

ECIU mobility fund 2018



2018 marked the official launching of the ECIU Mobility Fund. The European Consortium of Innovative Universities (ECIU) recognizes the importance of cooperation in science, technology and innovation for universities to become world-leading research institutions. This scheme is intended to work as an incentive to explore and deepen research collaboration within the ECIU network, for instance, in terms of joint research funding grant applications, scientific publications and research projects. Ultimately it supports professional development of ECIU researchers, by supporting know-how exchange in an international high-quality research environment. Early career researchers are encouraged to apply, including PhD students, but applications from researchers at any career stage are welcome. The fund is open to all disciplines. Six UA researchers were awarded with this support in 2018:

- Ali Baghizadeh, Department of Materials and Ceramics Engineering & CICECO (@University of Twente)
- Fatemeh Saghezchi, Department of Economics, Management, Industrial Engineering and Tourism & GOVCOPP (@University of Twente)
- Luís Novo, Geosciences department & GeoBiotec (@Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)
- Pegah Mirzadeh, Physics Department & CICECO (@University of Twente)
- Pierre Oskram, Communication and Art Department & ID+ (@Aalborg University)
- Sónia Ventura, Chemistry Department and CICECO (@Tecnológico de Monterrey)

About ECIU

ECIU is an international consortium of research intensive universities that gathers 13 universities linked by a collective emphasis on innovation, creativity and societal impact. Its activities are focused on 7 big themes: science, innovation, entrepreneurship, cooperation, mobility, education and regional development.

ECIU Partner Universities : Aalborg University, Dublin City University, Hamburg University of Technology, Kaunas University of Technology, Linköping University, Tampere University of Technology, Tecnológico de Monterrey, The University of Nottingham, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, University of Aveiro, University of Stavanger, University of Trento; University of Twente.



AWARDEES TESTIMONIALS

Luís Novo

Geociences department & GeoBiotec (@ Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 1 week)

When I first learnt about the ECIU mobility award, I couldn't help thinking "here's a cool way to fund a trip overseas and hopefully set in motion a new partnership". Surely, I was not wrong, but it was also so much more than that.

The application process itself was quite straightforward. There was no red tape involved and the results turnaround time was incredibly fast – I was notified only three weeks after submission! After a warm welcome by my hosts from the Ecological and Forestry Applications Research Centre at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, I was immediately immersed in several activities that had been carefully planned ahead of my arrival. The numerous field trips, group meetings, and seminars, certainly helped us aligning our interests, resources, and capabilities, taking the collaboration further than original expected. We are now actively involved in two different projects and pursuing new opportunities through joint applications to major research funding schemes. Since my visit, we have been in constant touch to keep track of ongoing experiments, discuss results, and prepare cooperative publications. Moreover, we already have new field measurements in Catalonia lined up, as well as concerted conference presentations. Needless to say, the partnership has also helped nurturing a solid friendship. To sum up, the award has granted me the possibility of working with top-tier scientists from a world-class institution, boosting my professional and personal growth.

Ali Baghizade

Department of Materials and Ceramics Engineering, and CICECO (@University of Twente, 2 months)

My research is focused on epitaxial growth of multiferroic oxide films in collaboration with the Department of Physics, University of Minho, where I was using pulsed laser deposition for film growth. New advancement in the field of oxide superlattice motivated me to consider more sophisticated engineering of multiferroic films with few unit cells thickness. To accomplish this ambition, I had to use facilities allowing in-situ monitoring of film growth with unit cell precision. Within ECIU consortium, I found the University of Twente (Department of Inorganic Chemistry), one of the world leading Universities in developing pulsed laser technique.

While I there, I got training on their available facilities to conduct my research. Also I had opportunity to attend weekly social and scientific events of the Department, and a few days workshop on recent breakthroughs in oxide epitaxy organized by the Department. In the Department and MESA+ Institute, I met many experts from different nationalities, a further opportunity to expand my network. Based on my work within the ECIU grant, currently I am spending 6 months visit in ETH, Zurich, supported by FCT fund, to implement complementary research on samples I produced in University of Twente.

As a closing sentence, I always appreciate the kind support of the ECIU team in University of Aveiro, which without their help, such program and travel visit would be almost impossible.



Pegah Mirzadeh

Physics Department & CICECO (@ University of Twente, 2 weeks)

Being a researcher and working within the community taught me to be open to collaborations and new experiences. However, as a freshly graduated PhD, it is hard to find connections in the community. I came across the announcement for ECIU grant while I had difficulty in my research. Although University of Aveiro provides nice variety of characterization equipment, it is never enough. I applied for the grant after contacting the MESA+ Institute, University of Twente, Netherlands and within few weeks, I had an acceptance from the ECIU committee. The process of application is very fast forward and with the help of ECIU team, it is an easy task.

Only one month after having the acceptance, I traveled to Twente, and got a very warm welcome from the MESA+ Institute members. Professor Hilgenkamp, Dean in Faculty of Science and Technology, was very helpful and on my first day of arrival, he introduced me to his group, who were so kind to stop their research and focused on my work. The results from my two weeks of stay in Netherlands was really helpful and complementary to the data that I had before. Furthermore, I had opportunity to attend weekly social and scientific events in the department and meet experts, which is helping me to extend my connections in my field of work. Finally, I want to show my appreciation for kind support of the ECIU team in University of Aveiro, which without their help, such program and travel visit would have been impossible.



Pierre Oskram

Communication and Art Department & ID+ (@Aalborg University, 3 weeks)

The new building “CREATE” at the waterfront stands out. A huge entrance hall with large windows, student livelihood and smell of coffee welcomed me. At the upper floors, the open design studio allowed me to peek at the models and drawings. Head of the department Dr. Lea Laursen friendly welcomed me and showed me the workspace. The common table and kitchen for the whole research department, made it easy for me to mingle. An impression: with Christmas we had a “julefrokost” (Christmas lunch) and we sang a song about the department together. Aalborg itself is a serene place with beautiful old buildings, contrasted with modern technology and sleek buildings popping up. At the same time, nature is very close. I recommend exploring the region as well: discover why the Vikings settled down here. Many Aalborgians like to play board games. We have gone to pubs (yes, there are pubs just for playing board-games) to play – perfect to get to know locals! The absolute cherry on top was when Dr. Lea Laursen drove me through the Northern region of Denmark (Jutland). We had exciting research-related discussions during this trip. Without her knowledge and hospitality, my insights wouldn’t have been this rich. From research insights to cultural experience and personal connection, this initiative was very fruitful to me. I aim to come back again to work together. To conclude I am very grateful for this opportunity!



Fatemeh Saghezchi

Department of Economics, Management, Industrial Engineering and Tourism and GOVCCOPP (@University of Twente, 1,5 month)

My thesis is focused on developing and validating a scale for measuring quality of service experience of visitors in the context of science centres. From October till December 2018, I was a visiting PhD student at NIKOS centre, University of Twente (UT), Netherlands, supported by the ECIU Research Mobility Fund, where I worked with Prof Efthymios Constantinides and Prof Agata Leszkiewicz. This mobility programme provided me a great opportunity for collaboration and working abroad with a wonderful group and in a warm atmosphere. It helped me experience new culture, broaden my skills, and connect to new experts, colleagues, and friends. I acquired not only new insights into my own research, by receiving invaluable feedback from different perspectives, but I also became familiar with other interesting research topics. Overall, it was a great experience, and I am very pleased to have this opportunity. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the ECIU programme, NIKOS Centre, and the Research Support Office (GAI) (specially, Ms Tatiana Lima Costa and Ms Fabiana Henriques) for their kind support during my stay.

Photo: Erik Brinkhorst