

**ANNOUNCEMENT FOR THE
2021 CALL FOR EXPLORATORY RESEARCH PROJECTS
UNDER THE UT AUSTIN PORTUGAL PROGRAM**

Under article number 10 of the Regulation for Projects Exclusively funded by National Funds, hereinafter designed by [FCT Projects Regulations](#), published in Regulation N.º 999/2016, of October 31st, the Scientific Research and Technological Development Projects are submitted under a call for proposals with terms disseminated on the website of the *Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia, I.P.* (FCT) (www.fct.pt).

This Announcement for the Call for Proposals, hereinafter referred to as ACP, has been developed in accordance with the provisions of Article 11 of the above-mentioned regulation, and reads as follows:

1. AIMS AND PRIORITIES

The Exploratory Research Projects (ERP) call is designed to assist teams of researchers from non-corporate entities of the National Scientific and Technology System (NSTS) and The University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin), alongside industry partners, by bootstrapping high-impact potential research activities of strategic relevance for the UT Austin Portugal Program.

The projects must aim to stimulate and promote Portugal's international competitiveness and innovation capacity in Science and Technology (S&T) in the scientific areas addressed by the present Call, focusing on the opportunities provided by the data economy as a driver of growth and change.

Submitted proposals must configure groundbreaking, high-risk/high-reward projects, and show promise and a strategy for significant future expansion of the project's goals.

Although ERPs are not expected to achieve, during their execution timeline, the fully developed and ambitious results that are typical of longer-term projects, proposals must be very concrete on the activities and outcomes that the consortium proposes to carry out and achieve within the ERP's scope and timeframe and clearly link them to longer-term objectives.

The ERP should value impact, i.e., propose potential solutions to real-world problems, going beyond research papers' output.

The research areas addressed by this Call are:

- **Advanced Computing** (High-Performance Computing, High-Throughput Computing and Quantum Computing);
- **Medical Physics for Emerging Cancer Therapies;**
- **Nano Materials for New Markets;**
- **Space-Earth Interactions.**

A detailed description of each research area's challenges and subtopics is provided in the [Terms of Reference](#) of the present Call.

Projects proposed and, in particular, those addressing the [Space-Earth Interactions](#) area, should, desirably, demonstrate their contribution to the Atlantic International Research 'Center's scientific agenda (AIR Center), as laid down in the document "[Towards a Science and Technology agenda for an integrative approach to the Atlantic: Climate Change and Energy Systems, Space and Ocean Sciences, through North-South cooperation](#)", available on 'FCT's website.

Additionally, proposals addressing Advanced Computing-related topics are encouraged to foster synergies with the Minho Advanced Computing Center (MACC).

All applications must fully comply with the terms of reference defined in [the Terms of Reference for the ERPs Call for proposals 2021](#).

2. SUPPORTED ENTITIES

Only the following Portuguese entities are eligible to receive funding from FCT through the present Call for Proposals:

- Higher Education Institutions, their institutes and R&D units;
- State or International Laboratories with head office in Portugal;
- Non-profit private institutions whose main objective is R&D activities;
- Other non-profit private and public institutions developing or participating in scientific research activities.

The UT Austin counterpart of the Program will fund the participating researchers at UT Austin.

3. CRITERIA FOR SUPPORTING PROJECTS

This Call will fund proposals for research and development projects of exploratory nature, developed by entities of the National Scientific and Technology System (NSTS), defined in section 2 of this ACP.

The submitted proposals must include:

- One or more Portuguese research institutions from different entities as identified in section 2;
- At least, one partner at UT Austin (or at UT MD Anderson Cancer Center for applications in the area of Medical Physics, if applicable). Under this Call, project proposals in the area of Advanced Computer may be led by a PI affiliated to the Texas Advanced Computing Center (TACC) provided that they meet the eligibility status set forth in No 7.3 of this Announcement.

In addition to the above-mentioned applicants, consortia are allowed, to include other public or private entities, profit or non-profit, that may also invest in the exploratory project and bring relevant competencies to the project. However, those entities will not be eligible for funding by this Call.

This Call will only fund resources and activities attributable to Portuguese beneficiaries. UT Austin's teams will be granted funding by UT Austin in the frame of the UT Austin Portugal Program.

Projects will have a duration of 12 months, renewable for a maximum of further 3 months, in duly justified cases. At the end of each exploratory project, a final report must be submitted according to Article 24 of the FCT Project Regulation.

4. INDICATIVE FUNDING FCT

The funding to be granted under this ACP shall be non-reimbursable in accordance with number 1 of Article 7 of the [FCT Project Regulation](#).

The projects will be funded by National funds through the FCT, I.P., budget.

The total funding available for Portuguese research institutions under this Call will be of € 400,000 (four-hundred thousand euros) with awarded ERPs due to begin in the last quarter of 2021. An awarded project may be granted up to € 50,000 (fifty thousand euros) to fund the research work carried out by the Portuguese team.

Considering the maximum amount of eligible funding per project, the Program expects to support up to 8 (eight) exploratory research projects through this Call. However, the actual number of exploratory projects funded will depend on the quality of the submitted proposals and funding available.

An advance payment of 75% of the funding approved for the financed projects will be made by FCT, I.P. after the Acceptance Documents return.

The remaining amount up to the maximum approved grant allocation will be paid after the project's scientific and financial components are closed through a final refund payment.

The expenditure justification should be made via electronic submission by means of a payment request in a specific form provided through the FCT, I.P internet Portal.

The UT Austin Portugal Program's budget at UT Austin will provide matched funding for UT Austin's research teams involved in the projects receiving the grants available on the Portuguese side through this Call.

5. ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Considering the provisions of Article 8 of the [FCT Projects Regulation](#), the following expenses are eligible:

a) Direct Costs for Portuguese institutions:

- **Human resources** dedicated or related to the development of R&D activities with regard to the 'project's execution in all mandatory components by the applicable labor legislation, including expenses with grant holders and working contracts directly supported by the beneficiaries.

Regarding employment contracts, human resources expenses are based on the costs incurred in carrying out the project, based on the monthly base salary declared for the social protection of the worker, which may be increased by the mandatory social food

allowance and occupational accident insurance under legally defined terms. The basic salary shall be the set of all remunerations of a permanent nature subject to taxation and declared for the purpose of social protection of the worker.

The Research Fellowships are tendered and contracted by the beneficiary entities in the context of the supported projects, which must comply with the [FCT Regulation for Research Studentships and Fellowships](#) (Law n.º 40/2004 of 18 August, in its present version);

- **Missions** (travel, accommodation, registration fees, etc.) in Portugal and abroad, and directly attributable to the project;
- **Acquisition of scientific and technical tools and equipment**, indispensable to the project if within the project during their useful lifetime;
- **Amortization of technical and scientific tools and equipment**, indispensable to the project and of which the useful lifetime falls within the execution period, but does not end within that period;
- **Subcontracts** directly related to the project scientific 'task's execution;
- Expenses related to the national and international record of **patents, copyrights, utility models and designs, national models or trademarks** when associated with other forms of intellectual protection, namely fees, state-of-the-art searches and consulting expenses;
- Expenses with the **demonstration, promotion and disclosure of 'project's outputs**, such as publication fees in order to meet the national policies for the Open Access, including activities to promote the scientific culture and exhibitions;
- **Acquisition of other goods and services** directly related to the project execution, including costs with **consultants** that do not establish subcontracts.

b) Indirect Costs for Portuguese institutions, with a fixed rate of 25% of direct eligible costs with exclusion of subcontracting.

Non-eligible expenses for Portuguese institutions under the Exploratory Research call are indicated in Article 9 of the [FCT Projects Regulation](#).

6. SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

Applications must be presented to FCT, in English, from the **19th May to 30th June 2021, at 17:00 Lisbon time**, using a specific on-line form and should be submitted through the FCT platform (<https://concursos.fct.pt/projectos/>), following the Call for Projects Announcement.

The PI, Co-PI, the core elements as well as the remaining elements of the research team in Portugal are responsible for submitting an updated version of their **CV in English on the CIÊNCIAVITAE platform**.

Applications to this Call must include the on-line FCT form and the following documents, also submitted electronically:

- "Technical Annex" (according to [section 5 of the 2021 Call for ERPs' Terms of Reference](#));

- The document that certifies the PhD degree of the Lead Principal Investigator (PI) in Portugal;
- A statement from the PI at UT Austin (or at UT MD Anderson Cancer Center for applications in the area of Medical Physics, if applicable), confirming that he/she will be the PI at UT Austin and that he/she holds a tenured-track faculty appointment at UT Austin. In the case of proposals in the area of Advanced Computing, led by PIs at the Texas Advanced Computing Center (TACC), the statement must indicate the PI is a full-time senior researcher with PI status;
- Timeline file of projects.

Scanning of the Declaration of Commitment of each application must be submitted through the [FCT platform](#) by **14th July 2021, 17:00 Lisbon time**.

Before submitting a proposal, applicants are advised to read all the documents of the call, namely: the [FCT Projects Regulation](#), the [Guidelines for Exploratory Research Projects Proposals Writing](#), the [Terms of Reference for the Exploratory Research Projects Call for Proposals 2021](#), the [Guide for Peer Reviewers](#), [CIÊNCIAVITAE Guide](#) and the [Ethics Self-Assessment Guide](#).

7. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

The eligibility conditions are those indicated in Article 6 of the [FCT Project Regulations](#) and those indicated in the present call.

7.1. The Lead Principal Investigator in Portugal:

- Is not allowed to submit more than one proposal as PI under this Call for Projects;
- Should also have an employment contract or grant contract with the Principal Contractor. In the absence of such a link, at the time of the Acceptance Document a written agreement between the parties must be submitted, according to point c) of item 1 of Article 6 of FCT's [Project Regulations](#);
- Must identify a co-responsible for the project, the Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI), that will replace the PI when he/she is unable to fulfil his/her duties;

Proposals will not be accepted from lead Portugal PIs affiliated with institutions in a situation of unjustified fault with FCT requirements regarding the delivery of scientific and/or financial execution reports from previously financed projects;

Proposals will also not be accepted from lead PIs in Portugal who have been PI of any project with a final scientific report rejected within two years before the opening of the Call, for reasons attributable to them.

7.2. Members of the Research Team in Portugal

The remaining members of the research team in Portugal shall be dedicated to the project based on their allocation.

7.3. UT Austin Team

The proposal must be led by a tenured or tenure-track faculty member, who will be responsible for the project in Austin. A confirmation statement should be attached to the application.

In the area of Medical Physics, faculty at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center may also participate and/or lead projects. In the area of Advanced Computing, full-time senior researchers from the Texas Advanced Computing Center (TACC) may also lead projects as long as they have a PI status.

7.4. Principal contractor in Portugal

The project's principal contractor should be one of the national entities of the R&D system mentioned on point 2 of this ACP.

Applications will not be accepted if the Principal Contractors are in unjustified situation regarding the return of funding transferred to the Principal Contractor in previous projects with the same Principal Investigator.

8. SELECTION METHODOLOGY

An international panel of independent reviewers will carry out the evaluation. The selection method and ranking of projects are based on the Project Merit Indicator using criteria described in greater detail in the [Guide for Peer Reviewers – UT Austin Portugal: Call for Exploratory Projects 2021](#) and in the [Terms of Reference for the 2021 UT Austin Portugal's Call for Exploratory Projects](#).

The evaluation process will be based on the following criteria:

- A. Scientific merit and innovative nature of the project;
- B. Scientific merit of the research team;
- C. Feasibility of the work program and budget adequacy;
- D. The potential social and economic impact of the research work;

The merit of the project is given by:

$$\text{MP} = 0.40 \text{ A} + 0.20 \text{ B} + 0.20 \text{ C} + 0.20 \text{ D}$$

The scoring system uses a 9-point scale, using 0.1 increments. The maximum score is 9 and the minimum is 1. The final score of MP is rounded to two-decimal places. If information made available in the application does not allow for evaluating a given criterion, then the respective

criterion will receive a score of 1 (one).

For a proposal to be eligible for funding, a minimum score of MP equal or higher than 5.00 points is required.

For the purpose of selection and decision-making regarding funding, projects will be ranked by score obtained in the review process in decreasing order. In case of ties (projects with the same MP score), the ratings assigned to criteria A, B, C and D will be used sequentially and by descending order to provide the final ranking of the projects.

9. PUBLICATION AND COMPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

This Announcement and other relevant materials and information, in particular the Regulations for Projects Exclusively Funded by National Funds, are available at [FCT's website](#).

For inquiries of a **scientific nature**, please contact the UT Austin Portugal program at research@utaustinportugal.org

For specific information related to the **application submission**, please contact concursoprojetos@fct.pt.

Helena Pereira

President, Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia