

EURAXESS Brazil Newsletter is a quarterly electronic newsletter, edited by EURAXESS Brazil, which provides information of specific interest to European and non-European researchers in Brazil who are interested in the European research landscape and conducting research in Europe or with European partners.

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Please email to brazil@euraxess.net for any comments on this newsletter, contributions you would like to make, if you think any other colleagues would be interested in receiving this newsletter, or if you wish to unsubscribe.

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EURAXESS BRAZIL

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1 Briefing

Overview of my 4 years as EU Science Counsellor in Brazil, by Piero Venturi

Dr.-Ing Alejandro ZURITA is the new scientific Counsellor at the EU Delegation.

With a background in energy, Mr. Zurita developed his career in the private and public sectors.

He started working for the European Commission in 1990, and in 1996 he moved to DG Research (nuclear fission) in Brussels where he contributed to project management and policy development in various reactor safety areas. Before starting at the EU Delegation to Brazil, he held the position of head of the Euratom International Cooperation sector.

Alejandro Zurita will share his views about his forthcoming mission in our next newsletter. Stay tuned!

„It is with a mixture of sadness and pride that I write these lines of farewell after four years as the EU's Science Counsellor in Brazil. Without doubt, this experience has been enriching from many points of view. I am proud of the results we achieved in cooperation with the Brazilian and European actors, which definitely improved our reciprocal knowledge and capacity to cooperate.

Several research areas have been targeted with the aim to improve cooperation between European and Brazilian scientists. For example, in bioenergy a joint call on advanced biofuels was published with 5 million Euro funding from the European side and a similar amount from the Brazilian contributors (Fapesp, Confap and MCTI). In the area of health, at the beginning of the Zika outbreak, the EU was the first foreign donor to open a call on the Zika virus for 10 million Euros, including funding for Brazilian scientists. Brazilian research groups were included in the leading European projects, such as Nanoreg on regulations in nanotechnologies. First-class Brazilian institutions were invited to be part of several international platforms: Glrepid-R - dealing with infectious diseases; Belmont Forum on environment, and the new International Bioeconomy Forum (IBF) in the area of bioeconomy.

When I arrived in Brazil, the main deadlock for participation of Brazilian scientists in the key European research programme Horizon 2020 was due to the new rules, which compared to the previous program FP7, did not permit automatic funding for Brazilians. It took quite some effort to identify the leading Brazilian institutions which could have an interest and the means to support this cooperation. Finally, an agreement was signed with Confap (Brazilian National Council for the State Funding Agencies) and with Fapesp, which gave the opportunity to scientists affiliated to projects of Horizon 2020 to be financed by their State Foundations. Currently, the Foundations of São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Santa Catarina, Distrito Federal, Parana, Goias and Espirito Santo are supporting their scientists, but it is expected that in the near future other States will join the agreement. For this reason, it is essential that Brazilian scientists transmit the importance of their cooperation with European colleagues to their Foundations.

I cannot forget the negotiations that have paved the way to the ERC-CONFAP agreement which will be signed in Brussels in the next weeks. It will allow top Brazilian scientists to join the European Research Council networks for a limited period, increasing their experiences and networks of contacts.

I would also like to remind of the good cooperation I had with the counsellors of the other Member States. This helped build up beneficial synergies which led to several initiatives and meetings all over Brazil, with the objective to give the Brazilian scientific community a flavour of the multiple opportunities of working with the European States bilaterally or together with the Commission.

It appears that there are many instruments supporting the effort of Brazilian and European scientists to work together, and EURAXESS is definitely one of them, and these important tools can be used according to political guidance and budget. I am positive that in the future Brazil and Europe will be able to define the best opportunities even more and will face together the challenges we are all confronting at the global level.“



2 Hot topics – How to apply for a (Marie Skłodowska-Curie) post doc grant?

This article has been written by two young cognitive scientists, [Christina Bergmann](#) and [Sho Tsuij](#), who share their insight and advice on their blog [Cogtales](#).

They are both currently conducting postdoctoral research supported by a Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant. You can also follow them on [twitter](#).

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First, check the eligibility and formal criteria

Post doc grants usually fund only between 5 and 20 percent of applications, so they are happy when they can weed out applications before even sending them out to reviewers. Avoid being one of those that don't even get feedback on their work by checking carefully whether you and your host institution are eligible and make sure you fulfil all formal criteria (number of pages or word limits, are all sections and appendices there, is the font correct and not too small, etc).

For instance, to even be able to apply for a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowship you need to be an "experienced researcher", which is defined as being in possession of a doctoral degree or have at least four years of full-time equivalent research experience at the deadline for the submission of proposals. It sounds simple, but is very important and thus seems not to be considered enough.

Take the non-science parts very seriously

If you look at how Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant proposals are evaluated, most of the points go to aspects of the proposal that have seemingly nothing to do with the science you want to do. There are many reasons for that, for example, if it is a training grant, then you should be sure to describe how the experience will help you grow as a scientist. They also want to make sure that the money is well spent by asking you to supply a lot of details about where you want to go and what kind of support you will receive there, both scientifically and in terms of admin, equipment, etc.

Sho will give you a concrete example based on her own experience: "I applied unsuccessfully once before getting the grant. I got full points on the research parts but lost points on "Training" (note that this was still under the previous framework, thus the structure is slightly different now – elements of the previous "Training" part are now found both in "Excellence" and "Impact"). The main negative feedback I got was:

- (1) The proposal does not give full evidence of how the relevant training courses will be included in the candidate's training plan.
- (2) The provision of training to develop the applicant's complementary skills, such as project management, is not sufficiently detailed in the proposal.

While this might seem minor, these two points transformed the proposal from an A-ranking to not even a B-, but a C-ranking, which is one step from the worst!

As to (1): In the old proposal, I had mentioned several training activities (learning new data acquisition and analysis techniques), but not explicitly said how that would benefit me in the future (thinking that would be obvious). So in the new proposal, I basically just added one sentence to each of the skills I listed, saying things like "This skill is crucial for my future research since knowing how to use technique A is the only way I will be able to assess X in infants"; "New skill B in combination with my old skill C will make me one of the pioneers of doing Y in Europe".

As to (2), I had mentioned I would gain project management skills simply by executing my research project. I had been more specific with other skills, and



that was simple enough: For instance, I mentioned I'd improve my writing skills by preparing journal articles together with my supervisor. But only for not specifically saying how I would gain project management skills I lost crucial points. So for my second try, I described several task coordination scenarios that would come up during my project, for instance coordinating multiple home visits at babies' homes, and linked that to the acquisition of project management skills.

And voila – that worked!”

Take time and ask for a lot of feedback

A brilliant, succinct, and impactful research proposal, like most writing, is rarely churned out a week before the deadline. Do take time, among many benefits this allows you to look back after a week of doing something else (and that includes vacation, you deserve it) and spot inconsistencies, omissions, and generally things to be improved.

If you know people who previously applied for the same grant, ask them for feedback. Ideally, get also people on board who are not in your core research field, because the evaluators won't be just from the small pool of your close colleagues. They often have a new perspective and will help you improve your proposal further, making it clear even for a non-expert.

There are also often dedicated *grant advisors*, either affiliated to foundations within your home or target country or at your current / future institution. They often also offer training sessions, and are usually happy to read your proposal with an eye on the formal aspects (see previous points, they matter a lot). In addition, when contacting a grant advisor from your target institution, they might be able to share previous successful proposals. Do look at them carefully, even if they come from organic chemistry and you care more about applied psychology. For example, details about the host institution can often be re-used.

Finally, Sho and I exchanged proposals, because there is no direct competition. The X best ones will be funded, but they had no problem giving 3 grants to our host institution in our round, and none in the year before. Someone who is in the same boat, knows the guidelines as well as you, and still possesses a fresh pair of eyes can be incredibly useful. We helped and inspired each other, for example when describing our host lab; the facts about this lab don't change so we could use the same information and split the work of finding out what, who, where, and when. As you see, this strategy was successful in our case.

Don't despair when confronted with very confusing language and an obscure submission system

The text in the documents provided to applicants, especially [this template](#) describing the different subcategories that you are supposed to elaborate on, can be very opaque. I asked professors at my target institution and did not receive the same interpretation twice. So what information goes where? This was especially tricky for us since they had just restructured the grant when Sho and I applied. So we could not simply look at proposals that our colleagues had kindly shared from previous years. Here, too, it can be extremely useful to talk to someone in the same boat and figure this all out together, and to ask some external grant advisor for additional feedback.

But even after a lot of asking around and discussing, what goes where stayed opaque in many cases. Our strategy there was in general to try to implement something from what everyone said – so write in a way that both professor A and professor B would be satisfied with. Within the place constraints, better repeat than leave out – after all, if one reviewer expects a certain element in Part A, she might still deduct points even if you mention that element in Part B and therefore left it out in A.

Brazilian National Contact Points (NCPs) for Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA):

CONFAP

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Some additional bits that might be useful

- A *figure* says more than 1000 words, so if you can add one to the science part, I'd recommend doing so.

- Last time I checked they did not have strict formal requirements for *references*. I added author names, years, and journal (incl issue/volume/number/pages) as footnotes and found this very space efficient



It might also take some time to get familiar with the submission system, do not postpone this bit to the last minute, either. Usually, right before the deadline is the busiest time for the system anyhow and it will be slow to react. So ideally have everything ready and just clickclick, submit. As we wrote [earlier](#), not all messages are as clear as we'd like them to be within the system, as in the documents. Take your time, ask someone else, and *don't panic*.

About the Marie-Skłodowska Curie Actions Individual Fellowships

What is it?

Individual Fellowships belong to the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) under Horizon 2020, the European Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.

Individual fellowships are either **European Fellowships** or **Global Fellowships**. European Fellowships are an opportunity for Brazilian researchers to work in research labs in Europe for up to two years. Global Fellowships offer the opportunity of Brazil-based research institutions to host a European fellow.

What is the aim of MSCA-IF?

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowships aim at enhancing the creative and innovative potential of experienced researchers (postdocs) through advanced training and international and intersectoral mobility.

Who can apply?

European fellowships are awarded to the most promising researchers of any nationality who want to benefit from advanced training in Europe (mobility rules). The host organisation (academic or non academic) in Europe employs the awarded researcher. Applicants either hold a PhD degree or have at least four years of full-time equivalent research experience.

Why should I apply?

You can expand and strengthen your network and gain new expertise through advanced training and mobility.

How does it work?

Proposals are submitted jointly with a "host" organisation in Europe and you as the researcher. You, the researcher, develop the proposal in cooperation with a European organisation that would be willing to host you. Host organizations can be universities, research centres or companies.

How can I apply?

First, find the right call on the Horizon 2020 Participant Portal [here](#). Then, inform yourself and read the important documents (Guide for Applicants – [here](#) for 2016 - and [Work Programme](#)).

For questions, please contact brazil@euraxess.net or MSCA NCPs (contact above).

When can I apply?

The next MSCA-IF call for proposals will open on 11 April 2017 with a deadline of 14 September 2017. More information [here](#).



EURAXESS members in Focus

EURAXESS – Researchers in Motion is an initiative of the European Research Area (ERA) that addresses barriers to the mobility of researchers and seeks to enhance their career development. This pan-European effort is currently supported by 41 countries, of which **we will profile one in each of our quarterly EURAXESS Brazil newsletters**. In this edition, we zoom in on the Slovak Republic.

[Research and Development in Slovakia](#), Brochure, 2016

3 EURAXESS members in focus: THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

[Slovakia](#) is a young and dynamic country offering an increasing number of opportunities to carry out excellent research and to turn it into practical application or business outlets. It has been an attractive destination for foreign investors, having one of the highest shares of medium and high tech exports in the EU and being the number one producer of cars per capita in the world. Now Slovakia has a strong ambition to take another step forward, to become the hub of innovations and encourage more Slovak companies to follow the examples of [ARDACO](#), [c2i](#), [ESET](#), [Ecocapsule](#), [GA Drilling](#) and several others that are among the innovation leaders in their fields. Research and development should be at the heart of this exciting transformation.

Slovakia and its Research, Development & Innovation System

R&D in the Slovak Republic is carried out particularly at public sector institutions, including [23 public and state universities](#), 57 institutes of the [Slovak Academy of Sciences](#) and specialised research institutes established by state administration central bodies. The private sector currently lags behind in R&D activities but several targeted policies and funding programmes should help to increase the number of researchers in private companies in the near future.

The portion of researchers in the working population is slightly under the average in the EU. 42,7% of researchers in Slovakia are women, compared to 33,2% in the EU, and their percentage is comparatively high also in the majority of [STEM disciplines](#). On the other hand, foreigners only comprised 2,4% of researchers employed in Slovakia in 2014 and increasing the number of international researchers in the R&D is therefore one of the main challenges for Slovak research institutions.

R&D expenditure in Slovakia is relatively low in comparison with the wider EU. In 2014, the overall spending on R&D was 0,9 % of GDP but it should increase to 1,2 % of the GDP by 2020. Considerable investment in the new research infrastructure has been made mainly due to the Structural and Investment Funds of the European Union. During the last decade brand new research infrastructures have been established or upgraded in all key research institutions and many research institutions now have an infrastructure comparable to that of the best R&D institutions in Europe. Further upgrades of the R&D infrastructure will be financed from the European Investment and Structural Funds in the period of 2014 - 2020. The establishment of these integrated scientific infrastructures has already shown its first success and the Slovak Republic became, together with Portugal, the most successful country in the first [Teaming for Excellence Call](#) (Horizon 2020) with a gain of four projects which should result in the creation of international centres of excellence.

Research Excellence in Slovakia

The areas with the largest potential to contribute to excellent, cutting edge research on an international scale were defined in the [Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation](#) (RIS3 SK) which outlines the R&D priorities to be funded in the forthcoming years via national funding schemes but also via EU structural funds. These areas reflect both the scientific and research capacities available and the economic specialisation of Slovakia. The R&D priorities include the **research of materials & nanotechnology, ICT and biomedicine & biotechnology**. Technology priorities include **industrial research, environmental & agricultural research and research on**



environmentally friendly and sustainable energy. The role of **social sciences** in tackling the global and local societal challenges is also stressed in the Strategy.



Several new [Science Parks](#) were established since 2007. Comenius University Science Park in Bratislava (in the picture above) should provide the space for collaborative interdisciplinary research in the fields of biomedicine, biotechnologies, environmental medicine and related societal challenges. (Photo: Vladimír Kuric)

The majority of institutions producing excellent and innovative research are located in Bratislava, one of the most innovative regions in the new EU member states according to the [EU Innovation Scoreboard](#). But research excellence and strong innovation potential can also be found elsewhere. The region of Košice is building its reputation of the Slovak “Silicon Valley” with a high concentration of ICT firms and related R&D activities. “[IT Valley](#)” cluster was one of the first industrial clusters in the region of Central and Eastern Europe awarded with the [Gold Label of the European Cluster Excellence Initiative](#). The region of Žilina is becoming a home of top quality research on intelligent transport systems, not only because of the presence of the numerous companies related to the car and transport industry, but also due to the ERA Chair grant awarded to the [University of Žilina](#).

Recruitment Opportunities

Public Sector Recruitment Opportunities

Most researchers in Slovakia are employed in public sector institutions, with universities being the most important employers of research staff. All positions open at the Slovak universities are published on [the webpage](#) of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport. Similarly, the Slovak Academy of Sciences announces all vacancies via its [public website](#).

Experienced scientists from abroad who are interested in working at the institutes of the Slovak Academy of Sciences can also apply for a **fellowship within the [SASPRO programme](#)**, co-funded under FP7. The programme allows applications for a fellowship from 12 to 36 months, in all fields of knowledge.

PhD candidates are considered to be regular students in Slovakia and receive a **monthly scholarship** if enrolled as full time students. Selected PhD programmes offered in English language can be found in the [overview prepared by SAIA](#).

Slovak researchers working abroad who consider returning to Slovakia might be interested in the [reintegration programme “Návraty”](#) introduced last year. The programme enables research institutions from the public sector to open the positions for highly qualified Slovaks living abroad and receive the extra funding from the state that would enable them to provide competitive salaries and other conditions to the returnees.

Private Sector Recruitment Opportunities

Slovakia is a country with a strong industrial base, a tradition of industrial R&D and a high share of medium and high technology production. Nevertheless, the R&D activity of the business sector remains relatively low which is reflected also in the lack of the R&D positions at Slovak companies. Recently introduced innovation policies (support to clusters, innovation vouchers, tax reliefs) and funding programmes indicate a positive shift that should contribute to increasing R&D activity in the business sector.

Besides supporting the R&D capacities in the established industries and companies, the creation of new technological start-ups is strongly encouraged. This support is not limited to Slovak citizens only. [Concept Paper on Start-up support](#) in Slovakia adopted by the Slovak Government in 2015 foresees various advantages for international researchers who decide to start their innovative business in Slovakia. These include start-up visas, grants and more. With a population of around 5 million, Slovakia is ideal for testing new ideas.



Researchers considering a short-term research stay in Slovakia can choose from a [variety of available options](#). The largest programme providing funding for study and research stays in duration from 1 - 12 months is **The National Scholarship Programme (NSP)** administered by [SAIA, n. o.](#), a mobility funding agency and also a member of the European EURAXESS network.

More information about the programme is available at www.scholarships.sk

Text prepared by Janka Kottulová, Katarína Košťálová and Mária Sásová, EURAXESS Slovakia team in SAIA, n. o. and the Slovakian embassy to Brazil.

Funding Opportunities

The competitive funding for R&D and innovation projects is provided by several public agencies. The main R&D grant agency in Slovakia is the [Slovak Research and Development Agency](#) (SRDA), which offers funding for research projects in both basic and applied research and across all scientific areas. Employees of universities and the Slovak Academy of Sciences can also apply for smaller grants supporting basic research ([VEGA grants](#)) and use its outcomes in the educational process ([KEGA grants](#)).

Larger infrastructural projects and collaborations between academia and industry are mostly supported by the Structural and Investment Funds of the European Union. More than 2.2 billion Euro have been allocated to the Operational Programme Research and Innovation for the period 2014 - 2020. Two agencies are responsible for distributing this Programme's funding: the [Research Agency](#) and the [Slovak Innovation and Energy Agency](#)

Research collaborations

Slovakia enjoys all benefits of being part of the European Research Area, with an access to the major international R&D funding programmes, collaborative networks and some of the world's best research infrastructures.

As a member state of CERN, the European Space Agency or the Institute for Nuclear Research in Dubna, the country provides its researchers with an opportunity to participate in some of the most thrilling research projects of the modern era.

Its geographical location, historical ties and current policies (see e.g. [EU Strategy for the Danube Region](#)) make it an especially attractive place to develop research collaborations with the regions of the Balkan and Eastern Europe.

Important information for incoming researchers

The instrument of **hosting agreement** was introduced to simplify the relocation of third country researchers to Slovakia. Researchers who signed a hosting agreement with a research institution or a university can apply for a temporary residence for the purpose of research and development. This type of residence requires fewer administrative duties and allows for a faster decision-making procedure. In this case, a researcher does not need a work permit or a job offer confirmation).

Practical assistance to international researchers is available at EURAXESS Service Centres in [five Slovak towns](#). The most comprehensive summary of practical information for mobile researchers is available on the national portal of the Slovak EURAXESS Network (www.euraxess.sk) and in the regularly updated [International Researcher's Guide to Slovakia](#).

Collaboration with Brazil

While there is still a lot of room for growth in this area, there has been a steady increase of collaboration between Slovakia and Brazil in the areas of R&D. The Brazilian company Embraco, which employs over 2000 people in Slovakia, has expanded its activities by establishing a research & development centre in 2014.

Past successful collaborations include the areas of agriculture and technologies used in road construction. Slovakia is very interested in collaborating with Brazilian researchers and participating in programmes such as *Science without borders*.



4 EURAXESS Links Brazil activities

4.1 [EURAXESS Science Slam 2016](#)

scienceslambrasil.com



Journalists, access our **press kit** [here](#). Contact us for any interview request.

EURAXESS Links Brazil received 45 applications for its science communication competition.

The 5 best candidates have been selected and will be testing their science communication skills during the live final of the EURAXESS Science Slam Brazil 2016, to be held at **Lapa Café in Rio de Janeiro on 19 October**.

The finalists are:

- **Alessandra Xavier Bueno**, UFRGS, Master student in Public Health
- **André Azevedo da Fonseca**, UEL, Researcher - Lecturer in Cultural History and Communication
- **Bruna Medeiros de Araujo**, UNIFESP, Master student in Nutrition and Health
- **Diego Nogueis**, UFPR, Master student in sustainable territorial development
- **Gabriel Poesia Reis e Silva**, UFMG, Master student in Computer Science

The final is supported by the **Brazilian Academy of Science (ABC)** and will be part of the National Science and Technology week (SNCT 2016) official agenda.

All finalists as well as selected scientists will be offered the possibility to improve their presentation techniques at a **one-day science communication course** given by some of the best communication professionals, including the organiser of **TEDx Rio**. To participate in the EURAXESS workshop (18 October) register at <https://comunica.splashthat.com/>

Beside the travel to Rio offered to all finalists, the winner will be awarded a **free trip to Europe** in June 2017 to **visit a top European research institute of his/her choice financed by EURAXESS Links**.

Finals:

19 October 2016, 18:30

Special presentation by the writer and presenter of Nerdologia videos, Atila Iamarino

Cocktail offered by EURAXESS Brazil

Free event. Registration required through: scienceslambrasil.com

Live broadcast on [EURAXESS Links Brazil Youtube channel](#)

Venue: Lapa Café, av. Gomes Freire, 453/457 - Lapa, Rio de Janeiro

4.2 [Looking for funding opportunities?](#)

Have a look at our [compilation of open calls](#) to fund researchers' mobility and cooperation with European teams. The document consists of a selection of grants & fellowships funded by the European Commission, EU Member States or Brazilian authorities to help you turn your interest in research mobility into reality. The latest edition is available here: [Funding opportunities - September 2016](#)

This list is compiled on a regular basis until the new EURAXESS portal is deployed, and it will include a **database of funding opportunities!** If you wish to receive it by email, write to brazil@euraxess.net.





4.3 In case you missed our Flashnotes

[Erasmus+ - Interview Brian Holmes, EACEA](#)

[EC Joint statement UK Referendum](#)

[Focus on the Netherlands](#)

[ERC Starting Grant now open](#)

[Horizon 2020: Largest budget ever for research excellence and mobility](#)

Focus on [Erasmus+](#), [MSCA](#), [Erasmus Mundus](#)

[Swiss Government Scholarships for 2016-2017](#)

[Workshop Science slam](#)

[POLAND – INCOMING Fellowships Polonez 3 programme](#)

[FRANCE - PRESTIGE Postdoc programme - Incoming, outgoing and reintegration](#)

[Open call to select Innovative Training Networks \(ITN\) under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions](#)

[Brazilian researchers from selected states can get co-funding from their FAPs to participate in Horizon 2020 collaborative projects](#)

4.4 Meet a European researcher in Brazil – [Geraldo Cebrian](#)

If you are looking for new a new job in research and/or a mobility opportunity, you can also use the **EURAXESS Job portal**, on which thousands of fellowships and positions related to science are available everyday.

It is free of use and covers all research areas.

Jobs.euraxess.org

How did you come to Brazil? With which initiative or funding?

I came to São Paulo in August 2012 with a postdoctoral scholarship from FAPESP to work at the Fundamental Chemistry department of USP. In 2015 I moved to Rio de Janeiro and now have a postdoctoral grant from CNPq to work in the Inorganic Chemistry Department of UFF.

You are going back to Europe. How did you find a new position?

I was offered a contract at the University of Nîmes (France), as a temporary lecturer and research assistant which I found on the EURAXESS Jobs website. That's why I'm leaving Brazil.

At the University of Nîmes I'll have the opportunity to work on a different line of research and my teaching responsibilities will be greater than to date. Furthermore, this will be a new international experience for me which will increase my skills and hopefully help me succeed in applying for further grants/calls both in Brazil and abroad. This particular funding comes from the French Ministry of higher education and research as it a vacancy at the University of Nîmes. I will be working at the Max Mousseron Biomolecule Institute, in the Bioorganic Chemistry Lab.

How was your experience in Brazil and what has it taught you?

My professional experience in Brazil was fantastic !! During the last four years I worked in three different laboratories, with totally different lines of research and therefore learned a lot over that time. I also had the opportunity to train and work as a lecturer and acquired even more experience giving lectures. On the personal side it was even better: I love Brazil, made many friends and met my future wife!