

The Cluster of Excellence on Plant Sciences CEPLAS invites applications for

7 Doctoral researchers (m/f/d)

Location: Düsseldorf/Cologne/Gatersleben

Start date: 01.06.2026

Limited until: 31.05.2029

Your profile

- M.Sc. in molecular plant sciences, genetics, quantitative biology, computational biology or a related discipline
- Research experience in the relevant field
- High level of English language proficiency
- Strong motivation to conduct a scientific project in an international, interdisciplinary research environment
- Motivation to contribute to a dynamic and diverse academic community
- Excellent communication, organizational, and analytical skills

Our Offer

CEPLAS offers the following PhD projects (details are available at www.ceplas.eu):

1. 4D-LEAF – Comparative Reconstruction of C3 and C3–C4 Leaf Development in Brassicaceae (A. Weber, HHU)
2. Functional resource allocation in stress resilience (P. Bauer, HHU, T. Hildebrandt, UoC)
3. Sexless seeds for Barley hybrids (R. Mercier, MPIPZ)
4. Deep learning prediction and experimental validation of transporter–substrate interactions (M. Lercher, HHU)
5. Root Biogeography Atlas (E. Loo, HHU, W. Frommer, HHU)
6. From genebank diversity to cellular networks: to optimise shoot meristem activities:
 - A. Identifying and characterizing barley diversity to enhance regulation of meristem development (A. Backhaus, IPK, L. Dixon, IPK, M. von Korff, HHU, N. Stein, IPK)
 - B. Dissecting Meristem Regulatory Networks in barley via Single-Nucleus RNA Sequencing (M. von Korff, HHU, A. Backhaus, IPK, L. Dixon, IPK)

CEPLAS creates a dynamic, international, and interdisciplinary research environment in plant science. We offer state-of-the-art laboratories and facilities, structured doctoral training within our CEPLAS Graduate School, as well as further career development support.

The place of employment is determined by the respective research project. The employment is initially limited to a period of three years, starting on June 1, 2026 (or as agreed) with the possibility of a one-year extension.

We offer qualification positions within the meaning of the Act on Fixed-Term Employment Contracts in Academia (Wissenschaftszeitvertragsgesetz-WissZeitVG), which serves to promote the scientific qualification of the employee.

The respective funding conditions of the individual partners apply. Salary is based, depending on the personal qualification of the applicant and the respective funding conditions of the individual partners, up to pay grade 13 TV-L for HHU, UoC and IPK /TVöD-Bund for FZJ and MPIPZ, 65%).

About us

The Cluster of Excellence for Plant Sciences CEPLAS is a joint initiative of Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf (HHU), the University of Cologne (UoC), the Max Planck Institute for Plant Breeding Research Cologne (MPIPZ), Forschungszentrum Jülich (FZJ) and the Leibniz Institute of Plant Genetics and Crop Plant Research (IPK) Gatersleben. CEPLAS develops innovative strategies for sustainable plant production and promotes innovative training programs for early career researchers. Detailed information about CEPLAS and the CEPLAS Graduate School is available at www.ceplas.eu.

All participating institutions are equal opportunity and family-friendly employers and strive for gender equality and excellence through diversity.

Applications from people of all genders are expressly welcome. Applications from women will be given preferential consideration in accordance with the State Equal Opportunities Act. The application of severely disabled persons and persons with equivalent disabilities is also welcome. In order for a severe disability or equality to be taken into account, please provide evidence of this with suitable documents.

Application process:

Applications are accepted exclusively via the HHU application portal. It is required to state in your motivation letter for which project you apply. Here's a list of the documents required for the application (please upload as one single PDF file < 5 MB):

- Motivation letter including a statement for which project you apply
- CV including publications (if applicable)
- Contact info of two references
- Bachelor's and Master's degrees and transcript of records

Contact

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