

CITADELS

CITADELS COHORT 1 OPEN CALL - ETF



Cultivating Industry 5.0 Talents: Academia-industry collaboration and empowerment through accessible DEep technoloGieS

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- Have followed the required conventions in referencing the thoughts, ideas and texts made outside the Project.

CITADELS Cohort 1 Open Call – ETF

Table of contents

Table of contents.....	1
Open call for DeepTech Research Talent secondments from ETF	2
1 About the call	2
2 Eligibility conditions	2
3 Secondments: DeepTech Deployment actions and TestBeds.....	3
3.1 DeepTech Deployment Action 1: ETF -> DKR - XR/VR cobot training	3
3.2 DeepTech Deployment Action 2: ETF -> XRI - XR/VR cobot programming	4
4 Transversal skills secondments and topics	6
4.1 Transversal Skills Action 1: PTP - Innovation & Entrepreneurship	6
4.2 Transversal Skills Action 2: K&I - RRI	6
5 What will be expected from selected talents?	7
6 Financial conditions	8
7 Relevant research interests and professional experience	8
8 Why apply?.....	8
9 Inclusion, fair access and data management.....	9
10 How to apply	10
11 Required application materials	10
11.1 Guidance for the Motivation Letter	10
12 Evaluation criteria	11
13 Selection committee	11
14 Selection process indicative timeline.....	12
15 Obligations of the Research Talent.....	12
16 Obligations of the Home Institution	13
17 Obligations of the Host Institution.....	14
18 Holidays, leave and sickness	14
19 Early termination	14
20 Contact point for Applicants/Application Desk	14
21 Disclaimer.....	15

Open call for DeepTech Research Talent secondments from ETF

This call has been tailored for Cohort 1 Research Talent secondments from ETF and should be implemented in line with CITADELS project rules and ETF internal procedures.

The below-referenced DeepTech Deployment and Transversal Skills Secondments offered under this call are funded through the Horizon Europe project CITADELS (Cultivating Industry 5.0 Talents: Academia-Industry Collaboration and Empowerment through Accessible Deep Technologies). CITADELS aims to strengthen human-centric Industry 5.0 innovation by promoting DeepTech talent circulation, cross-sectoral mobility, and collaboration between academia and industry across Europe. Through international secondments, structured mentoring, and career development support, the project seeks to create attractive and sustainable career pathways for researchers working in emerging DeepTech fields. The project will run from September 2025 to August 2029 and foresees the active involvement of the selected talents in a structured capacity building and career development planning process.

1 About the call

School of Electrical Engineering, University of Belgrade (ETF) invites applications from researchers and technical research staff for two DeepTech Research Talent positions. Each selected Talent will complete one 3-month DeepTech Deployment secondment, two 1-month Transversal Skills secondments at PTP and K&I, and a structured mentoring and Career Development Plan process before, during, and after the secondments. The expected periods are October 2026 - September 2027 for the Transversal Skills secondments and April 2027 - September 2027 for the DeepTech Deployment. Exact dates within these windows will be agreed with the talent, ETF, and the relevant host institution.

A DeepTech Research Talent is a researcher or technical research staff member working in Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, Extended Reality, Human-Machine Interfaces, or a closely related DeepTech field.

A DeepTech Deployment is a cross-border secondment to an industry partner under this call (DKR or XRI), focused on applying, testing, adapting, validating, or documenting a DeepTech solution linked to a predefined TestBed.

A Transversal Skills secondment is a cross-border secondment to a CITADELS project partner. Under this ETF Cohort 1 call, selected Talents will complete Transversal Skills secondments at PTP and K&I, focused on innovation and entrepreneurship and Responsible Research and Innovation.

The call is led by **Filip Becanovic**.

2 Eligibility conditions

- Applicants must be employed by ETF, or be able to establish an eligible contractual relationship with ETF before the secondment starts and maintain it throughout the secondment period.
- PhD students, postdoctoral researchers and faculty professors may apply if the required contractual arrangement can be put in place before participation in the CITADELS project.

- Applicants must be available for one 3-month DeepTech Deployment secondment and two 1-month Transversal Skills secondments at PTP and K&I. Any limited availability must be declared in the application and will be considered during the evaluation process.
- Applicants must comply with project rules on confidentiality, personal data protection, ethics, host access, health and safety, and dissemination clearance.

3 DeepTech Deployment actions (secondments) and TestBeds

Each secondment position under this call is tied to a specific DeepTech Deployment Action and a predefined TestBed. A TestBed is the technology and experimental setup on which the selected talent will work during the secondment.

Two DeepTech Deployment Actions are available under this ETF Cohort 1 call. Each position is tied to one industry host and one main secondment topic.

3.1 DeepTech Deployment Action 1: ETF -> DKR - XR/VR cobot training



INDUSTRIAL

HUB

1 - Industrial Automation
<https://industrialhub.ba/>

Join **Industrial Automation**, Bosnia and Herzegovina's first domestic robot system integrator and a leader in industrial robotics and advanced manufacturing. Learn how robotics research is translated into operational industrial solutions through robot-cell integration, automation workflows, remote and predictive maintenance, commissioning, troubleshooting, safety, and customer-driven validation.

Main topic: XR/VR-supported cobot programming and training cell for DKR. The secondment will support DKR in developing internal capacity for ROS/ROS 2-based cobot programming, using VR/XR tools as a training and knowledge-transfer layer before deployment on a physical robot cell. The technical focus will be on learning and documenting ROS-based cobot control, using immersive training modules for safe operator upskilling, and creating a small demonstrator cell at DKR for internal training, client demonstrations, and future DeepTech Deployment actions. **Nominal TestBeds:** XR Neuroergonomic Cobot-Supported Manual Assembly TestBed (**Figure 1**) + VR Training for Collaborative Robots TestBed (**Figure 2**).

Responsible persons:

ETF TestBed PI:

Nikola Knezevic
Assistant professor
Email: knezevic@etf.rs

DKR contact point:

Ahmed Korlatovic
Project coordinator
Email: a.korlatovic@dkr.ba

3.2 DeepTech Deployment Action 2: ETF -> XRI - XR/VR-based



**Extended
Reality
Institute**

assessment of workspace ergonomics

Collaborate with **Extended Reality Institute**, a private research organisation at the frontier of ergonomics and VR/XR. Work alongside

experts in human factors, programming and 3D modelling, and learn how immersive technologies move from prototype to real use through XR interaction design, motion tracking, remote assistance, virtual training, usability testing, and deployment in human-centred environments.

2 - *Extended Reality Institute*
<https://www.xr-institute.cz/en>

Main topic: XR/VR-based assessment of workspace ergonomics. The secondment will explore how human motion, posture, and

interaction data can be collected in immersive environments and used to assess ergonomic risks, evaluate workspace layouts, and support human-centred workplace design. In practical terms, the goal is to reproduce representative work tasks in XR/VR, analyse worker movements and physical demands, and use the results to identify and test ergonomic improvements before implementation in a real human-robot collaborative workspace. **Nominal TestBeds:** XR Neuroergonomic Cobot-Supported Manual Assembly TestBed (**Figure 1**).

Responsible persons:

ETF TestBed PI:

Nikola Knezevic
Assistant professor
Email: knezevic@etf.rs

XRI contact point:

Marek Bures
Executive director
Email: bures@xr-institute.cz

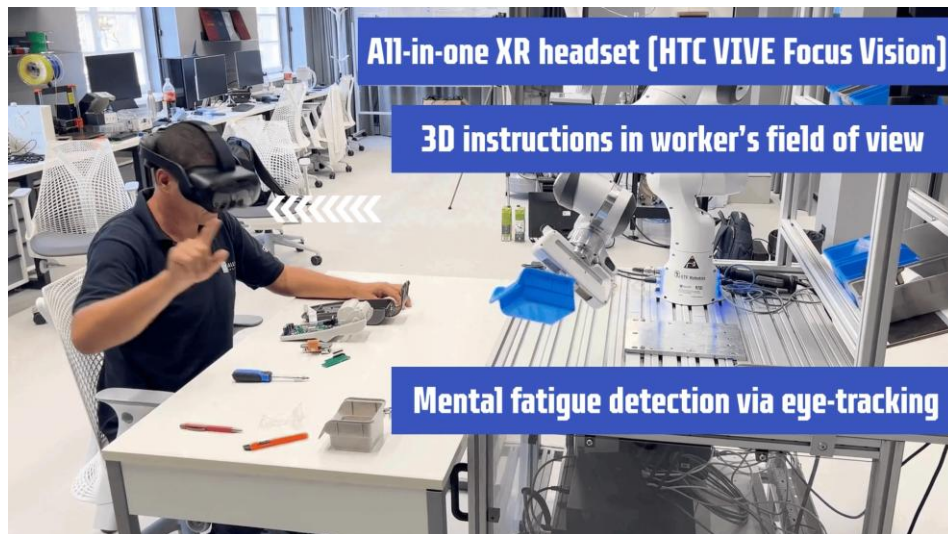


Figure 1 – **TestBed**: XR Neuroergonomic Cobot-Supported Manual Assembly

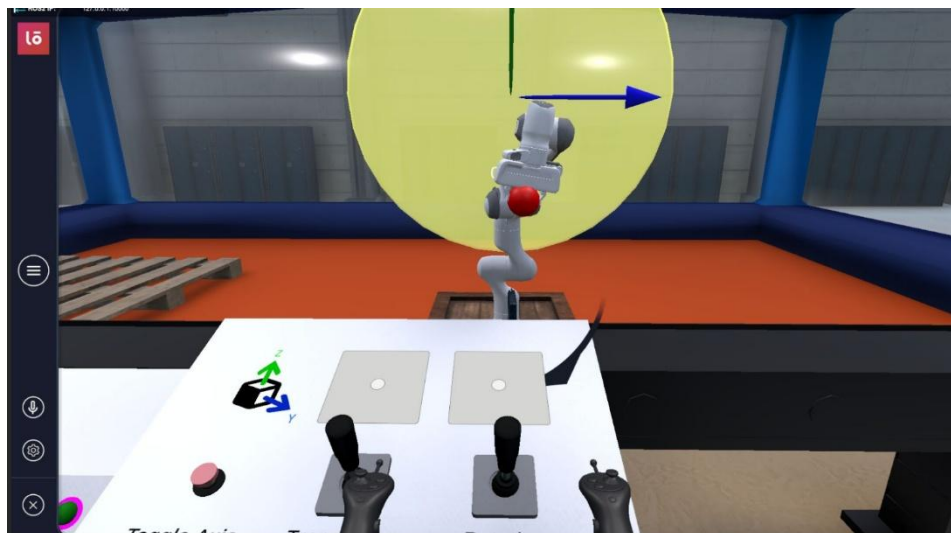


Figure 2 - **TestBed**: VR Training for Collaborative Robots TestBed

4 Transversal skills secondments and topics

Each selected Talent will also complete two 1-month Transversal Skills secondments: one at PTP and one at K&I. Transversal Skills secondments complement the DeepTech Deployment by helping selected talents build career-relevant skills beyond their technical field: project execution, innovation and entrepreneurship, knowledge valorisation, and responsible research and innovation.

The available Transversal Skills Actions are listed below.

4.1 Transversal Skills Action 1: PTP - Innovation & Entrepreneurship



3 - Pomurje Technology Park
<https://www.p-tech.si/en/>

Learn from **Pomurje Technology Park**, a regional innovation hub supporting start-ups, SMEs, technology transfer and business growth. Explore how research results move towards the market through business modelling, entrepreneurship programmes, access-to-funding support, investor readiness, internationalisation strategies, and practical engagement with technology park services.

Expected learning focus: business modelling, entrepreneurship programmes, technology transfer, access-to-funding support, investor readiness, internationalisation, and practical engagement with technology park services relevant to research valorisation.

PTP contact point:

Sarah Vidmar Ravber
 Project manager
 Email: sarah@p-tech.si

4.2 Transversal Skills Action 2: K&I - RRI



4 Knowledge and Innovation
<https://www.knowledge-innovation.org/>

Collaborate with social science and RRI experts from **Knowledge and Innovation**, to understand how DeepTech innovation can become more responsible, inclusive and socially robust. Gain practical exposure to gender-responsive research planning, stakeholder engagement, co-creation, monitoring and evaluation, policy-oriented work, and ethical, legal and societal dimensions of emerging technologies.

Expected learning focus: gender-responsive research planning, stakeholder engagement, co-creation, monitoring and evaluation, policy-oriented work, and ethical, legal and societal dimensions of emerging technologies.

K&I contact point:

Claudia Colonnello
Senior social researcher
Email: colonnello@knowledge-innovation.org

5 What will be expected from selected talents?

During the secondment, selected candidates will be expected to:

- Carry out a 3-month DeepTech Deployment at the assigned industry host organisation, working on the assigned TestBed under the guidance of the home mentor and host supervisor.
- Carry out two 1-month Transversal Skills secondments, one at PTP and one at K&I.
- Follow the CITADELS Career Development Plan methodology, including preparation of a career and return plan with mentor support.
- Provide input to the CITADELS human-centricity study, such as responding to a questionnaire or providing structured feedback when requested.
- Meet the related project requirements: participate in preparation and follow-up meetings; comply with host access, safety, confidentiality, data protection, and dissemination rules; contribute to secondment documentation, reporting, and testimony; and, where appropriate and cleared, contribute to publications, datasets, code repositories, technical documentation, dissemination materials, or presentations arising from the action.

The selected Talent will have a mentor from ETF and a daily supervisor from the relevant host organisation. The mentor supports career planning and professional development. The host supervisor supports daily secondment work.

Post-secondment, selected candidates will be expected to participate in CITADELS Task 5.3 post-secondment career-support activities, including:

- Be involved in the post-secondment and return phase activities – including dissemination and knowledge sharing activities – for instance participation in one (or multiple) whole-day events called CITADELS Days.
- 6 months of post-secondment mentoring from their CITADELS mentors;
- two online monitoring meetings;
- dissemination and knowledge-sharing activities, such as participation in one or more CITADELS Days, where relevant;
- one IDEATON session, where selected talents will work with peers to develop Business Plans or R&I Project Proposals;
- one PITCHING session, where developed ideas may be presented for further support.

Each selected Talent will be provided with a €1,500 professional development voucher after the secondment, as part of the CITADELS post-secondment career-support process, to support participation in international conferences, training activities, or other eligible career-development opportunities. Where a Talent's Business Plan or R&I Project Proposal is selected as promising, the Talent may also receive further mentoring support to develop it towards submission, implementation, or fruition.

6 Financial conditions

This secondment is a **fully funded mobility opportunity** within the CITADELS project.

Selected candidates will receive support for eligible mobility-related costs, in accordance with CITADELS project rules and the applicable internal procedures of ETF. This support is expected to include travel, accommodation, and subsistence or mobility-related support, including a mobility allowance, subject to the Secondment Arrangement and institutional rules.

This call does not offer a separate scholarship. Candidates employed by ETF will retain their regular employment status during the secondment, subject to institutional rules and required approvals.

In addition to secondment-related mobility support, each selected Talent will be eligible for a €1,500 post-secondment professional development voucher, in line with CITADELS Task 5.3 and project rules, to support participation in international conferences, training activities, stakeholder events, or other eligible career-development opportunities.

7 Relevant research interests and professional experience

Applicants should demonstrate expertise, technical competencies, research interests, or professional experience relevant to the selected TestBed and DeepTech Deployment Action. Depending on the specific deployment opportunity, relevant areas may include: robotics and automation, extended reality, artificial intelligence, computer vision, data analytics, human-machine interfaces, advanced sensing, simulation, digital twins, software engineering, industrial testing, validation, or responsible design of DeepTech systems.

All CITADELS TestBeds can be found at <https://www.deeptech-citadels.com/catalogue>.

Specific profile required for this call: applicants should have a background or strong professional interest relevant to collaborative robotics, ROS/ROS 2, XR/VR, human-machine interfaces, artificial intelligence, motion/interaction data, simulation, industrial training, or deployment and validation of human-centred DeepTech systems. Candidates should indicate whether they are applying primarily for the ETF -> DKR route, the ETF -> XRI route, or both routes.

8 Why apply?

Participation in the CITADELS programme offers a unique opportunity to strengthen technical expertise, expand international networks, and gain hands-on experience in applying DeepTech solutions within real-world environments.

Selected candidates will benefit from:

- An international secondment at a leading industrial or research organisation working on cutting-edge DeepTech applications.
- Direct involvement in the deployment, testing, validation, or adaptation of innovative technologies within a dedicated CITADELS TestBed.
- Personalised mentoring and support through the CITADELS Career Development Programme, including the preparation of an individual career and return plan.

- Exposure to different research, innovation, and organisational cultures through collaboration with partners from academia, industry, and innovation support organisations across Europe.
- Opportunities to develop complementary professional skills through a dedicated transversal skills secondment in areas such as research management, knowledge valorisation, responsible research and innovation, or innovation support.
- Access to the wider CITADELS talent community, fostering long-term professional connections and future collaboration opportunities.
- A €1,500 post-secondment professional development voucher to support participation in international conferences, training activities, or other eligible career-development opportunities, in line with CITADELS project rules.
- Opportunities to contribute to scientific, technical, innovation, or dissemination outputs arising from the secondment activities, where relevant and appropriate.

9 Inclusion, fair access and data management

CITADELS is committed to inclusive R&I participation, equal treatment, and non-discrimination.

Applications are especially encouraged from early-career researchers and, doctoral researchers. In line with CITADELS' commitment to fostering inclusive and diverse research and innovation in the DeepTech sector, applications from underrepresented groups — including women researchers, researchers with disabilities, and researchers from diverse socio-economic, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds — are particularly welcomed.

The selection process is designed to be free from gender bias, and candidates from all backgrounds will be assessed according to the same criteria published in this call. The selection process is described, alongside its indicative timeline, in section 14.

Where candidates are equally ranked, the project's objectives concerning inclusion and gender balance will be taken into account, in line with applicable rules and the principles of fairness, transparency, and equal treatment.

The selection process is subject to oversight under the CITADELS Quality Management Plan and Data Management Plan, ensuring compliance with ethical, legal, and procedural standards, including the principles of equal-treatment and non-discrimination.

Application data will be handled in accordance with GDPR, institutional data protection rules, and project requirements. Personal data submitted for this call will be used only for the purposes of this selection process and will be shared only with authorised persons involved in the selection and administration of the CITADELS secondment.

Any Intellectual Property (IP), management tools, or reports created by the Research Talent during the secondment shall be governed by the terms of the CITADELS Consortium Agreement. Unless otherwise agreed, any IP generated specifically for the Host Institution's internal processes shall be owned by the Host Institution, while the Talent retains the right to use non-confidential methodologies for their professional development at the Home Institution.

10 How to apply

Applications must be submitted through: [CITADELS Cohort 1 Open Call Applications Form - ETF – Fill out form](#)

Application period: 8 July 2026 - 31 August 2026

Deadline: 31 August 2026, 23:59 Anywhere on Earth (AoE).

Late or incomplete applications may not be considered. An acknowledgment of receipt of the application will be sent to candidates within 48 hours.

11 Required application materials

All submitted materials should be in the English language (Approval letter and Proof of employment may be provided in the original institutional language alongside a translation).

- Curriculum vitae (up to 2 page).
- Completed and signed Commitment Statement using the template provided as a supporting document for the call.
- Motivation letter (up to 1 page).
- any access, safety, or logistical constraints that may affect participation.

11.1 Guidance for the Motivation Letter

The motivation letter should be concise and should not normally exceed one page.

Applicants should explain:

- their motivation for participating in the CITADELS programme;
- how their academic, research, technical, or professional background aligns with the selected TestBed and DeepTech Deployment Action;
- the expertise, skills, or experience they would bring to the secondment and their expected contribution to the proposed activities;
- how the secondment aligns with their career development objectives and future professional aspirations;
- how they plan to apply the knowledge, skills, and experience acquired during the secondment in their future research or professional activities;
- where relevant, how the secondment could contribute to strengthening the research, innovation, or educational activities of their research group, department, or institution.

The motivation letter should also demonstrate the applicant's understanding of the proposed secondment activities, their commitment to participating in the preparation, secondment, and follow-up phases of the programme, and their willingness to work in an international, collaborative, and multidisciplinary environment.

The information provided in the motivation letter will contribute to the assessment of the evaluation criteria below.

12 Evaluation criteria

Applications will be evaluated on the basis of fit with the DeepTech Deployment Action and the CITADELS Research Talent role.

Criterion	Points
Fit between the candidate's profile and the specific TestBed / Deployment Action	20
Relevant technical, research, or professional experience	20
Motivation and clarity of expected contribution	20
Availability and feasibility of participation in the secondment and in CDP activities	20
Evidence of collaboration in multidisciplinary, international, intersectoral, or applied research and innovation activities	10
Alignment of the proposed secondment with the applicant's career development and institutional context	10
Total	100

Eligibility and preliminary scoring will be assessed on the basis of the submitted application documents. Candidates who fulfil the eligibility requirements and demonstrate the required availability and commitment will be shortlisted and invited to an online interview. The interview will be used to confirm and finalise the assessment of the published evaluation criteria, including motivation, expected contribution, feasibility of participation, and alignment with the CITADELS Research Talent role. Final ranking will be determined after the interview stage, based on the complete assessment. A reserve candidate may also be selected.

13 Selection committee

The selection committee will be appointed by ETF in accordance with institutional rules and CITADELS project procedures. The committee should normally include:

- two representatives of ETF;
- a representative of the WP5 career planning process.

The committee may consult the host organisation on technical feasibility and host requirements. Evaluators will declare any conflict of interest before assessment. The selection will be documented through a restricted selection evidence pack containing the call text, publication link, applications received, COI declarations, and scoring grid with interview notes where relevant, ranking, selected candidates, and reserve candidates.

14 Selection process indicative timeline

The evaluation process will be carried out in two stages. First, the selection committee will conduct an administrative eligibility check and preliminary assessment of the submitted application documents, including the candidate's signed commitment statement, proof of eligible contractual relationship, motivation letter, CV, and required approvals. Candidates who meet the eligibility requirements and demonstrate the necessary commitment and availability will be shortlisted.

Shortlisted candidates will then be invited to an online interview with the selection committee. The interview will determine the final scoring and ranking, using the evaluation criteria published in this call.

The publication of selection results will define the selected candidates and reserve candidates. Two candidates will be selected, with reserve candidates if applicable. Candidates on the reserve list may be contacted if a selected candidate withdraws or becomes unable to participate.

Step	Indicative date
Call publication	15 July 2026
Application deadline	31 August 2026
Evaluation	1-3 September 2026
Online interviews with shortlisted candidates	4-7 September 2026
Publication of the selection results	7 September 2026
Confirmation and Secondment Arrangement	13 September 2026
Preparation meetings	1 month before agreed secondment date
DeepTech Deployment secondment	1 April 2027 - 30 September 2027
Transversal skills secondment	1 October 2026 - 30 September 2027
Follow-up, reporting, and testimony	1 November 2027

Dates may be adjusted depending on project requirements, host availability, and institutional procedures. Transversal Skills secondments may be effectuated either before, or after the DeepTech Deployment secondments. **For the secondments, exact dates within these windows will be agreed with the talent, home institution, and host institution.**

15 Obligations of the Research Talent

The Research Talent explicitly agrees to the following obligations for the duration of the secondment:

- **Valid identification and travel documentation:** The talent is solely responsible for ensuring they possess a valid National Identity Card and/or a Passport for the entire duration of the secondment. The talent must also ensure compliance with any visa or immigration

requirements of the Host country prior to the Commencement Date. The Seconded is responsible for maintaining all evidence required for the Project's financial audit, including boarding passes, hotel invoices, and a record of attendance.

Note: A valid passport is mandatory for secondments hosted by institutions located outside the EU and the Schengen Area (Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina).

- **Health insurance:** The talent must ensure they carry the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) and any additional insurance certificates provided by the Home Institution at all times during the period of the secondment.

Note: The EHIC is only valid within the EU. For secondments at Host Institutions located outside the EU and the Schengen Area (such as Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina), the acquisition of a temporary private health insurance policy is mandatory. The costs associated with this temporary health insurance are considered eligible expenses under the CITADELS project budget.

- **Compliance with local rules:** The talent shall respect the Host Institution's internal regulations, including working hours, health and safety protocols, security procedures, and codes of conduct.
- **Confidentiality:** The talent undertakes not to disclose any sensitive or proprietary information accessed during the secondment at the Host Institution to any third party (including the Home Institution, unless strictly necessary for the Project) without prior written authorization.
- **Personal equipment and infrastructure usage:** The talent is required to bring and use their own personal equipment (e.g., a personal laptop) for the duration of the secondment. The Seconded shall take full responsibility for the care, maintenance, and security of their personal equipment, and shall use the Host Institution's infrastructure and consumables in a responsible and sustainable manner.

16 Obligations of the Home Institution

- **Travel, accommodation and subsistence allowance:** Eligible travel, accommodation, and subsistence or mobility-related support will be arranged, reimbursed, or otherwise provided in accordance with CITADELS project rules, the applicable internal procedures of ETF, and the relevant Secondment Arrangement. The exact form and timing of support may differ between consortium institutions.
- **Insurance:** The Home Institution shall ensure that the Research Talent is fully covered for the entire duration of the secondment. The responsibility for ensuring and, where applicable, financing these insurances lies with the Home Institution, using the Project's allocated budget.

The coverage must include:

i. Medical expenses and assistance: The Home Institution shall provide or reimburse a Private Travel Insurance policy covering emergency medical expenses, hospitalization, and urgent repatriation that may not be fully covered by public healthcare.

ii. Personal accident insurance: The Research Talent remains covered by the Home Institution's mandatory workplace accident insurance. The Home Institution warrants that this coverage is extended to activities performed at the Host Institution's premises and during travel.

iii. Civil liability: The Home Institution shall ensure that the Research Talent is covered for any third-party liability (accidental damage to property or persons) during the performance of the seconded tasks at the Host Institution.

17 Obligations of the Host Institution

- **Infrastructure and equipment:** The Host Institute shall cover costs associated with the use of premises, infrastructure, equipment, products and consumables during the period of the secondment.

Note: The Research Talent will use their personal computer; the Host Institution will not provide a personal computer.

- **Logistical support:** The Host Institution shall assist the Research Talent by providing guidance and accompaniment regarding housing and administrative issues related to cross-border secondments.
- **Payments:** The Host Institute will not pay any salary, fees, or costs associated with accommodation or travel to the Research Talent.

18 Holidays, leave and sickness

The Research Talent is expected to perform the secondment activities without planned holidays. Any exceptional leave must be agreed upon in writing by both the Home and Host Institutions. In case of sickness, the Research Talent must report to the Home Institution according to internal procedures. If the sickness exceeds one (1) week, both the Home and Host Institutions shall consult each other to decide on the continuity or early termination of the secondment.

19 Early termination

Either ETF, the Host Institution, or the Research Talent may terminate the future secondment agreement by providing 14 days' prior written notice to the other parties. In the event of a material breach of conduct, safety regulations, or confidentiality by the Research Talent, the Host Institution reserves the right to terminate the secondment with immediate effect, subject to prior consultation with ETF.

20 Contact point for Applicants/Application Desk

For questions about this call, please contact:

Filip Becanovic
Research associate

Email: filip.becanovic@etf.rs

Phone: +381 11 3218318

For questions about the specific TestBed or DeepTech Deployment Action, please contact:

Nikola Knezevic

Assistant professor

Email: filip.becanovic@etf.rs

21 Disclaimer

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