CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

COHORT 2021-2022
The 2021-2022 ‘COHORT’ 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 2022), a group of internationally renowned researchers from various geographical backgrounds and disciplinary fields, 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 time’.

WHAT ROLES FOR SCIENCE IN CRISIS TIMES?
Applications in the health, environmental and agri-food cross-cutting fields

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

The aim will be to analyse together how this theme and the societal controversies attached to it impact agri-food, environmental and health transitions towards sustainable development and to 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., in order to accelerate these transitions.

MAK’IT offers its fellows a privileged working environment to develop their ideas in a decompartmentalized way, within a scientific community recognized worldwide in the three fields of action of the Institute: agriculture & food, environment, 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?

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 scientific views outside of these committees and the rejection by parts of populations of science-derived approaches. Hence, summoned as ‘experts’, the scientists have found themselves both given collective responsibility and exposed individually. 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 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 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 health crisis has thus spurred the transformation of scientific practices towards more interdisciplinarity (the need to go beyond the medical interpretation of the pandemic by including ecological sciences and SSH, more particularly behavioral and organizational sciences around the confinement issue for instance), more internationalization (with calls to create ‘science networks’ or scientific councils at a continental scale that would anticipate the emergence and manage future crises in a concerted way), 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 agri-food stakes – areas where Montpellier’s scientific community has built an international recognition - and their impacts on global transitions at play. All types of research projects with the propensity to contribute to the proposed research theme in both STEM and SSH disciplines are eligible.
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 obtained before 1 January 2012).
- ‘Junior’ candidates: a minimum of 2 years’ experience in research after the doctorate (doctorate obtained between 1 January 2012 and 1 January 2020).

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 research project likely to feed the selected research theme.

Scientific partnership: applicants must have identified one or more possible partnerships with Montpellier’s research units that could lead to scientific cooperation during their stay.

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, and motivated by the discovery of an original methodological approach focusing on societal 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, the hosting research unit 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 a desk equipped with a flat screen computer monitor, 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 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 cafeteria on which the Institute depends.

The integration of the invited fellows into Montpellier’s scientific community is facilitated by their connection to one of the local research units in line with their respective research themes, and the appointment of a scientific referee for each of them. The concerned research units provide each fellow with a workspace that he/she can use as he/she wishes during his/her stay in Montpellier.

To facilitate their interdisciplinary group work, fellows are accompanied by a Research Officer who is, among others, responsible for compiling a literature review and enriching a virtual library related to the research theme, developing a work programme based on an innovative methodological approach focusing on societal controversies, as well as setting up a scientific network of local, national and international experts who can share their knowledge and interact with the Institute’s fellows.

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 cohorts.
**Housing**

MAK’IT works with a seasonal apartment rental agency in Montpellier to offer guest fellows a range of quality apartments, selected by itself, that are fully equipped and nearby or easily accessible from the Institute. MAK’IT takes full and direct responsibility for the accommodation costs of its residents. Requests for family accommodation must be indicated in the application form in order to be considered.

**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, by freely 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 stay (excluding periods of closure of the Institute). This residency requirement, which is essential to 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 host research structure and the MAK’IT team. A longer absence will be subject to management approval.
Contribution to the cohort’s activities on the selected controversy

The fellow commits to contribute fully to the interdisciplinary activities, meetings and events organized by MAK’IT during his/her stay, including a weekly fellows’ seminar with other fellows and a collaborative working session with the rest of the cohort on the treatment of the selected research theme. He/she agrees to share the progress of his/her research, to participate actively in the collective production that will come from the cohort’s work and exchanges and to prepare a short activity report at the end of his/her stay.

Organisation of an international public scientific event in Montpellier

The invited researcher undertakes to organize, during his stay in Montpellier, at least one scientific event of international scope, open to the public, on a topic related to his research project and the research theme dealt with by the cohort, in collaboration with the research unit he/she is collaborating with and Montpellier's scientific community more broadly.

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.

He/she undertakes to contribute to MAK’IT’s publications and other communication tools concerning the activities of the cohort. He/she 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.

He/she 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.

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 proposal entail research at the highest level?
- **RESEARCH THEME:** Does the project 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?
- **RELEVANCE:** Does the project have relevance for MAK’IT and Montpellier’s scientific communities? Does it constitute a meaningful contribution to the acceleration of transitions within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?
- **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 he/she 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?
- **FEASIBILITY:** How convincing is the project design? How realistic is the research plan?

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

• 1st February - 15 May 2021: opening of the ‘COHORT’ call for applications
• May - June 2021: evaluation of applications by MAK’IT Scientific Council and shortlisting of candidates
• July 2021: final selection of candidates by MAK’IT Management Board (MUSE Board) and announcement of results
• January – June 2022: MAK’IT cohort in Montpellier

HOW TO APPLY?

Submit your application via the following online platform: