MSCA COFUND PICTUS

PhD Fellowship Programme

GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

2nd Call for Applications

Czech Technical University in Prague

1. The programme at a glance

Item	Detail
Programme	MSCA COFUND PICTUS — International PhD Programme at the Czech Technical University in Prague
Funded by	The European Union under Horizon Europe, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (COFUND), co-funded by CTU
Positions in this call	8 fully funded doctoral fellowships
What you get	A 48-month full employment contract with CTU, combined with enrolment in a CTU doctoral study programme
Call opens	Sept 3, 2026
Submission deadline	Dec 3, 2026, 24:00 CET — no extensions
Results communicated	February 2026 (indicative)
Earliest start of contract	March 1, 2026
Language	English. All application documents and the interview are in English.
How to apply	Online application form linked from the PICTUS call webpage. Applications by e-mail are not accepted.
Project administrator	pictus@cvut.cz

What you receive

Item	Amount / provision
Gross monthly salary (incl. Mobility Allowance)	2888 EUR or 69 300 CZK per month, before tax and before the employee contribution to social and health insurance[1]
Indicative net salary (incl. Mobility Allowance)	Approximately 55 000 CZK per month for a single researcher with no dependants [2]
Family allowance	Approx. 8 888 CZK per month where you have dependent family members, as defined in Section 8 [3]
Travel and mobility support	Support for conference travel and for secondments
Research costs	Reasonable costs will be covered by CTU
Training	Structured doctoral training, a transferable skills programme, and secondments to partner organisations

[1] Cofund allowance 3 300 EUR + Mobility allowance 600 EUR include employer contribution to social and health insurance of 35%

[2] This amount may be higher, as theMobility allowance of 600 EUR in some cases may be tax-free

[3] This amount may be higher, as the Family allowance of 500 EUR in some cases may be tax-free

Note on the salary. The figure is gross, under the standard Czech employment scheme. It includes the 11% employee contribution to social and health insurance and is subject to 15% income tax. Tax reliefs apply, for example to employees with children, so your net pay may differ from the indicative figure. Amounts are subject to exchange rate adjustment.

2. Eligibility

Eligibility is checked before any scientific evaluation. It is a pass or fail check against the criteria below and there is no discretion: an application that fails any criterion is rejected, however strong the research proposal is.

2.1 The eligibility criteria

Criterion	Requirement	How it is verified
Degree	Master degree obtained or must complete all the Master degree requirements by the call deadline. This means all courses finished and Master thesis submitted.	Master's diploma uploaded with the application. If you have not yet graduated, upload an official statement from your university confirming your expected graduation date. Your Master thesis must also be uploaded
Compatible background	Your previous studies must be compatible with the research topic you apply for.	Assessed from your CV, your Master's thesis and the topic you have chosen.
Mobility	You must not have resided or carried out your main activity (work or studies) in the Czech Republic for more than 12 months in the 3 years immediately before the call deadline. Career breaks are not counted.	Declared by you in the application form (in the CV) and verified against documentary evidence before appointment. A false declaration leads to withdrawal of the offer.
Doctoral status	You must not already hold a doctoral degree.	Declared in the application form.

2.2 The mobility rule

It is a rule about where you were physically based, not about your nationality. Czech nationals returning from abroad can be eligible; foreign nationals who have been living in Prague for two years are not.

Reference period: the 3 years (36 months) counted backwards from the call deadline of December 2026 that is, the period from December 2023 to December 2026.

The time does not have to be continuous. Three separate stays of five months each add up to fifteen months and make you ineligible. Career breaks are not counted towards the reference period. Compulsory national service, parental leave and documented long-term illness may extend it. If any of these apply to you, contact the helpdesk before the deadline with your dates, so that the reference period can be adjusted in writing.

Worked examples

Situation	Eligible?	Why
Indian national, Master's completed in Germany, never lived in the Czech Republic.	Yes	Zero months in the Czech Republic within the reference period.
Czech national, has lived and worked in France for the last 5 years, visits family in Prague for holidays.	Yes	Short visits are neither residence nor main activity. Nationality is irrelevant.
Spanish national, Erasmus exchange at CTU for 6 months two years ago, otherwise in Spain.	Yes	6 months is under the 12-month limit.

Ukrainian national, employed in Brno for the past 20 months.	No	More than 12 months of main activity in the Czech Republic within the reference period.
Slovak national, Master's completed at a Czech university, graduated 8 months before the deadline after 2 years of study in Prague.	No	Study in the Czech Republic counts as main activity and exceeds 12 months.
Italian national, 10 months in Prague, then 6 months of documented parental leave in Italy, then abroad.	Yes	10 months of Czech residence is under the limit, and the career break extends the reference period.

3. Choosing a topic and contacting the supervisor

3.1 You must apply to a listed topic

PICTUS is not an open call for any research idea. A list of research topics is published with the Call. Each topic has a named supervisor, a host faculty or department, and a short scientific description. You select exactly one topic and write a research proposal that develops it. Proposals that do not correspond to any listed topic, or that select a topic and then describe unrelated research, score poorly on Excellence and are not competitive. You may submit only one application per call. If you submit more than one, only the most recent submission is considered.

3.2 Contact the supervisor before you submit

You are expected to consult your research proposal with the supervisor of your chosen topic before submitting. Applicants who do so write better proposals, because they know what infrastructure, data and expertise are actually available. Contact them as early as possible in the call period.

What the supervisor does: gives scientific advice, discusses your proposed research, and explains the expertise and infrastructure available.

What the supervisor does not do: write your proposal, promise you a position, comment on your chances, or take any part in evaluating or selecting candidates.

How to write the first e-mail

- Subject line: "PICTUS 2nd Call — enquiry about topic [number and short title]".
- One paragraph on who you are: current or most recent degree, institution, field.
- One paragraph on why this topic: what in your background connects to it, plus one or two concrete questions about the research direction.
- Attach your CV.
- Keep it under 300 words.

4. The documents you must upload

All four documents are mandatory. All must be in English and uploaded as PDF through the online application form. An application missing any of them is incomplete and is treated as ineligible.

File naming: Surname_Name_DocumentType.pdf — for example, Novak_Jan_CV.pdf

4.1 Curriculum Vitae

Format: PDF, maximum 3 pages, maximum 10 MB. Free layout, but it must contain all six sections below, each clearly labelled.

Required section	What to include

a) Education received	For each degree: institution, country, dates, title of the degree, grade or classification with the grading scale used, and the title of the final thesis. State your expected graduation date if you have not yet graduated.
b) Working and professional experience	Employer, role, dates and one line on your responsibilities. Include part-time and research assistant roles. Explain any gap of more than six months.
c) Prizes and awards	Name of the award, awarding body, year, and one line on what it recognises and how competitive it is. If you have none, write "None" rather than omitting the section.
d) Participation in projects	Project title, funder, your role, dates, and what you personally contributed.
e) Internships	Host organisation, country, dates, supervisor, and what you worked on.
f) List of publications	Full bibliographic references with DOI where available, grouped by type: journal articles, peer-reviewed conference papers, book chapters, preprints, other. Mark your own name in bold. If you have no publications, write "None", this is normal at Master's level and is not penalised in itself.

Do not include a photograph, date of birth, marital status or personal identification numbers. These are not assessed and their presence raises data protection issues.

4.2 Master's thesis

Format: PDF, maximum 20 MB. This limit is enforced by the form.

- Upload the full thesis as submitted, in its original language if it is not in English.
- If the thesis is not in English, add an English summary of min. 2 pages at the front of the same PDF, covering the objectives, methods, results and your own contribution.
- If your thesis exceeds 20 MB, compress the images rather than deleting content. Do not split it across the other upload fields.

4.3 Research proposal

This is the document that determines your score. Its required structure is set out in full in Section 5.

Format: PDF, maximum 10 pages excluding references, font size 11 pt or larger, single spacing, margins of at least 2 cm, maximum 10 MB. Pages beyond the limit are not read by evaluators.

4.4 Master's degree diploma

- A scanned copy of your diploma, plus the diploma supplement or transcript of records if you have one.
- If the diploma is not in English or Czech, add a translation. A certified translation is not required at application stage.
- Recognition of a foreign degree (nostrification) is not required at application stage. Successful candidates are assisted with this before enrolment.
- If you have not yet graduated: upload an official statement from your university confirming your enrolment and expected graduation date. You must hold the degree by the date your contract begins.

5. Writing the research proposal

The proposal must contain the four sections below, in this order, using these headings. Evaluators score the first three sections against the published criteria and read the fourth as part of the assessment of your suitability. If a section is missing, the corresponding criterion cannot be scored.

Section	Length	What it must cover
1. Excellence	5 pages	● The state of the art and the specific gap you address.

		• Your research objectives, stated as a small number of specific, verifiable objectives rather than general aims. • Your hypothesis or research question. • Methodology: what you will actually do, in enough detail for a specialist to judge whether it will work. • What is novel or ambitious about the approach, stated explicitly. • How the work fits the chosen PICTUS topic and the host group's expertise and infrastructure. • Interdisciplinary or intersectoral aspects, where relevant.
2. Impact	2 pages	• Expected outputs: publications, datasets, software, prototypes, patents. Be concrete about type and number. • Scientific impact: what changes in the field if this work succeeds. • Societal or economic impact where applicable, and who the beneficiaries are. • Dissemination, exploitation and communication plan, including open science practices such as open access publication and FAIR data management. • Impact on your own career: which skills and networks this project builds.
3. Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation	2 pages	• A work plan broken into work packages or phases across the 48 months. • A timeline, for example a Gantt chart, with milestones and deliverables. • Resources needed — equipment, data, computing, access — and confirmation that the host provides them. • Risk assessment: the two or three realistic risks, each with its mitigation. • Planned secondments, collaborations, mobility and training. • Data management, ethics and any approvals required.
4. Personal motivation	1 page	• Why this topic, this supervisor, this university, and why now. • Your career goals during and after the fellowship. • The research and professional skills you expect to gain, and the gaps you need to close. • What you bring to the host group.

6. How your application is evaluated

Every eligible application is assessed independently by three evaluators: two external experts and one internal CTU evaluator. They work independently and do not see each other's scores before submitting their own. They then meet to agree a consensus score and consolidated written comments.

6.1 Criteria and weights

Criterion	Weight	The question the evaluator answers
Excellence	50%	Is the research question significant, is the approach sound and ambitious, and is the candidate's background a credible match for delivering it?
Impact	20%	Will the results matter beyond the thesis, is the dissemination and open science plan credible, and will the fellowship measurably advance the candidate's career?
Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation	30%	Is the work plan realistic for 48 months, are resources and risks properly addressed, and is the host environment adequate?

6.2 What a strong proposal looks like

Criterion	Scores well	Scores poorly
Excellence	A clearly identified gap, supported by current literature	A general topic area with no identified gap
	Three to five specific, verifiable objectives	A list of vague aspirations
	Methods described in enough detail to be judged feasible	A method named but not described
	An explicit statement of what is new and why it is difficult	Novelty asserted without evidence
	Prior work in the CV that demonstrably supports the methods proposed	No link between the CV and the proposal
Impact	Named target journals and conferences, and expected output types	"Results will be published"
	Concrete beneficiaries and a route to reaching them	Generic claims about benefiting society
	Open access and FAIR data handled specifically	Open science not mentioned
	Career development described as specific skill gaps to be closed	"This will help my career"
Implementation	Work packages and a visual timeline with milestones across 48 months	A narrative with no schedule
	Two or three real risks, each with a specific mitigation	"There are no significant risks"
	Resource needs listed and confirmed as available at the host	Resource needs not addressed
	Secondments and training identified by name	Mobility mentioned only in the abstract
	Data management and ethics addressed proportionately	Ethics ignored where the work clearly requires it

The best proposals will be shortlisted for Interview.

6.3 The interview

Candidates who pass the threshold are invited to an interview conducted in English, online or in person. The panel includes external experts and a chair, and assesses:

- your understanding of the proposed research;
- your scientific and methodological competence;
- your motivation and suitability for the fellowship;
- your capacity to complete both the project and the doctoral training;
- your communication and presentation skills;
- the quality of your responses to the panel's questions.

6.4 Ranking, results and feedback

- The Supervisory Board establishes the final ranking list and a reserve list on the basis of the documented written evaluation and interview results.
- All applicants are informed of the outcome, whether successful or not.
- If you ask, you may receive the consolidated evaluator comments on your application.

- If you are placed on the reserve list, you may be offered a position later if a selected candidate withdraws or does not meet the conditions for recruitment.

6.5 Impartiality and confidentiality

Evaluators declare any conflict of interest before assessing an application and are reassigned where a conflict exists. This includes recent collaboration, supervisory relationships, close personal relationships and financial interests. All applications are assessed under identical conditions irrespective of gender, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. Applications and evaluation documents are handled confidentially throughout.

7. The process, step by step

#	Stage	What you need to do
1	Call published	Read this Guide and the topic list; identify your topic.
2	Contact the supervisor	E-mail the supervisor and discuss your proposed research.
3	Submission	Submit the online form with all four documents. Start your PhD admission application (see 7.1).
4	Eligibility check	Nothing, unless you are contacted for clarification. Respond promptly if you are.
5	Independent evaluation	Nothing.
6	Consensus and shortlisting	Nothing.
7	Interviews	Attend the interview and prepare any requested presentation.
8	Final ranking and reserve list	Nothing.
9	Results communicated	Check your e-mail, including the spam folder.
10	Offer and acceptance	Accept in writing by the stated deadline. An offer not accepted in time may pass to the reserve list.
11	Recruitment and appointment	Complete PhD admission, provide originals and certified documents, complete visa and residence formalities.
12	Onboarding and start	Attend the introduction meting, confirm supervision arrangements, prepare your Career Development Plan.

7.1 The parallel PhD admission application

A PICTUS fellowship is an employment contract plus enrolment in a CTU doctoral programme. These are two separate applications, and you must complete both.

- Apply for admission to the relevant CTU doctoral study programme at the same time as your PICTUS application.
- At some faculties doctoral admission may be closed when the call is open. In that case submit your PICTUS application, and you will be notified when the doctoral admission system opens.
- The doctoral admission procedure is run by the faculty and has its own requirements, fees and deadlines. Check them with the faculty.
- Selection for a PICTUS fellowship does not guarantee doctoral admission, and doctoral admission does not guarantee a fellowship. You need both.

7.2 Submission mechanics

- Submit through the online application form linked from the call webpage. Applications by e-mail, by post or via a supervisor are not accepted.
- Prepare all four PDFs before you open the form.
- The deadline is Dec 3, 2026, 24:00 CET — no extensions The system closes at that moment. Technical problems on your side are not grounds for an extension.
- Submit at least 48 hours early. Uploads fail most often in the final hours of a call.
- You should receive an automatic confirmation. If it has not arrived within several hours, contact the helpdesk immediately and keep evidence of your submission attempt.
- If you need to correct a submitted application before the deadline, you can do so. In case of problems contact helpdesk. Corrections after the deadline are not possible.

8. Employment, family allowance and practical matters

8.1 Your contract

- A full-time employment contract with CTU for 48 months. This is employment, not a stipend: you have the associated rights, including paid annual leave, sick leave, parental leave and pension contributions.
- MObility and fam,ily allowance can be paid as a tax-free scholarship
- You are enrolled at the same time as a doctoral student at the relevant CTU faculty.
- Your progress is reviewed annually against your Personal Career Development Plan.

8.2 Family allowance

The family allowance of 500 EUR per month (supergross[4]) is paid where you have dependent family members at the time you begin the contract. "Family" means persons linked to you by marriage or by a relationship with equivalent status under national law, or dependent children for whom you have a maintenance obligation. Your family status is fixed at the start of the contract and, in line with MSCA rules, is not revised later. Supporting documents are requested before appointment.

8.3 Visas, residence and arrival

- Non-EU citizens need an employee card or long-term residence permit. Processing can take several months, so begin as soon as you accept the offer.
- The CTU Welcome Office assists selected candidates with visas, residence registration, health insurance, the accommodation search and the initial administrative steps.
- Recognition of your foreign degree may be required for doctoral enrolment. You are guided through this after selection.
- Czech is not required for the fellowship.

9. If you think something went wrong

You may request a review of the procedure if you believe that a procedural irregularity materially affected the outcome of your application.

You may request a review of	You may not request a review of
An incorrect eligibility assessment	The scientific opinions of the evaluators
Administrative or factual errors in processing your application	Differences in expert judgement

[4] What you get depends on the tax and social and medical insurance rates. In some cases this amount is without tax

Failure to follow the published evaluation or recruitment procedure	The scores you were awarded
A procedural conflict of interest	The wording of evaluator comments
A breach of equal treatment	The final ranking, where it rests solely on the scientific evaluation
Procedural irregularities during interviews or consensus meetings	
Failure to comply with published timelines or decision-making procedures	

Disagreeing with the scientific assessment of your proposal is not grounds for a review.

How to submit a request

1. Send a written request electronically to pictus@cvut.cz within 10 calendar days of the notification of the outcome. Requests received after this deadline are normally inadmissible.
2. Include your name or application identifier, the proposal title, a clear description of the alleged procedural irregularity, and any supporting evidence.
3. The Programme Management Team checks admissibility. You may be asked for further information within a specified period.
4. Admissible requests are reviewed by the Supervisory Board, excluding any member with a conflict of interest or who took part in the decision concerned.
5. You receive a reasoned written decision, normally within [30] calendar days of receipt of an admissible request. The decision is final within the PICTUS programme.

The possible outcomes are: rejection of the request; correction of an administrative error; or a partial or full re-evaluation, where a procedural irregularity could reasonably have affected the outcome.

10. FAQ

Question	Answer
Can I reapply in a later call if I am unsuccessful?	Yes, and previous applications are not held against you.
Can I do part of the fellowship abroad?	Yes. Secondments are part of the programme and should be described in your implementation plan.
What happens if I am placed on the reserve list?	You may be offered a position if a selected candidate withdraws or does not meet the conditions for recruitment.
Can I change my proposal after submitting?	Only before the deadline.. No changes are possible after the deadline.
Does my supervisor see my application?	Supervisors do not evaluate applications and do not decide who is selected. They may take part in interviews.

11. Contacts

Purpose	Contact
Administrative helpdesk, eligibility questions, technical problems with the form	pictus@cvut.cz
Scientific questions about a topic	The supervisor named in the published topic list
Visas, residence, accommodation, arrival	Project HR officerKaroliba Bambousova bambokar@fel.cvut.cz or CTU Welcome Office
Call webpage	https://international.cvut.cz/jobs-at-ctu/pictus-phd-fellowship-programme/

This Guide is issued by the PICTUS Programme Management Team and complements the PICTUS Call for Applications. Where this Guide and the published Call text differ, the Call text prevails.