

Human Technopole Early Career Fellowship Programme

Human Technopole (HT)'s overarching mission is to promote and contribute to improving human health and wellbeing, including healthy ageing. It pursues these aims by carrying out frontier research (mix of fundamental and translational) in the life sciences, particularly focussing on developing novel approaches for personalised and preventive medicine. The HT operating model represents a combination of creating an internationally competitive research institute and being a contributor to the Italian research community by broad academic and translational collaborations.

Aim of funding scheme

The purpose of the Human Technopole Early Career Fellowship Programme (ECF Programme) is to help talented researchers start their own independent research at Italian Universities or research institutes.

With this programme, under the patronage of the Ministry of University and Research, HT aims to foster the development of young, independent, talented early-career scientists who have achieved significant results and recognition and who wish to carry out their research activity at an Italian institution (research centre or University) different from HT in the field of life sciences, contributing to the advancement of fundamental knowledge. At the same time, the ECF Programme will facilitate collaborative relationships between HT and the Italian research system.

Guidelines

The research activity proposed in the application should be in line with HT's overall research programme and, in particular, consistent with the one of the scientific areas of the [HT Research Centres](#): Functional Genomics, Population & Medical Genomics, Neurogenomics, Computational Biology, Structural Biology, and Health Data Science.

The ECF researchers will have access to HT's research infrastructure at the same conditions as internal researchers and will be expected to participate in internal meetings and/or events with HT Research Group Leaders.

Applications for the ECF Programme must be submitted by an individual researcher (PI - Principal Investigator) together with a Letter of Intent from an Italian host institution (HI - Host Institution). The HI must undertake to provide the researcher with all the necessary facilities, equipment, and infrastructure to carry out the research proposed in the application, while ensuring agile and autonomous access to the awarded funds by the PI.

Prior to the start of the PI at the Host Institution, an agreement between HT and the HI will be signed, with the specific purpose of ensuring and guaranteeing the independence of the PI. PIs are entitled to change their HI during the period of the ECF Programme, providing adequate motivation and notice to the original HI and to HT; in such cases an agreement between the old and the new HI will need to be put in place.

PIs are expected to report annually on scientific achievements, usage of resources and impact of the ECF Programme on their career development.

Funding

Early Career Fellows will receive a total "research and remuneration package" of up to 200,000.00 euros per year for a period of five years. The award of up to five ECF grants is planned for the current call. The initial ECF package is intended to cover the salary of the PI, as well as of junior researchers, and/or other research related costs including publications, travel, and training costs. The PI's employment contract will be concluded directly by HT and/or by the HI. The research funds will be managed by the Host Institution and dedicated exclusively to the ECF research project. The funds may also cover specialised equipment

not already available at the HI. In this case, with the consent of the PI, the equipment may remain in the possession of the HI at the end of the five-year research programme.

A candidate who receives the ECF award may not hold it concurrently with another grant designed to assist in establishing the scientist at a host institution in Italy and to pursue the same line of research. Exceptions to this rule may be made only under exceptional circumstances, which must be communicated promptly to HT for consideration. Co-funding from the host institution, on the other hand, is positively considered.

Requirements and eligibility criteria

The **ECF Programme** is aimed at researchers of all nationalities who have acquired research experience after their PhD and are ready to hold a position as independent Group Leaders. More specifically, candidates must:

1. **hold a doctoral degree and have no more than 8 years** of experience from the date of its award. The calculation of this period is made by comparing the date the degree was awarded to the ECF application deadline (i.e., January 31, 2022). This limit may be extended in the case of maternity or paternity leave, serious and documented illness and for national service (military or civil), for a period corresponding to the leave granted by the relevant research organisation for the reasons mentioned above (in these cases, appropriate documentation must be provided);
2. not hold a long-term position at Universities or IRCCS (i.e., RTD-B or higher) and/or a position as Group Leader at the time of the ECF Call deadline (i.e., January 31, 2022);
3. demonstrate significant **mobility** and independence between the current and future host institution, i.e. must have carried out their latest research activities independently of their PhD supervisor and, in any case, at a different institution than that attended during the doctorate. The Host Institution of the ECF must be different from the institution where the applicant is currently working;
4. have identified a host institution established **under Italian law**, with headquarter in Italy, and operating in the Italian territory. The **Host Institution commits to support the career development of the PI** and to provide the necessary facilities, equipment, and infrastructure to carry out the research proposed in the ECF application by signing the Letter of Intent (see below “Structure of the application”);
5. develop a research plan that is in line with one of the scientific areas of HT, i.e. Functional Genomics, Population & Medical Genomics, Neurogenomics, Computational Biology, Structural Biology, and Health Data Science;
6. be willing to **start during 2022**, in agreement with the Host Institution and HT. Latest expected starting date is January 2023.

Structure of the application

All documents must be submitted in English and in pdf format. Please include your name in the title of each pdf document (e.g. MillerL CV.pdf, MillerL Publications.pdf, etc.) and the document title in the header of each document.

Applications must include:

1. CV of the candidate, up to 2 pages (please download and fill in the template provided below);
2. PhD certificate including the date of the degree;
3. list of scientific publications of the applicant, with specific indication of those produced independently of the PhD supervisor;

4. title and abstract: the abstract, not exceeding one page in length (1.15 spacing; minimum font size 11), should include Background, Objectives/Aims, Preliminary results, Strategy/Methods, Significance/Relevance;
5. scientific research proposal – (please see below for a detailed description of the structure);
6. the corresponding financial plan of the research proposal, broken down by year with an indication of costs for staff, equipment, travel, supplies, meeting expenses and overheads, if relevant (please download and fill in the template provided below);
7. two letters of reference: These letters should be on institutional letterhead, signed and scanned and include the name of the applicant and referee in the file title (e.g. MillerL_from_SmithC.pdf). They must be sent directly by the referee via e-mail to earlycareerfellows@fht.org only (without cc to the candidate) by the submission deadline (i.e., January 31, 2022). It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that such letters are received on time;
8. a Letter of Intent (LoI) signed by the legal representative – or their delegate (e.g. Head of Department) – of the Host Institution confirming the full support and commitment of the institution towards the independent scientific research programme of the candidate and indicating the willingness to provide space and facilities for the implementation of the project, as well as agile modalities and procedures for access to the dedicated funding transferred by HT and exclusively dedicated to the PI's research project – (a list of all aspects to be included in the LoI can be downloaded below);
9. if applicable, certification(s) by a previous host institution/employer of the period of leave granted for maternity or paternity, serious and documented illness or national service (military or civil);
10. if applicable, letters of collaboration by scientists who will contribute to the ECF research project (max 2).

Applications lacking any of the above will not be considered.

The scientific project proposal must be sufficiently detailed to enable its evaluation by a panel of experts in the relevant field. The proposal should be in line with HT's scientific programme, indicating which of the HT's scientific areas it is aligned with and commenting on how the PI plans to collaborate with the relevant HT Research Centre. The proposal, not exceeding ten pages in length (1.15 spacing; minimum font size 11) excluding bibliography, should allow for the evaluation of the quality of the candidate as well as of the originality and feasibility of the proposed research.

It must include the following sections:

- a. introduction, with a description of the preliminary work and background information;
- b. objectives to be achieved during the five years of the programme, including a description of the contribution of the proposed research to the relevant scientific area, highlighting its novelty, originality and/or innovative potential relative to the international scientific landscape;
- c. experimental programme and methods to be used;
- d. motivation for why the particular Host Institution was selected and justification of its suitability to support the proposed research programme;
- e. bibliography (not included in the ten-page count).

How to apply

Please apply online by uploading all required documents, apart from the reference letters, in English by **January 31, 2022, 23:59 CET**. Please make sure to inform your referees to send their confidential recommendation letters to earlycareerfellows@fht.org by the above-mentioned deadline. Any questions or requests for clarification regarding the scope of the call or mode for applying should be addressed to earlycareerfellows@fht.org.

Letter of Intent from Host Institution

The Letter of Intent (LoI) should confirm the Host Institution (HI)'s full support and encouragement of independent scientific research in general, and of the applicant in particular, and should express the HI's commitment to the applicant's future career development.

The Letter of Intent should be submitted in the form of a signed copy on institutional letterhead, and the surname of the applicant and name of the Host Institution should be included in the file title. The applicant is responsible for receiving and submitting the LoI via the HT recruitment portal by January 31, 2022. It is paramount that the applicant and the Department Head, institute Director, etc. are in complete agreement regarding all aspects of the position before submitting the application. Similarly, the applicant should be fully familiar and in agreement with the contents of the Letter, which should include the following information at minimum:

1. An indication of why the Host Institution/Department Head/Director wishes to have the applicant work in their institute or department.
2. A description of how the applicant's research, while remaining completely independent, complements other work carried out at the Host Institution.
3. A description of how the Host Institution will ensure and promote the applicant's scientific independence as well as of the mentoring opportunities available to the applicant.
4. A statement that the HI will avoid, with all necessary precautions, influencing in any way the PI's judgement and decisions related to the performing of their research programme.
5. A statement that the Host Institution will do its best to support and foster the applicant's career progression, and an indication of whether the applicant would be eligible for academic and/or permanent positions at the Host Institution.
6. A statement that the Host Institution is accepting an engagement of the applicant within its organisation, through for example a direct employment contract. If the latter applies:
 - a. A statement that the applicant is provided with the most convenient contractual provisions to be applied based on the applicable law and jurisdiction, maintaining relevant salary records (*i.e.* ~ 80.000 Eur/year company cost, ~ 50.000/year Eur gross salary);
 - b. A statement that the Fellow is covered under the social security legislation, applicable according to Title II of Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004, and that provisions for annual and sickness leave, if any according to the applicable law and internal rules of the Hosting Institution are, in place.
7. A statement that that the applicant is provided with 1) general health and safety measures and specific risk protection and prevention measures and 2) adequate insurance coverage and appropriate training about the risks and all prevention measures.
8. A description of what the Host Institution offers in terms of facilities, equipment and infrastructure required to enable the applicant to carry out their research project, including both shared and dedicated lab space (sqm; bench space; general laboratory equipment such as freezers/fridges, incubators; number of cages for animal work, etc.), administrative/research support available, etc.
9. A statement that the Host Institution is willing to take on the administrative responsibilities involved in accepting the grant. If any administrative costs are associated with the

implementation of the applicant's research programme at the Host Institution (i.e., overhead), it should be clearly stated, along with the relevant percentage they amount to. This should in any case not exceed 10% of the funds awarded as part of the ECF grant and dedicated to the sum of direct costs calculated excluding personnel costs.

10. A statement acknowledging that the applicant will list both the Host Institution and the HT/ECF author affiliation on the relevant scientific outputs originating from the ECF research project (e.g. publications, conference proceedings, abstracts, etc.).
11. A clear statement that the applicant will be granted the possibility (also in terms of the relevant working time) to attend meetings, retreats and other events organised by Human Technopole, and that in general collaborative endeavours between the Host Institution and HT will be encouraged.
12. An indication of any potential additional support and/or benefits that will be provided to the applicant by the Host Institution, in addition to his/her salary as set out in the relevant employment contract.
13. An indication of any potential additional starting package that will be provided to the applicant by the Host Institution to establish his/her research laboratory, in addition to the ECF grant.
14. A statement acknowledging that the PI is entitled to change HI during the period of the ECF, without penalties or charges, giving an adequate notice period to the original HI, and the obligation to enter into an agreement with the new HI in such a case (see point 2 below).
15. A statement confirming that the Host Institution and the applicant are in complete agreement as to all terms described in the Letter of Intent.
16. A statement confirming that the Host Institution will enter an agreement with HT in order to establish responsibilities and duties of the Host institution and HT in relation to the ECF Research Project carried out by the PI at the HI.

In case of an existing/ongoing agreement between the applicant and the Host Institution regarding the applicant joining the Host Institution independently of the ECF award, this must be promptly communicated to HT for further consideration.

IMPORTANT CONDITIONS OF THE AWARD

1. Please note that HT considers the letter of intent a binding document and integral to the granting of the ECF grant. Therefore:
 - The actual conditions offered to the candidate by the Host Institution should reflect the same (or greater) terms and conditions represented in the submitted Letter of Intent. Any difference between these and the Letter of Intent should be notified promptly to HT and could result in the original grant being forfeited and a new application having to be submitted for review.
Any difference emerging after the ECF grant is received should be promptly communicated to HT and to the ECF recipient, providing justifications. Lacking this, HT reserves the right to revoke the ECF funding and to enforce the reimbursement in full of the funds already received from HT. This may be invoked at any time. By submitting your application, you accept the conditions above.
 - Any difference in the terms and conditions and/or delay in making the facilities and equipment available to the ECF awardee may result in a delay in the transfer of the ECF grant to the Host Institution. In that case, the Host Institution will be responsible for covering

the research costs and salary of their lab members until the facilities are made available under the conditions specified in the Letter of Intent. Only then can the ECF grant be disbursed.

2. Please note that the applicant is granted the right to change their Host Institution over the period of the ECF programme, providing adequate prior notice; in such a case the grant shall be transferred by HT to the proposed new Host Institution upon the submission by said Institute of a Letter of Intent, as per the description/template above, reflecting similar (or improved) terms and conditions to those described in the Letter of Intent submitted with the original ECF application.

Please fill in the following template and do not exceed 2 pages in length

[NAME, SURNAME OF APPLICANT]

Personal information

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Phone number | |
| Email | |
| Nationality | |
| Current Affiliation | |
| Host Institution for ECF proposal | |

Research interests

(please add up to max 3 keywords to describe your main research interests)

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-
-

Education

(please list all relevant academic degrees in reverse chronological order. An example is provided below)

| Date | Degree and University |
|------|--|
| | PhD in --- University of --- Grade: Thesis title: Name of advisor: |
| | |
| | |

Research Experience

(please list all relevant research experience in reverse chronological order. An example is provided below)

| Date | Project Information |
|------|--|
| | Postdoctoral researcher at (Affiliation): Research field: Name of advisor: |
| | |
| | |

Scholarships, Funding Acquisition, and other Awards

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Invited Contributions to Scientific Meetings

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Other Information