



MKIT

MONTPELLIER
ADVANCED KNOWLEDGE
INSTITUTE ON TRANSITIONS



CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

COHORT 2023



MUSE



MONTPELLIER UNIVERSITY OF EXCELLENCE



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The present call for applications launched by the Montpellier Advanced Knowledge Institute on Transitions (MAK'IT) aims to set up in Montpellier, over a period of 6 months (January – June 2023), a group of internationally renowned researchers from various geographical and disciplinary backgrounds, covering both life and engineering sciences as well as social sciences and humanities, to apprehend together, through innovative and creative approaches, the research theme:

‘What roles for science in crisis times?’

**Outlook in the health, environment and agriculture
interconnected areas**

Each member of the cohort thus formed will approach this theme from the perspective of his/her own scientific background and discipline, while comparing his/her own results with those of the other members of the group and enriching them in an inter- and trans-disciplinary manner.

Group dynamics and interactions will build upon an original methodological approach focused on addressing the controversies associated with the proposed research theme, and how harnessing them and generating constructive discussions around them can help overcome the blockages they create to open new perspectives for change and foster positive societal impacts. The fellows will for instance be encouraged to identify actors involved in those controversies and arenas where they take place, stakes and arguments put forward, disciplinary contributions, etc.

The aim will be to decipher together, as a group, the way science is and will be challenged during present and future crises, in the areas of health, environment and agriculture. This analysis will help identify priority lines of action in terms of research programming, teaching, foresight exercises, capacity building of scientific communities and their participation in public debate, international collaborations, etc.

The expected deliverables include at least a joint publication covering the different dimensions, implications and possible applications of the research theme and any other joint outputs that the group would have decided to pursue.

MAK'IT offers its fellows a privileged working environment to develop their ideas in a decompartmentalized way, within a world-renowned scientific community in the Institute's three fields of action: agriculture & food, environment, and health. MAK'IT's fellows are strongly encouraged and actively supported in their efforts to create new connections and develop new collaborations with Montpellier's scientific community.

What roles for science in crisis times?

Outlook in the health, environment and agriculture interconnected areas

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought science and scientists into the limelight. In many countries, *ad hoc* scientific committees have been put in place to assist decision makers, in a context marked by recurrent changes of policy directions as the knowledge about the virus expands, the expression of alternative and contested views outside of these committees and the rejection of science-derived approaches by some. Hence, summoned as 'experts', the scientists have found themselves both given collective responsibility and individual exposure. They have also constituted a reference point for citizens to gradually build up an understanding of the situation.

Vertical figure of the 'Prince's advisers' and spectre of the 'government of experts', uncertainty management and resort to the precautionary principle, scientific data vs. actionable information and its accessibility to the average citizen, unpopularity of some decisions taken under cover of scientific justification: all challenge the role of scientists and science in crisis management. How can policy crisis management and scientific approach articulate themselves? How should the expertise mobilized in crisis times be organized? Does it present some distinctive characteristics? How is it then appropriated by citizens and how does it impact public opinion and behavioral change? And in turn, which responsibilities for citizens in this new type of crisis-related science? What have we learnt from

past and existing crises, such as the climate and the COVID-19 ones? Finally, what needs to change about science for it to be more responsive and fit for purpose in a more and more turbulent world?

Transitioning from the era of scientific alert to the one of solutions, and building up regular exchanges and progressive familiarisation between scientists, politicians and citizens, is what is already being tested in some arenas dealing with the more latent – but not less critical – climate, biodiversity and food security crises. The novel nature of crises- transversal, multifaceted and transboundary- illustrated by new scientific concepts such as the one of 'Planetary Health', seems to call for an extension of these models and for an 'all-encompassing science' where decoding complexity goes hand in hand with doing it in a policy-relevant way. Scientists are invited to decipher the dynamics and interactions at work, to understand the synergistic effects among sectors as well as the differences in contexts and perceptions, to guide the adoption of the best possible decisions. They are encouraged to help move from a reactive to a proactive crisis management.

The current pandemic has ushered in a new awareness for scientists as key players in the participatory frameworks engaged in crises resolution. It has thus spurred the transformation of scientific practices towards more transdisciplinarity (the need to go beyond the medical interpretation of the pandemic by including ecological sciences

and SSH for instance), more internationalization (with calls to strengthen and create new 'science networks'), more openness and better communication to outside audiences (for a jointly-built 'science of crisis').

This call for applications intends to analyse and debate what some have called 'the next world in science', in the light of health, environmental and agricultural crises – three areas where Montpellier's scientific community has built an international recognition – and their impacts on global transitions at play. All types of contributions with the propensity to feed the proposed research theme, in both STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and SSH (Social Sciences and Humanities) disciplines, building on the candidate's existing expertise or will to propose a new topic with support from the Montpellier's scientific community, are eligible.

WHY APPLYING?

- To participate in a new type of decompartmentalized cutting-edge research in a privileged scientific environment with minimum constraints;
- To take part in group-building exercise that promotes collective intelligence and transdisciplinarity, together with other researchers from different geographical and disciplinary backgrounds, expertise and viewpoints on the proposed research theme;
- To acquire and test a new scientific methodological approach focusing on the treatment of societal controversies;
- To interact with actors outside of the research sphere and get exposed to new perspectives at the science-society interface;
- To be part of a vibrant scientific community that earned international recognition on the three societal challenges 'Feed, Protect, Care' and explore new possibilities for collaboration with the different research units on site;
- To take risk, experience creativity, unconventionality and innovative thinking.

WHO CAN APPLY ?

- **Nationality:** researchers of all nationalities, who have not resided in France for more than 12 months in the three years preceding the call for applications.
- **Tax residence:** candidates must have a tax residence abroad.
- **Level of education:** candidates must hold a doctorate or equivalent and fall into one of the following two categories:
 - 'Senior' candidates: a minimum of 10 years' experience in research after the doctorate (doctorate obtained before 1st January 2013).
 - 'Junior' candidates: a minimum of 2 years' experience in research after the doctorate (doctorate obtained between 1st January 2013 and 1st January 2021).
- **Professional status:** candidates must have an employment contract in a foreign university or research institution (other than a French research institution abroad), or be attached to it through an emeritus, covering the period of their residency. A letter of attachment, signed by the head of the home institution, will be required in the event of selection at the end of the evaluation process.
- **Disciplines / research field:** all disciplines, in life and engineering sciences or SSH, related to MAK'IT's three main action areas (agriculture & food, environment, health) and able to feed the proposed research theme.
- **Scientific partnership:** applicants must have identified - even if they have not materialized yet - one or more possible partnerships with Montpellier's research units that could lead to scientific cooperation during their stay (list of all research units available here).
- **Languages:** Fluency in English is required, understanding of French is preferable.
- **Open-mindedness:** the proposed programme requires candidates to be creative, open to interdisciplinary dialogue, risk-taking, real group thinkers ready to engage in a collaborative exercise and motivated by the discovery of an original methodological approach focusing on controversies and exchanges with other actors from the socio-economic world.

HOSTING CONDITIONS

A hosting agreement is signed between the University of Montpellier, on which MAK'IT depends administratively, and the fellow to formalize the following modalities.

Research resources

Fellows invited by MAK'IT are detached from their usual obligations in their home institution and have the necessary availability to freely devote themselves to their research project and participate in the Institute's activities.

During their stay in Montpellier, they each have an office equipped with a computer, internet access and printing facilities in an open space at MAK'IT's premises, located at the Institut de botanique, in the historic heart of Montpellier. The fellows also have access to several meeting rooms and a 250-seat amphitheatre. MAK'IT facilitates access and extended lending rights in the main libraries of the University of Montpellier, as well as the possibility, with financial contribution, of having lunch at the administrative restaurant on which the Institute depends.

Fellows are entitled to a research allowance of up to € 2,500, which can be paid in several instalments. This allowance, for their exclusive use, can be used to support their research or the costs associated with the organisation of their international event (interpretation, catering, airfare for participants, etc.).

COHORT fellows are accompanied by a dedicated member of the MAK'IT Team, whose role consists in organizing and facilitating fellows' interdisciplinary group work as well as in supporting their integration, individually, into Montpellier's scientific community by putting them in contact with local research units that may be interested in their work. The COHORT Officer is also in charge of conducting a bibliographical review and enriching a virtual library related to the research theme, identifying experts who can share their knowledge and interact with the Institute's fellows, as well as valorising the products resulting from the group's work.

An induction period is planned for the fellows at the beginning of their stay, including visits to Montpellier campuses and research centres, as well as an introductory group seminar to explain the interdisciplinary and collaborative approach expected within the cohort.

Housing

MAK'IT takes full and direct responsibility for the accommodation of its fellows and related costs. Requests for family accommodation must be indicated on the application form in order to be considered.

As of September 2022, MAK'IT will have at its disposal newly renovated one- and two-room apartments at Villa Leenhard, next to its premises. In addition, the Institute works with a seasonal apartment rental agency in Montpellier that offers a range of quality, fully equipped apartments in the city center.

Flat-rate monthly allowance

Fellows invited to MAK'IT remain attached to their home institution during their stay: they do not have an employment contract with the Institute, and it is their responsibility to ask their institution of origin to maintain all or part of their salary.

MAK'IT pays guest fellows a monthly allowance of a non-negotiable lump sum as follows:

- 'Senior' fellows: € 3,000
- 'Junior' fellows: € 2,000

This amount is calculated to enable fellows to largely cover the costs related to their stay in Montpellier and to finance their scientific activity (travels to meetings, registration fees for scientific events, purchases of books or software, etc.).

Travel and visa

MAK'IT covers its fellows' return trip between Montpellier and their usual place of residence, in economy class.

Any immigration costs (visa) are also covered.

Insurance and social security coverage

MAK'IT does not cover insurance and social security costs, which must be borne by the fellows themselves or their employer. The MAK'IT team is at the fellows' disposal to assist them in dealing with international health insurance companies, in the event that the coverage available through their home institution is not valid in France.

The fellows must provide proof of adequate social security coverage, covering the risks of illness, accidents at work and civil liability, before their arrival in Montpellier.

Administrative services

The MAK'IT team is at the fellows' disposal to help them with the administrative procedures related to their installation in Montpellier and the organization of their scientific events.

If necessary, their families also benefit from specific support: schooling of children, assistance with the academic integration of spouses, French as a foreign language courses, etc.

COMMITMENTS OF THE FELLOW

A stay at MAK'IT aims to enable invited fellows to carry out their research through an innovative and enriching approach, with flexibility in organising their activities and working hours and benefiting from the necessary services and assistance in their daily practical and administrative procedures. It also implies the acceptance of certain conditions.

Time spent in Montpellier

Each invited fellow is required to be in Montpellier for at least 90% of the duration of his or her stay (excluding periods of closure of the Institute). This residency requirement, which is essential to pursue effective group work and establish genuine partnerships with the local scientific community, is compatible with occasional absences, which must be reported in advance. Absences of less than a week are simply notified to the MAK'IT team. A longer absence will be subject to management approval.

Contribution to the cohort's activities on the selected controversy

The COHORT programme is first and foremost a collective exercise. The fellow commits to fully contribute to the group discussions and exchanges, joint activities and the co-productions arising from the cohort's work. S/he commits to participate actively to other interdisciplinary meetings and events organized by MAK'IT during his/her stay, including a weekly seminar with other MAK'IT Fellows on Thursday mornings. S/he acknowledges that these commitments may take up to two days a week.

The fellow also agrees to share the progress of his/her research and to complete an end-of-fellowship questionnaire at the end of his/her stay.

Communication and dissemination of results

The fellow retains the intellectual property rights to the results of his/her research carried out as part of this fellowship with MAK'IT.

S/he undertakes to contribute to MAK'IT's publications and other communication tools concerning the activities of the cohort.

S/he keeps MAK'IT informed of its participation in external symposia, seminars or scientific events as well as of his/her publications, prizes and distinctions obtained...

S/he authorizes MAK'IT to publish his/her portrait and, if relevant, the results of his/her research carried out at MAK'IT for the Institute's archives. In the event of their wider dissemination, the fellow undertakes to mention the support he has received from MAK'IT and to affix the Institute's logo to them.

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EVALUATION PROCESS

MAK'IT attaches great importance to the quality and impartiality of its selection process. Each application is reviewed by MAK'IT's Scientific Council composed of independent international experts. The latter establishes a list of shortlisted candidates, as well as a complementary list (with rankings) and forward them to the MAK'IT Management Board (Board of the MUSE initiative) for final decision.

At the end of these two successive phases, candidates are informed of the result of the selection. Successful candidates receive a letter of invitation from MAK'IT Director detailing the proposed conditions of stay.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

- **LEVEL:** Do the scientific background and international recognition of the candidate meet the standards set for this programme? Does the proposed contribution entail research at the highest level?
- **RESEARCH THEME:** Does the candidate's proposed contribution have relevance for the proposed research theme? Does it hold the promises of new insights and the potential to produce new knowledge, including publications? To what extent could it contribute usefully to interdisciplinary exchanges?
- **GROUP PLAYER:** Does the candidate's profile correspond to the vision and values inherent to this programme: collegiality, open-mindedness, creativity, out-of-the-box thinking, risk taking? Does the candidate's profile suggest that s/he could be a leading force in the cohort and contribute positively to the group dynamics? Do the expectations of the candidate match with what the programme has to offer?
- **VISION & PARTNERSHIPS:** Does this application match with MAK'IT vision and ambition? Does it constitute a meaningful contribution to the acceleration of transitions within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development? Does it present an interesting potential for collaboration with Montpellier's scientific communities?

The evaluators will strive to ensure that the group is as representative as possible with regard to gender balance, age, geographical origins, scientific disciplines and areas of expertise of the candidates.

PROVISIONAL CALENDAR

- **28 February 2022 - 31 May 2022:** opening of the 'COHORT' call for applications
- **June 2022:** evaluation of applications by MAK'IT Scientific Council and pre-selection of candidates
- **July 2022:** final selection of candidates by MAK'IT Management Board (MUSE Board) and announcement of results
- **January - June 2023:** selected COHORT Fellows in Montpellier

**SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION VIA THE
[ONLINE PLATFORM](#)**