant Dynamics at ETH Zurich. They are supported by additional faculty members of ETH Zurich to evaluate applications and conduct interviews with short-listed applicants.

How many fellowships will be granted?

The program aims to award up to ten fellowships each year. The actual number depends on the performance of the applicants during the interviews, taking into account not only scientific abilities of the candidates, but also their personal qualities and motivations. No effort will be made to award all ten fellowships.

Scientists from what disciplines are eligible to apply for a fellowship?

The Branco Weiss Fellowship is open to researchers at postdoctoral level in all disciplines.

What criteria beyond the formal criteria must applicants meet?

Applicants must submit a project that exploits new avenues of research, often transdisciplinary. They must also provide evidence of outstanding achievement in their particular scientific field and be willing to engage in a dialogue on relevant social, cultural, political, or economic issues across the frontiers of their particular discipline.

Where do applicants have to be in their career to apply?

Applicants must have officially completed their PhD by the application deadline, and they should not have received their PhD more than five years ago. Faculty members (assistant professors or lecturers) or former faculty members are not eligible.

What projects qualify for support?

Projects which depart significantly from mainstream research and will profit from the unique freedom offered by the fellowship. Ideal projects follow new paths in an interdisciplinary setting.

How does the financial support work?

Financial support is given to fellows in the form of a personal grant. This is administered by

the host institution via a three-way contractual agreement between the fellow, their chosen institution(s), and ETH Zurich. Overheads must be covered by the host institution(s).

How does the selection procedure work?

All incoming applications are screened. Letters of recommendation and external reviews will only be requested once the applicant has been short-listed. A final selection of applicants will be invited for interviews to present their project to the Directorate and selected faculty members of ETH Zurich in Zurich, Switzerland. The decision is typically communicated to candidates within two weeks after the interview.

What is the role of ETH Zurich in the fellowship?

The Branco Weiss Fellowship is domiciled and run by ETH Zurich. Founded in 1855 and located in the heart of Europe, ETH Zurich stands for world-class scientific experience, research for the benefit of society and industry, and the training of highly skilled professionals. A total of 21 Nobel Prize Laureates studied, taught, or carried out their research at ETH Zurich. Transferring knowledge from the university to the worlds of business, society, and politics is one of the strategic goals of ETH Zurich – equally important are first-rate education, excellent research, and maintaining a strong international network. The Branco Weiss Fellowship is just one of the means to achieve these ambitious goals.

Contact Information

For further information and questions regarding The Branco Weiss Fellowship, please don't hesitate to contact us.

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