Centre for Microbiology and Environmental
Systems Science (CeMESS)
Djerassiplatz 1
1030 Wien

Postdoctoral Researcher Position:
"The evolution of metabolic integration in an early-stage photosynthetic organelle"

University of Vienna, Austria
Centre for Microbiology and Environmental Systems Science
Division of Microbial Ecology

Deadline: 1st June 2026
Start date: Ideally the 1st September 2026 (negotiable)
Duration: 3 years
Group: Assistant Professor Dr Megan Sørensen

Project Background: The evolution of eukaryotic photosynthesis has played a fundamental role in life history. Yet the processes underpinning this critical evolutionary transition are difficult to study owing to their ancient history. The project utilises the only known example of primary plastid endosymbiosis outside the Archaeplastida – in the cercozoan genus *Paulinella*. Photosynthetic *Paulinella* house chromatophores, these photosynthetic units resemble plastids but are more closely-related to cyanobacteria. Critically the *Paulinella*-endosymbiosis is relatively recent compared to the acquisition of Archaeplastida plastids, and represents, therefore, an intermediate in the evolution of a photosynthetic organelle. This postdoc will investigate the metabolic integration between the photosynthetic chromatophores and the host, and its degree of adaptability. This position is part of an ERC-funded project.

Your responsibilities will include:

- Design and perform laboratory experiments
- Cultivate stock cultures
- Develop and optimise assays
- Process, analyse and interpret data
- Supervise students
- Take ownership of the project and contribute to its development
- Present research results at conferences and publish in peer-reviewed journals
- Collaborate with others: in the group, the Centre and external collaborators
- Be a responsible and active member of the lab-group

Your profile: We welcome applicants with a background in microbiology, protistology, molecular biology, symbiosis, phycology, or related fields.

Necessary Requirements:

- Completed/or soon to be completed PhD in Biology
- Strong passion, curiosity and motivation for research
- Experience cultivating micro-organisms or photosynthetic organisms
- Experience with molecular biology lab skills

- Experience with computational analysis (e.g., R / command line)
- Excellent problem-solving skills
- Excellent command of written and spoken English
- Good communication and organisation skills

Desirable requirements:

- Experience with metabolomics
- Experience with evolution experiments
- At least one peer-reviewed publication as first author in a related field
- Presentation experience at international-meetings
- Supervision experience

Work environment: You will join a vibrant and internationally-visible research community at the University of Vienna. You will be a member of Megan Sørensen's team and you will be embedded in the Centre for Microbiology and Environmental Systems Science (CeMESS) that is home to over 26 research groups. The working language of the group is English.

What we offer:

- A position within a cutting-edge, interdisciplinary research environment
- Access to advanced analytical and computational infrastructure
- A supportive environment for scientific development and career growth, including the chance to apply for independent-funding
- Opportunities for international networking, conference participation, and publications
- Integration into a dynamic research community at the University of Vienna

Duration of contract: The position is funded for 3 years. The contract will be initially limited to 1 year, and then extended.

Working conditions: The successful applicant will be employed in accordance to the standards of University of Vienna. The starting salary is EUR 5.014,30 (paid 14 times a year, 40hrs/week).

Application: Your application should be written in English and should consist of:

1. A letter explaining your motivation and relevant experience (1 page max)
2. A copy of your PhD certificate or a letter confirming your planned defence date
3. Your academic CV (including a list of your relevant publications and orcid ID)
4. Two reference letters – please ask for your reference letters to be directly sent to the email address below

Please combine your application files into 1 pdf and email it to:
open.positions.sorensen.group@gmail.com

Deadline: 1st June 2026

Contact: If you have any questions, please contact Dr Megan Sørensen (open.positions.sorensen.group@gmail.com)

The University of Vienna pursues a non-discriminatory employment policy and values equal opportunities, as well as diversity (http://diversity.univie.ac.at/).