



GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

TALENT4RURALSOURCE CALL FOR RESEARCHERS

UNIVERSITY OF EXTREMADURA (SPAIN)

MSCA COFUND PROGRAMME

(Grant Agreement No. 101217463)



Please note that all updated information about the TALENT4RURALSOURCE programme will be available on the project website: www.talent4ruralscience.eu

Those interested in the programme are strongly encouraged to consult the website regularly and subscribe to the newsletter



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1 TALENT4RURALSCEINCE PROGRAMME

Rural development and talent retention have become key priorities within European policies, especially in the context of the European Union (EU). These issues are linked to the challenge of mitigating the depopulation of rural areas and fostering their economic and social sustainability. European policies have recognized the importance of rural areas for territorial cohesion, balanced economic development and the preservation of cultural and environmental heritage.

The Long-Term Vision for the EU's Rural Areas (2021-2040), published by the European Commission in 2021, reinforces this trend. In this document, the EU commits to making rural areas more attractive to young and skilled people, through the creation of infrastructure, access to digital services and employment opportunities in key sectors, such as the green and circular economy. Retaining talent, especially young people with higher education, is one of the major challenges for rural areas. Rural depopulation and population ageing are common problems in many Member States, particularly in peripheral or sparsely populated areas, such as regions in Spain, Italy, Greece and Eastern European countries.

The European Commission long-term vision for the EU's rural areas report describes the challenges of rural population in Europe including 10 common objectives representing the shared aspirations of rural communities and stakeholders for the future of the EU's rural areas in 2040.

Some of these common objectives have been selected after a matchmaking co-creation exercise at TALENT4RURALSCEINCE during the elaboration of the proposal with rural development representative regional stakeholders (rural associations, civil servants, potential supervisors of this MSCA Cofund program, policy-makers, international support managers, rural facilitators and managers of development projects at local level) in the framework of the collaborative platforms of the Research and Innovation Regional Strategy 2021-2027.

The co-creation exercise results in the ideation of European added value research challenges aligned to the previous EU long term vision objectives and with a strong potential of capitalization in different rural areas of the Member States and HE Associated countries.

The proposal to solve the program challenges will be the base for the TALENT4RURALSCEINCE applicants' technical proposals to participate in the project acceleration program to achieve high quality and impactful science-based results.



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The scientific implementation of the projects to solve the challenges will be guided by the list of supervisors in different innovative Research Institutes at the University of Extremadura committed to the programme with large experience in researching to solve rural necessities and in supervising research careers.

A multidisciplinary approach lies at the core of this challenge-based programme, whose main objective is to solve problems through integrative projects. Cooperation between different disciplines, both in the methods used and the results obtained, will form the basis for the selection criteria for proposals and the focus of the supervisory committee's work.

TALENT4RURALSCIENCE programme is designed as a tool to promote rural development and talent retention, with an international and cross-sectoral dimension, seeking the professional development of research staff and employability in rural areas, promoting rural development. **TALENT4RURALSCIENCE is an international challenge-based programme that aims to attract 10 postdoctoral researchers of any nationality through an open international call for an acceleration programme offering interdisciplinary and intersectoral grants to develop innovative R&D&I projects at the interface between rural development and talent retention.** These researchers will generate a positive impact in terms of research excellence, innovation and talent attraction and retention in the region of Extremadura (Spain), with a special focus on rural development and strengthening the regional economy.

TALENT4RURALSCIENCE is also directly related to RIS3 Extremadura by promoting key sectors such as agribusiness, digitalisation and sustainability in rural areas. By attracting highly qualified talent, the project boosts technological and scientific innovation in rural areas, encourages the creation of skilled jobs and contributes to the retention of local talent. In addition, this project facilitates the improvement of digital infrastructure and promotes the internationalisation of the region, in line with the objectives of modernisation, economic diversification and sustainable development established by RIS3 for Extremadura.

The project consortium includes nine partner organisations (seven universities, one public administration department, and one clinical research centre from the public health system) from different European countries and one American country (Spain, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and Chile).

TALENT4RURALSCIENCE PROGRAMME is co-funded by the European Commission through the MSCA COFUND 2024 Action - Grant Agreement No. 101217463 (<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101217463>) and the Regional Government of Extremadura (<https://doe.juntaex.es/otrosFormatos/html.php?xml=2025063367&anio=2025&doe=18400>)



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The project will run from 1 October 2025 to 30 September 2030, and the postdoctoral researchers' contracts will be for 36 months.

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE OFFER

Taking advantage of the excellence of the University of Extremadura, TALENT4RURALSCIENCE PROGRAMME will train researchers in the areas of **sustainable development, natural resources management, innovation in health, technology for rural development, education, inclusion and community development**, thus contributing to rural development and to the Spanish and European context of research and innovation.

TALENT4RURALSCIENCE offers 10 full-time contracts for international postdoctoral researchers through an international public call for applicants. Postdoctoral researchers will carry out a 36-month project, freely chosen by them within the objectives and topics described in the TALENT4RURALSCIENCE programme.

The projects will be carried out at one of the 9 University Research Institutes participating in the TALENT4RURALSCIENCE programme at the University of Extremadura and will also include **at least one compulsory secondment at an international academic organisation and another at a non-academic organisation (both for a period of between 3-6 months)**, which will contribute to broadening the researchers' training experience and their exposure to different learning environments.

Each researcher will have a supervisor at the University of Extremadura and co-supervisors at each of the Associated partners where they will carry out secondments to support their professional development with an Individual Career Development Plan (ICDP) that will guide researchers in achieving their scientific and professional development goals. All researchers will benefit from the training programme with specific scientific modules and others on cross-cutting skills.

The University of Extremadura has been awarded the Human Resources in Research (HRS4R) seal of excellence by the European Commission. This seal recognises the University's commitment to the personal, professional and academic development of its researchers, as well as its full alignment with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct, which will be applied to recruitment, including selection processes and the full implementation of TALENT4RURALSCIENCE programme.

3 RESEARCH AREAS



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Long term vision for the EU´s rural areas

The following objectives of the long-term vision for rural areas in the European Union have been selected as areas of focus for the project, linked to the challenges addressed by TALENT4RURALSCIENCE:

- **III. Rural areas as providers of food security** and high quality products retaining a fair share of the value generated. → **TALENT4RURALSCIENCE Challenge 2**
- **IV. Vibrant communities focused on well-being**, including livelihoods, equity, prosperity and quality of life, where people live and work well together, with adequate capacity for mutual support. → **TALENT4RURALSCIENCE Challenge 2**
- **V. Inclusive communities of solidarity**, equity and intergenerational renewal, open to newcomers and fostering equal opportunities for all. → **TALENT4RURALSCIENCE Challenge 3**
- **VI. Thriving sources of nature**, enhanced by and contributing to the goals of the Green Deal, such as climate neutrality, as well as sustainable management of natural resources. → **TALENT4RURALSCIENCE Challenge 1**
- **VII. Spaces that fully benefit from digital innovation** with equal access to emerging technologies, widespread digital literacy and opportunities to acquire more advanced skills. → **TALENT4RURALSCIENCE Challenge 2**
- **VIII. Places that have entrepreneurial, innovative and skilled people co-creating technological, ecological and social advances.** → **TALENT4RURALSCIENCE Challenge 3**
- **IX. Places equipped with efficient, accessible and affordable public and private services** (...) offering tailor-made solutions (such as education and health and services). → **TALENT4RURALSCIENCE Challenge 2**

Research topics that postdoctoral researchers can work on within the framework of each of the challenges defined for the TALEN4RURALSCIENCE programme:

Challenge 1: Sustainable development and natural resource management

- Research Topic 1.1: Assessing land degradation neutrality and land abandonment trade-offs across Europe
- Research Topic 1.2: Design and evaluation nature based solutions for the adaptation and mitigation to climate change of silvopastoral systems
- Research Topic 1.3: Sustainable Valorisation of Agri-Food Plant By-Products for Novel Ingredients and Functional Food Design



Challenge 2: Innovation in health and technology for rural development

- Research Topic 2.1: Pharmacological aspects of Equality and Inclusion in Extremadura
- Research Topic 2.2: IoT and Distributed Computing for Health Improvement in Rural Environments
- Research Topic 2.3: Quality and safety of animal origin foods
- Research Topic 2.4: Personalized Medicine Program for Prevalent Diseases for rural development

Challenge 3: Education, inclusion and community development

- Research Topic 3.1: Identities, territory and demographic change: an approach to rural depopulation in Europe
- Research Topic 3.2: Community development in rural contexts from an educational and inclusive perspective

Detailed information on each research topic can be found in ANNEX I: RESEARCH TOPICS (available in the ‘CALL FOR RESEARCHERS’ section on the website www.talent4ruralscience.eu)

When submitting their application, candidates must indicate which of the three challenges best fits their research topic and which of the specific research topics proposed they would like to work on, applying with a research proposal that responds to that specific research topic. This research topic will be the one on which they will work for the duration of their contract.

Proposals will be evaluated in the selected challenge in order to ensure the optimal allocation of experts.

4 HOST INSTITUTION

The **UNIVERSITY OF EXTREMADURA** is the main public research institution in Extremadura (Spain) with 4 university campuses. It has more than 24,000 students and 2,405 researchers and professors.

UEx has extensive laboratories and state-of-the-art research infrastructures. The Campus addresses high levels of excellence in teaching and research activity, knowledge transfer to the productive sector and entrepreneurship, as well as the dissemination of science and



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innovation to society, producing a high socio-economic impact within a cross-border campus of international dimension.

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH INSTITUTES

These are centres dedicated to research related to science, technology and technology, human and social sciences, as well as artistic creation, which encompasses all the areas of knowledge that exist at the UEx. They also provide technical advice around their competence.

The University Research Institutes have a transdisciplinary nature, an integrating function of different areas of knowledge and a high level of specialisation, bringing together researchers and research groups immersed in related and/or complementary research that can generate coherent research structures, facilitating collaboration. between researchers, enabling access to scientific infrastructures and attracting, as far as possible, researchers from other universities, research centres and/or countries, at the same time cooperation with other R&D centres should also be encouraged in both public and private.

UEx has 15 University Research Institutes, including two mixed.

Below is a list of the University Research institutes at the University of Extremadura participating in the TALENT4RURALSCIENCE programme and their main workplaces.

NAME OF THE RESEARCH INSTITUTE WHERE THE RESEARCH ACTIVITY WILL BE CARRIED OUT	MAIN WORKPLACE WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY OF EXTREMADURA
UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE OF HERITAGE RESEARCH	URI buildings (Cáceres)
UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE OF BIOMARKERS FOR MOLECULAR PATHOLOGIES	URI Buildings (Cáceres/Badajoz)
UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE OF THE DEHESA AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EXTREMADURA	University Center of Plasencia (Plasencia)
UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND PROSPECTING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EXTREMADURA	URI Buildings (Badajoz)



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NAME OF THE RESEARCH INSTITUTE WHERE THE RESEARCH ACTIVITY WILL BE CARRIED OUT	MAIN WORKPLACE WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY OF EXTREMADURA
RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE LAND DEVELOPMENT	URI Buildings (Cáceres)
UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE OF APPLIED INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES RESEARCH	URI Buildings (Cáceres)
UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE OF BIOSANITARY RESEARCH OF EXTREMADURA	URI Buildings (Cáceres)
UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES RESEARCH	URI Buildings (Badajoz)
UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE OF MEAT AND MEAT PRODUCTS	Faculty of Veterinary (Cáceres)

TRANSVERSAL SERVICES THAT CAN BE FOUND IN THE UEX AS A HOST INSTITUTION

More information about the cross-cutting services available at UEx to postdoctoral researchers, such as the Cultural Services Secretariat, the University Office for Cooperation and Solidarity Action, the Coexistence Committee, the University Social Responsibility Office, the Healthy University Office, the University Office for the Environment, the Office for Equality, the Social Action and Assistance Service, and the Religious Assistance Service: www.unex.es

5 SUPERVISORS

At the beginning of the fellowship period (contract signature), an academic supervisor will be assigned to each recruited postdoctoral researcher.

The supervisors are senior researchers at the host University Research Institute of the University of Extremadura and will be responsible for the general well-being of the postdoctoral researcher, their career development and their integration into the UEx research community and its environment. In order to ensure high-quality supervision, and in line with the section on supervision in the European Charter for Researchers, all



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supervisors have been selected on the basis of their extensive experience in supervising doctoral students, their current activities and their publications as lead authors.

Information about supervisors is available in the 'PARTICIPANTS' section on the website (www.talent4ruralscience.eu)

All participating University Research Institutes have a long and distinguished track record in training and research development in their areas of expertise. Supervisors at University of Extremadura will support the postdoctoral researchers in order to ensure their progress, checking and assisting them in achieving the expected results and in their personal development in relation to training and secondment planning. In addition, they will be responsible for maintaining a direct relationship with the researcher and supporting them throughout the fellowship period, as well as supervising, evaluating and reporting on the results obtained.

During the secondments, each postdoctoral researcher will have a scientific supervisor at the host institution where they are carrying out the secondments (associated partner), who will be responsible for coordinating, together with the supervisor at the University of Extremadura, the scientific and technical work of the postdoctoral researcher during the secondments and will collaborate with the supervisor at the University of Extremadura to ensure the correct implementation of the Individual Career Development Plan (ICDP) for postdoctoral researchers.

6 SECONDMENTS

Researchers will have the opportunity to undertake secondments that will increase the impact of their research projects. TALENT4RURALSCEINCE integrates the possibility of strengthening the training and skills of researchers through international partners, both academic and non-academic, which will facilitate better technology transfer.

Each researcher must complete a compulsory secondment to an international academic organisation and another to a non-academic organisation dedicated to rural development (both lasting between 3 and 6 months), which will contribute to broadening the researchers' training experience and their exposure to different learning environments.

Researchers will have access to a list of Associated Partners (APs) already committed to the programme, along with opportunities offered by the EUGREEN European University Alliance. Additional academic and non-academic partners may be added if necessary.

These associated organisations will provide researchers with the necessary research and knowledge infrastructure and assign a supervisor for the duration of the secondment.



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The entities that are already part of the programme as associated partners are as follows:

1. Atlantic Technological University (Ireland)
2. University of Évora (Portugal)
3. University of Angers (France)
4. University of Jyväskylä (Finland)
5. University of Magdeburg (Germany)
6. University of Bologna (Italy)
7. Catholic University of Chile (Chile)
8. Regional Government of Extremadura – Ministry of Education, Science and Vocational Training (Spain)
9. Clinical Research Centre of the Badajoz Health Area (Spain)

7 REQUERIMENTS

To be eligible to file an application, researchers will have to comply with all the following eligibility criteria:

- Individuals eligible for this grant can be of any nationality but must comply with the MSCA mobility rule: not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Spain (the host country) for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately preceding the deadline of the program's call.
- Be in possession of a doctoral degree at the deadline of the co-funded program's call. The date of defence and approval of the thesis is considered as the date of award of the doctoral degree.
- Meet the minimum legal age required for establishing an employment contract and not have reached the legally established retirement age.
- Have the functional capacity necessary for the performance of the position subject to the call.
- Not have been separated through disciplinary proceedings from the service of any public administrations, nor be under disqualification for the performance of public functions by a final judgment.



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- Not have been previously employed under a doctoral research personnel access contract, in accordance with the provisions of Article 22 of Law 17/2022, of 5 September, amending Law 14/2011, of 1 June, on Science, Technology and Innovation in the Spanish Science, Technology and Innovation System, or under the extinct contract modality, when the total cumulative duration of all contracts signed, in the same or different entities, including that corresponding to the TALENT4RURALSCIENCE programme (with a duration of 36 months) , exceeds 6 years, or 8 years in the case of applicants applying under the provision for persons with disabilities. More information on this can be found in the 'EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS' section of the Guide for applicants to the TALENT4RURALSCIENCE programme.

All of the above requirements must be met on the date of submission of the expression of interest. No additional or supplementary information will be accepted after the deadline for submission of expression of interest.

8 APPLICATION PROCEDURE

The application process consists of two phases:

- **Phase A of the application process (Expression of interest).** In Phase A of the application process, **the following documents must be sent for the expression of interest in PDF file to the email address: info@talent4ruralscience.eu** (Email subject: Name and Surname_Expression of Interest – TALENT4RURALSCIENCE programme)
 - **Expression of interest:** including personal details, the research topic they are applying for, and **the scientific proposal to address that research topic, following the template provided** (Annex II).
 - **Affidavit of compliance with the MSCA mobility rule:** using the template provided (Annex III).
 - **Affidavit of not having enjoyed a contract as a doctoral research personnel or under an extinct modality of contract within the Spanish Science, Technology and Innovation System.** If applicable, the candidate must prove proof of employment for the period of said contract by means of a certified document attached to the expression of interest (Annex IV)
 - **Copy of doctoral degree.**



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- **Complete curriculum vitae.** In free format, including the following information:

Include articles published in scientific journals, books or chapters of scientific and technical books, patents granted or licensed, conference presentations, awards, mentions and distinctions, contributions to society, including technological development activities, innovation, dissemination, collaboration with industry, the private sector, public institutions, and other end users of research.

Include information on stays at national and international centers and the candidate's contributions to the lines of work of the center and group(s) with which they have worked, as well as the importance for their own lines of research and, where applicable, the results obtained during these stays.

Include information on actions related to international programs and projects, especially those related to predoctoral and postdoctoral international mobility, as well as participation or funding in projects and contracts carried out in international collaboration.

Include information on participation in R&D&I projects as a researcher or principal investigator, supervision of doctoral theses, and any other relevant scientific and professional experience.

To complete your CV, please take into account the evaluation criteria, which can be found in section 'EVALUATION CRITERIA'.

Only documents in English language will be accepted (except for the copies of official the academic degrees).

Templates are available in the section 'CALL FOR RESEARCHERS' on the website www.talent4ruralscience.eu

At this stage of the application process, it will be verified that the candidate meets the eligibility requirements and has provided all the above documentation, duly completed.



The deadline for submitting expressions of interest is 31 March 2026

A confirmation email will be sent to the applicants when the expression of interest is received. Expression of interest sent after the deadline will not be accepted.

Expression of interest not including all the necessary documentation will be considered ineligible and therefore eliminated from the process. Applicants that do not meet the eligibility criteria may be declined without further review. All applicants will receive an email confirming their eligibility or informing that they are ineligible according to the eligibility criteria. Applicants have the right to request a redress if they will consider there was a procedural flaw during the eligibility check. The list of admitted and excluded candidates will be published on the program website and University of Extremadura website, ensuring a transparent process and equal opportunities.

- **Phase B of the application process.** Candidates who meet the requirements for phase A will be invited to participate in the University of Extremadura's TALENT4RURALSCIENCE Call for Researchers, where they must submit the following documentation.
 - Application form in the format provided.
 - Copy of identity card or passport.
 - Curriculum vitae including the requested information.
 - Documents proving compliance with the requirements established for the call for applications.
 - Documents proving the merits presented.

All detailed information regarding phase B of the application process will be sent by email to applicants who meet the eligibility requirements and have passed phase A of the process. It will also be published on the project website (www.talent4ruralscience.eu) and on the University of Extremadura website (www.unex.es).

Applicants who have been invited to phase B will be informed of the documentation to be submitted, where to submit it and the deadlines, and will be provided with the required templates.

The scientific-technical proposal sent by candidates will be evaluated at this stage according to the evaluation criteria found in the 'EVALUATION CRITERIA' section of the TALENT4RURALSCIENCE Guide for Applicants (available on the website www.talentruralscience.eu).

The expected date for applying for the University of Extremadura's TALENT4RURALSCIENCE Call for Researchers (phase B of the selection process) can be found in section 9.

9 APPLICATION AND SELECTION TIMETABLE

Note that these dates may be subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances. We therefore recommend that you check the website www.talen4ruralscience.eu frequently, where we will update all information relating to the TALENT4RURALSCIENCE programme.

10 SELECTION AND EVALUATION PROCESS

The selection process will be organised into five main stages, according to the following steps:



STEP 1: Open call for Expressions of interest. All interested applicants will send their expressions of interest. For the presentation of expressions of interest from applicants, a period of 2 months is open from the date of publication.

STEP 2: Eligibility check. Once the deadline for submitting expressions of interest has ended and the initial eligibility check is done, the Selection Committee will review the proposals presented ensuring that all of them meet the required eligibility criteria of the call (necessary requirements such as MSCA-Cofund requirements, mobility rule, having a doctorate and other requirements established and published in the call) and that the provided documentation is correct, with the aim of inviting them to participate in the TALENT4RURALSCIENCE Call for Researchers of the University of Extremadura.

The report of candidates who meet the requirements will be published on the project website and provided by email to all participants, guaranteeing a transparent process and equal opportunities for all candidates.

STEP 3: Application to TALENT4RURALSCIENCE Call for Researchers of the University of Extremadura. The Selection Committee will invite candidates who meet the



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requirements to apply for the call to be launched by the University of Extremadura, guiding them through the process of preparing and submitting the documentation in due time and form.

Candidates invited to participate in step 2 of the application process will be informed within the application submission period.

Information about TALENT4RURALSCIENCE Call for Researchers of the University of Extremadura will be published on the project website (www.talent4ruralscience.eu) and the official website of the University of Extremadura (www.unex.es).

STEP 4: Scientific and technical evaluation of applications.

Once applications for the University of Extremadura's TALENT4RURALSCIENCE call have been received, the Management Team (MT) will send the research proposals of all admitted candidates, together with the evaluation guide, detailed evaluation criteria and evaluation forms, to the Chair of the Evaluation Panel (EP Chair).

Then, every candidature will be evaluated by 3 evaluators (of whom 1 is international), that will be selected by the EP considering their adequacy in view of the thematic area of the proposal. All the evaluators will assess each candidature individually and provide an Individual Evaluation Report (IER) to the EP Chair.

The President of the EP will issue a report with the final score for each researcher, which will be the result of the double external evaluation carried out by independent experts, based on the evaluation criteria and sub-criteria established in the call for applications. The final score will be the average of the scores awarded by the experts.

STEP 5: Selection of the candidates. The selection of candidates will be carried out by the Selection Committee, adhering to the principles of equality, merit, and capacity. Decisions will be based on criteria aligned with the profile specified in the announcement, with proper documentation in the records justifying the resolution.

Once constituted, the committee will proceed with the following successive actions:

1. First meeting:

- Committee establishment and review of evaluated applications.
- Compilation of a provisional list with the assessment results of the candidates provided by the EP chair.
- The provisional lists will be published on the project website (www.talent4ruralscience.eu) and UEx website (www.unex.es).



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- Complaints against this publication may be submitted to the committee within the time frame established in the University of Extremadura's TALENT4RURALSCIENCE Call for applications.

2. Second meeting:

- Addressing any objections raised.
- The Chair of the committee will prepare and sign the final minutes with the results.
- The Selection Committee will generate a final list of the top 10 selected candidates and up to 3 candidates on a waiting list and will send an official invitation to the successful candidates to become TALENT4RURALSCIENCE fellows.
- The candidates on the waiting list will also be informed accordingly.

Those selected will have a deadline set in the Call for Researchers to confirm their acceptance of the fellowship. In case of rejections, candidates on the waiting list will be contacted.

Applicants have the right to appeal the Selection Committee's decisions in accordance with the criteria and procedures indicated.

Claims should be based on factual mistakes or errors, as the quality assessment made by the Selection Committee cannot be appealed.

The final results will be published on the project website (www.talent4ruralscience.eu) and on the official website of the University of Extremadura (www.unex.es), and the dossier will be sent to the Human Resources department for the recruitment of the selected researchers.

The publication of results of the selection process at UEx will comply with the principles of data minimization, legal basis, transparency, security and rights of candidates established by the GDPR to protect the privacy of postdoctoral researchers.

The selection process will be governed by the OTM-R (Open, Transparent and Merit-based recruitment) principles in accordance with the HR Excellence in Research (HRS4R) label awarded by the European Commission to the University of Extremadura (More information at <https://vriinvestigacion.unex.es/acreditacion-hrs4r/>).



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11 EVALUATION CRITERIA

The selection process is designed to be open, transparent and merit based. Evaluation scores will be provided for each criterion whereas sub-criteria are elements to be considered by the expert evaluators. The maximum final score will be 100, based on the weights applying for each of the criteria specified below:

1. Alignment of his/her expression of interest with the proposed challenge to be solved with research: a score between 0-70 points will be awarded.

1.1 Quality and originality of the expression of interest and level of answer to the described challenge: 0-30 points. The definition, content, quality, and degree of innovation of the research proposal with respect to the scientific technical field in which it is developed will be assessed.

1.2 Relevance of the proposed objectives in the corresponding scientific-technical context: 0-10 points. The adequacy and coordination of the proposed scientific-technical activities with the activities carried out by the receiving University Research Institute will be assessed.

1.3 Feasibility of the expression of interest: 0-10 points. The temporary planning of the established activities and the methodology to achieve the proposed objectives will be valued.

1.4 Results transfer viability in the rural development context. 0-10 points: Dissemination of the results to the scientific community and transfer to the public and private sector and/or society in general will be valued.

1.5. Scientific and professional growth potential of the expression of interest: 0-10 points. The expected capacity for impact on the personal and professional development of the researcher in accordance with the expression of interest will be evaluated.

2. Scientific-technical trajectory, a score between 0-30 points will be awarded.

2.1 Scientific-technical contributions: 0-10 points: The scientific-technical contributions of the candidates will be valued, their relevance and contribution to generation of knowledge, as well as the relevance of the main line of research that they have developed and their contributions to it. The relevance of the contributions of the candidate in articles published in scientific journals, books or chapters of scientific and technical books, patents granted or licensed, papers presented at congresses, obtaining prizes, mentions and distinctions will be valued. Likewise, their contributions to society will be valued, such as activities of technological development, innovation, dissemination, collaboration with industry, the private sector, public institutions, and other end users of research.



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2.2 Mobility and internationalization: 0-10 points: The relevance of the stays of the candidate in national and international centers, the prestige of the center receiving the stay, the contributions of the candidate to the lines of work of the center and group/s with which they have worked will be assessed, as well as the importance for the candidate's lines of research and, where appropriate, the results of the activity during these stays. Direct participation in actions related to international programs and projects will be valued, especially those related to predoctoral and postdoctoral international mobility programs, as well as participation or funding in projects and contracts carried out in international collaboration.

2.3 Leadership. 0-10 points: The candidate's research independence will be valued throughout their research career, including participation in R&D&I projects as a researcher or principal investigator, the ability to lead research groups, fundraising, including funding through participation in actions related to both national and international programs and projects, including those financed by companies and other private entities, directing doctoral theses and any other relevant scientific and professional experience.

Scoring/ thresholds:

- The maximum score will be awarded when the proposal addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question in an outstanding manner.
- 0 points will be awarded when the proposal does not adequately meet the established criteria or has serious deficiencies.
- Intermediate scores will be awarded when the proposal falls between these two extremes.
- The candidate's final score will be the sum of the points obtained in the previous sections.
- The final score must be equal to or greater than 70 points. Proposals that do not reach this threshold will be rejected.
- In the event of a tie, applications will be prioritised according to the final score, and if the tie persists:

The highest score obtained in section 1 (70 points) will be considered.

If the tie persists, the highest score obtained in subsection 1.1 (30 points) of the evaluation criteria will be taken into account.

If the tie still persists, it will be resolved according to the highest score obtained in subsection 2.3 (10 points).



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In the selection process for postdoctoral researchers, each applicant must explicitly indicate the research topic from among the nine proposed that they wish to apply for with their research project. Once all proposals have been evaluated, a ranking will be drawn up for each of the nine scientific topics proposed, and the researcher who has obtained the highest score within that research topic will be selected. This ensures cohesive progress towards the programme's joint objectives, expected results and impacts, covering all areas of the programme. The other candidates will be ranked according to each research topic, thus forming a reserve list, and will be contacted in order of ranking if any of the selected candidates decline their position.

The tenth candidate will be selected based on the highest score obtained immediately after the first nine selected candidates, regardless of the research topic among the nine proposed topics to which they applied.

The final score obtained by the candidate must be equal to or greater than 70 points. Proposals that do not reach this threshold will be rejected.

Reserve list

- Candidates who are not selected retain their score and position in the rankings for each of the nine research topics proposed.
- Each ranking functions as a reserve list: if a selected candidate withdraws, the next candidate in order for the same research topic is contacted.

12 SELECTION COMMITTEE

Selection Committee (SC): The Selection Committee shall be composed of:

- The Director of Research Human Resources.
- One senior researcher from each project challenge (excluding supervisors).
- The Chair of the Evaluation Panel, who shall convey its conclusions.

One of these members will act as secretary to the committee.

Its functions include, among others: Approving the list of candidates selected at each stage of the selection process and inviting the selected candidates to become TALENT4RURALSCIENCE researchers.

Evaluation Panel (EP)

The Evaluation Panel is the body responsible for evaluating all proposals in Step 4 of the TALENT4RURALSCIENCE programme selection process.



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The EP will be made up of scientific experts from academic and non-academic fields, specialising in areas relevant to the challenges of TALENT4RURALSCIENCE, and will be led by the Panel Chair.

All EP members will be external to the organising body (UEx), and the panel will be managed by the Management Team (MT).

The EP will be responsible for evaluating proposals in Step 4 in accordance with the TALENT4RURALSCIENCE evaluation criteria.

Each proposal received will be evaluated by at least three independent EP evaluators, one of whom will be an international expert.

Management Team (MT)

Both the Selection Committee and the Evaluation Panel will be permanently assisted by the Management Team, which will oversee the technical and administrative management of the entire selection process.

The MT will ensure that the evaluation is conducted transparently and independently, in compliance with the selection process rules established by the UEx and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

13 EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

Postdoctoral researchers will be hired under the terms of a contract for access to doctoral research personnel, in accordance with the provisions of Article 22 of Law 17/2022, of 5 September, amending Law 14/2011, of 1 June, on Science, Technology and Innovation, on a full-time basis for a fixed term of up to 36 months from the start date of the contract.

In the event that the postdoctoral research personnel had previously been hired under this type of contract or the now defunct type of contract for access to the Spanish Science, Technology and Innovation System, the total number of all contracts signed, including this grant, in the same or different entity, may not exceed 6 years, including possible extensions, except for persons competing in the category for persons with disabilities, for whom the maximum period may not exceed 8 years.

Remuneration:

A breakdown of the total amounts allocated to each fellow:

- **Living allowance:** 3,736.18 euros/month.



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This concept includes labour costs corresponding to the salary of the full-time postdoctoral researcher.

- **Family allowance:** 101.13 euros/month (if applicable).

Postdoctoral researcher will receive this amount if they move to Extremadura with their family and/or dependents.

The above amounts are calculated based on current taxes costs and may be subject to change during the duration of the contract.

*The **net salary** will be the amount resulting from subtracting the living allowance (and family allowance if applicable), the contribution to personal income tax + the employee's share of social security contributions in accordance with the personal circumstances of each postdoctoral researcher hired.*

More information about Social Security System Contribution, Redundancy Compensation and Personal Income Taxes in Spain: <https://www.euraxess.es/spain/news/understanding-msca-funding-and-researcher-salaries-spain-new-guide-fecyt>

The amount of redundancy compensation will be paid to the postdoctoral researcher at the end of their contract, in accordance with the Spanish System's hiring regulations and in proportion to the actual length of employment.

- **Mobility allowance:** The maximum amount to be received by each postdoctoral researcher will be 3,499.92. This amount must be used for relocation and travel costs.

If this cost is to be included as part of the researcher's salary, the legal percentage indicated in the regulations would be deducted.

- **Travel allowance:** up to a maximum of 50,000.04 euros.

Costs for secondments at Associated partners and other trips to scientific conferences and networking and communication activities. This section includes travel and subsistence costs, and the University of Extremadura's travel regulations will be used as a reference.

- **Research costs:** Postdoctoral research hired will have a maximum of 9,000 euros to fund the R&D&I activities outlined in the research proposal. This section includes



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the cost of consumables, publication costs, and other expenses necessary for the project's development.

14 RIGHTS OF POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS UNDER CONTRACT

- An employment contract for a period of 36 months will be signed between the University of Extremadura and the selected postdoctoral researcher.
- Receive the corresponding payments, as established in section 'EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS'.
- Receive the necessary cooperation and support from the University of Extremadura to carry out the research work.
- Use the services of the University of Extremadura and participate in its activities, in accordance with the internal regulations of the University of Extremadura.
- Have a supervisor from the University of Extremadura and another from each of the host organizations (Associated partners) where the secondments take place (co-supervisors), as well as an Individual Career Development Plan (ICDP).
- Scientific training through their individual research projects and specific training events as established in the project's Grant Agreement.

15 OBLIGATIONS OF POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS UNDER CONTRACT

- **In order to formalize the contract, the postdoctoral researcher selected in the evaluation process must submit documentation proving that they have applied for the equivalence/validation of their doctoral degree, as established in the RESOLUTION of March 24, 2017, of the Management, which implements the regulatory agreement adopted by the Governing Council approving the regulations governing the procedure for the equivalence of foreign higher education degrees to the academic level of Doctor of the University of Extremadura (<https://eid.unex.es/secretaria/tramites-y-modelos/equivalencia-del-titulo-extranjero-de-doctor/>) and comply with the internal regulations for recruitment at the University of Extremadura.**
- Depending on the researcher's nationality, apply for and obtain the necessary permits allowing the candidate to work under contract, in accordance with the terms established by current legislation and for the period indicated in this call for applications.
- Postdoctoral researchers will work at the University of Extremadura facilities.
- Full-time position at the University Research Institute within the period established in the TALENT4RURALSCIENCE programme.



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- Compliance with the internal rules and specific regulations of the University of Extremadura, as well as those of the corresponding University Research Institute.
- Inform the University of Extremadura as soon as possible of any event, circumstance, or change in circumstances that may affect their fellowship.
- Conduct research in accordance with the research proposal and Individual Career Development Plan (ICDP) accepted by the supervisor, project management team, and the EU. Any deviation from the research proposal must be explicitly reported to and authorized by them.
- Each researcher must complete **a mandatory secondment at an international academic organization and another at a non-academic organization dedicated to rural development (both lasting between 3 and 6 months).**
- Inform the University of Extremadura if the research project requires additional short visits outside the University of Extremadura facilities (excluding secondments and dissemination/communication activities). Short visits will be subject to prior approval by the supervisor and the project management team during the project implementation phase.
- Complete the mandatory joint and individual training specified in the project Grant Agreement in the three defined training areas, as summarized below:

Area a). Researching Transversal Skills

Area b). Specific training for individual research project objectives

Area c). Training to improve science for rural development and talent retention

Description	Modality of implementation
Area a). Researching Transversal Skills	
10 compulsory individual hours a year (30 hours)	Virtual/In-person
10 compulsory individual hours a year (30 hours)	In-person (Summer schools)
Area b). Specific training for individual research project objectives	
20 compulsory individual hours a year (60 hours)	Virtual/In-person
Area c). Training to improve science for rural development and talent retention	
10 compulsory joint hours a year (30 hours)	In-person (Summer schools)
10 compulsory hours a year (30 hours) in EU brokerages and networking events for EU projects and/or participating in networking local activities	In-person



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- Actively participate in the project communication and dissemination events set out in the project Grant Agreement.
- Submit progress reports within the deadlines and in the format established by the project management team, describing the progress of their research, achievements, and impact in accordance with the ICDP.
- Complete a final evaluation form to assess the program and provide feedback on their experience at the host institution.
- All project promotion, dissemination, or communication activities must include the relevant logos as indicated by the project management team.
- All postdoctoral researchers must disseminate their research and results in collaboration with the Scientific Culture Dissemination Service and the Communications Office of the University of Extremadura, providing information aimed at various audiences.
- Selected candidates must move their residence to Spain no later than the date of their hiring.
- Complete all economic-financial reports requested by supervisors and/or the project management team.
- Postdoctoral researchers must comply with the principles of good scientific conduct in accordance with the regulations of the University of Extremadura and the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity. More information about the HS4HR seal is available on the website: <https://vriinvestigacion.unex.es/acreditacion-hrs4r/>
- All dissemination activities must comply with the University of Extremadura's Open Access policy and be in line with the Horizon Europe program's rules and regulations on this subject.

16 OBLIGATIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EXTREMADURA

- The execution of the full-time contract, in accordance with current regulations, for a period of 36 months.
- The provision of the facilities and material resources necessary for the postdoctoral researcher to carry out their work, as well as the guarantee of the rights corresponding to staff of a similar category.



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- Obtaining the corresponding TALENT4RURALSCIENCE contract shall not oblige the University to subsequently incorporate the postdoctoral researcher into its staff.

17 DATA PROTECTION

In accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council (General Data Protection Regulation – GDPR) and Organic Law 3/2018 of 5 December on the Protection of Personal Data and the Guarantee of Digital Rights, the personal data provided by applicants during the TALENT4RURALSCIENCE selection process will be processed by the **University of Extremadura (UEx)** as data controller.

PURPOSE OF THE PROCESSING

Personal data will be processed exclusively for the following purposes:

- Managing participation in the TALENT4RURALSCIENCE programme selection and evaluation process (Phases A and B).
- Verifying compliance with eligibility and mobility requirements under the MSCA COFUND action of the Horizon Europe Programme.
- Scientific and technical evaluation of applications.
- Publication of provisional and final results of the selection process.
- Managing appeals, complaints and redress procedures.
- Managing the recruitment of the selected candidates.

Participation in the call implies acknowledgment and acceptance of this data processing.

DATA RECIPIENTS

Personal data may be accessed by:

- The TALENT4RURALSCIENCE Management Team.
- The Selection Committee and Evaluation Panels (including international evaluators).
- The Human Resources Department of the University of Extremadura.
- European Commission bodies or authorised auditors, where required under the MSCA COFUND Grant Agreement.

Data will not be transferred to third countries outside the European Economic Area, except where evaluators are located outside the EEA, in which case appropriate safeguards will be applied in accordance with Articles 44-49 GDPR.



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PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

In order to ensure transparency and equal opportunities, the following information will be published on the project website (www.talent4ruralscience.eu) and the website of the University of Extremadura (www.unex.es):

- Provisional and final lists of admitted and excluded candidates (Phase A);
- Provisional and final lists of selected and reserve candidates (Phase B).

Published data will be limited to name and surname, and, where applicable, anonymised evaluation identifiers, in accordance with the principles of data minimisation and proportionality.

DATA RETENTION

Personal data will be retained for the duration of the selection process and, subsequently, for the periods required by:

- Applicable legal obligations.
- Audit and control requirements of the Horizon Europe Programme,
- Archival obligations of the University of Extremadura.

RIGHTS OF THE APPLICANTS

Applicants may exercise their rights of access, rectification, erasure, restriction of processing, objection and data portability by contacting:

Data Protection Officer (University of Extremadura)

Email: dpd@unex.es

18 CONTACT INFORMATION

The information regarding the TALENT4RURALSOURCE programme will be found on the official programme website www.talent4ruralscience.eu.

Enquiries about TALENT4RURALSOURCE programme should be made via the following e-mail address info@talent4ruralscience.eu



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