



EURAXESS members in focus: PORTUGAL

Centuries of history and culture, and a prime location and Mediterranean lifestyle, make Portugal the right place to learn and do science. Speaking the language of the future, Portugal is a hub for creativity and innovation, a gateway to the world. It is a unique place to live and share good memories.

Portuguese research landscape

With one of the oldest universities in Europe, the University of Coimbra, founded in 1290, Portugal has a long tradition in education and research. The country has also made significant progress in the last 25 years in enhancing its national research and innovation system, by extending its reach to a larger share of the population, by broadening its scope to all areas of knowledge, by fostering strong links with society, in particular with economic actors, and by always striving for excellent research as defined by international standards. In fact, the Portuguese research and innovation system is structurally internationalised, in part because of the relatively small size of the country and the need to share expertise with a broader community, but also because of the strong policy vision that we can only push the boundaries of modern science and technology in collaborative efforts, that have to go above and beyond national borders.

The main funding agency in Portugal is the [Foundation for Science and Technology](#) (FCT), responsible for the implementation of the public policies that arise from the Ministry for Science, Technology and Higher Education. In 2016, the Government published its “Compromise with Knowledge and Science: the compromise with the future“, a strategic document that defined the policy ambitions up to 2020. Among them was the goal of reinforcing the scientific institutions, to expand and dignify the scientific careers, to continue the stimulus for internationalisation, and to develop, with the involvement of the scientific community, a set of [research and innovation agendas](#) in different thematic areas that should guide national policies up to 2030.

Facts & Figures

Portugal has 132 Higher Education Institutions [spread throughout the country](#), supporting a community of almost 360 000 students, 12% of which are foreigners. In fact, the number of foreign students in Portugal increased by 95% in the last 7 years, a clear sign of the attractiveness of the country.

The national research and innovation system includes [307 research centres](#) dedicated to all areas of knowledge, originating around 2000 doctorates completed each year, a 74% growth between 2000 and 2010. The strong and long-lasting support to S&T policies led to a 35-fold increase in scientific production in the last 25 years – actually, Portugal had the second highest average annual growth rate of publications between 2001 and 2014 within the EU.

The country also had a 45-fold increase in registered patents between 2001 and 2014. An innovation-friendly environment led to an annual rate of 31 000 new start-ups created every year, and almost 310 000 created between 2007 and 2015. This reflects a changing economic environment in the country, also reflected in the 130% increase of the technology-based firms between 2007 and

EURAXESS – Researchers in Motion is an initiative of the European Research Area (ERA) that addresses barriers to the mobility of researchers and seeks to enhance their career development.

This pan-European effort is currently supported by over 40 countries, of which we will profile one each quarter. Here, we zoom in on PORTUGAL.

Author: EURAXESS Portugal, Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia.



2010. To continue fostering this dynamic, the Government has recently launched the [Collaborative Laboratories \(Colabs\)](#), a new model of association between academia and the industry, where the main goal is to create skilled and scientific jobs in Portugal, both directly and indirectly, by implementing research and innovation agendas geared at creating economic and social value.

Bilateral and International cooperation

Portugal has a number of active, bilateral agreements in Science and Technology, most under the responsibility of [FCT](#). These bilateral agreements normally support researcher mobility and, in some cases, collaborative projects. The historical and linguistic connection with Brazil has led to a strong bilateral cooperation, with frequent calls for researcher mobility ([CAPES](#) and [FAPESP](#)), and a dedicated legal regime to welcome Brazilian scientists and students in Portugal.

International cooperation is a fundamental characteristic of the Portuguese Research and Innovation landscape. Portugal has a tradition on bilateral agreement with several countries such as **Argentina** ([Cooperation Programme in S&T between Argentina and Portugal](#)), **China** ([Sino-Portuguese Programme for Cooperation in S&T](#)), **India** ([Indo-Portuguese Programme for Cooperation in S&T](#)), and the **USA** ([Fulbright Program](#)), among others.

Along with the bilateral agreements, the country is an active member of several international organisations, such as ESA, which is a part of the national [Space Programme](#), EMBO, EMBL or CERN. Portugal is also a very active participant in the [COST programme](#), as well as in [CYTED](#), the Ibero-american programme for science and technology for development.

Taking advantage of its historical connection to the ocean, of the privileged geographical location, and of the expertise that has been built during the last decades, Portugal has recently promoted the creation of the [Atlantic International Research Centre \(AIR Centre\)](#), an intergovernmental initiative to foster collaborative research activities on climate, land, space and oceans. The AIR centre already has the involvement of Portugal, Brazil, Spain, Angola, Cape Verde, Nigeria, Uruguay and São Tomé and Príncipe, with the United Kingdom and South Africa participating as Observers.

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions in Portuguese institutions

Experienced researchers willing to move to Portugal can apply to an Individual Fellowship (IF) of the [Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions](#) (MSCA), irrespective of their country of origin.

Portugal is in the list of widening countries, and therefore, from 2018 to 2020, proposals above the quality threshold of 70% but not retained for funding through the MSCA IF call with a host institution in Portugal will be automatically reassigned to the Widening Fellowships call (unless the applicants explicitly opted-out).

Portugal as a destination

Besides its excellent universities and research centres, there are a number of reasons to justify the attractiveness of Portugal as a [study and research destination](#). Not only the sun, the food and the friendliness of the people, but also the reasonable [cost of living](#) and of [accommodation](#), the comprehensive [health system](#), or knowing that the country has been among the top 5 countries in the [Global Peace Index](#) for a number of years now. In fact, there are at least [10 reasons](#) to choose Portugal as a study and research destination. Find a [job](#) or a [hosting institution](#) and experience this beautiful country.

About the Widening Fellowships

The results from the first years of MSCA in Horizon 2020 revealed the existence of a mobility gap across Europe and discrepancies between European countries in their ability to attract funding. To specifically address this gap in participation the new Widening Fellowships call will provide an additional opportunity to researchers of any nationality to acquire and transfer new knowledge and to work on research and innovation in Widening countries, including Portugal.





Catarina Freitas was born in Lisbon, finished graduation in Biochemistry and PhD in Developmental Biology at the University of Lisbon and the Instituto Gulbenkian de Ciência,

Catarina had a first postdoctoral experience at the College de France/INSERM in developmental and pathological angiogenesis, followed by a postdoctoral fellowship and researcher position at Northwestern and Yale University.

She is currently assistant professor in Cell and Developmental Biology at Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro)

Contact Catarina [here](#).

Interview with Catarina Freitas, Portuguese researcher based in Brazil

How did you come to Brazil? With which initiative or funding?

I came to Brazil for a personal reason, my husband (also a researcher) got a faculty position in Rio de Janeiro. I did apply (and was granted) a Science without Borders (*Ciencia sem Fronteiras*) fellowship, Young Talent (*Jovem Talento*), CNPq back in 2013.

How has your experience in Brazil been so far and what has it taught you?

I have been working at the Cell Morphogenesis Laboratory, on the Institute of Biomedical Sciences, within the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), since 2013. Doing biomedical research in Brazil has been quite a challenge, mainly because of political/economical decisions on severely cutting funding over the last years. On the other hand, people are quite resourceful, they are very active in looking for collaborations (both national and international) to carry on their research projects.

What advice would you give to Brazilian researchers seeking closer collaboration with or thinking about working in Portugal?

Biomedical research centres in Portugal are full of young, active, high standard researchers, which would be glad to collaborate with laboratories in Brazil, do not hesitate to visit the websites and contact the Principal Investigators (PIs)!