

## MECAM-Fellowships in the context of its Interdisciplinary Fellow Group “Resources and Sustainability”

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### Eligibility

##### **1. Who is eligible for the MECAM Fellowships?**

The Fellowships are aimed at researchers from any country, from all stages of their academic career (advanced PhD scholars, Postdocs, or advanced researchers) and from any discipline of the Humanities or Social Sciences.

##### **2. What exactly does it mean to be an "advanced PhD scholar", a "Postdoc" or an "advanced researcher"?**

Advanced PhD scholars are going to complete their doctoral thesis within the following two years. Postdocs, in general, completed their PhD no more than four years ago. Advanced researchers completed their PhD at least 5 years ago.

##### **1. What language skills are required for a MECAM Fellowship?**

MECAM’s working languages are English, French, and Arabic. Applicants should be able to communicate in at least two of these languages. Applications should be submitted in English or French.

##### **2. Do I have to be associated with one of MECAM's partner institutions to apply?**

No, an association with MECAM's partner institutions is not a precondition for application.

#### Application

##### **1. Can I submit my application by e-mail?**

Applications sent by e-mail will not be considered. Instead, we ask all applicants to submit their application via the secure online application platform of the Forum Transregional Studies: [application.trafo-berlin.de](http://application.trafo-berlin.de).

##### **2. Do I need to hand in samples of my scholarly work or recommendation letters along with my application?**

It is necessary to send us at least one sample of your academic work. Letters of recommendation can be waived. However, in the application platform you will be asked to provide two references from academics who know your work.

##### **3. Is the list of bibliographic references included in the page count of the project outline (1000 words)?**

Yes. A short bibliography should be part of your project outline.

**4. Are applicants expected to have published already?**

Yes. You are expected to have published academic articles or books prior to your application.

**5. When will I find out whether my application was successful?**

All applicants will be informed in writing about the result of their application by the MECAM Coordination Office. The application, evaluation, and invitation process will take about five months.

**6. What happens if my application is successful?**

Successful applicants will be informed according to the following procedure. This includes all further agreements regarding the prospective Fellowship.

1) Receipt of the Confirmation Letter

Once the selection process is complete, successful applicants will receive a "Confirmation Letter" by MECAM's two Academic Directors confirming their selection as a MECAM Fellow within the framework of an Interdisciplinary Fellow Group. Along with the letter, the prospective Fellows will receive the document "MECAM Terms and Conditions", which provides detailed information on the conditions of the Fellowship, rights and duties of the Fellows, remuneration and organisation of the research stay, as well as the "Declaration of Intent" form to be completed and returned to MECAM Coordination Office (see step 2).

2) Declaration of Intent by the Fellow

To confirm his or her intention to take up the Fellowship, the prospective Fellow submits a "Declaration of Intent" to the MECAM Coordination Office. This form will have been sent to the Fellow along with the Confirmation Letter. In addition to this form, the Fellow has to provide proof of income according to MECAM's Terms and Conditions as well as a signed version of the „MECAM Terms and Conditions“ document.

3) Receipt of the Grant Letter

Once the proof of income has been verified and the remuneration has been determined, the prospective Fellow will receive a "Grant Letter" along with the "Confirmation of Fellowship" form indicating the amount of the grant. This form has to be signed by the Fellow and returned to MECAM Coordination Office.

## **Fellowship Grants**

### **1. What are the financial conditions of the Fellowship?**

MECAM concludes an individual agreement with each Fellow prior to his or her arrival, in which the specific conditions of the stay are mutually agreed upon. The Fellowship grant is the financial agreement following the principle “no gain, no loss”. It enables the invited Fellows to pursue her or his project during the Fellowship and to engage in collective activities at MECAM without loss of income.

### **2. What allowances can be paid to the MECAM Fellow in addition to the stipend?**

In addition to the stipend, MECAM pays allowances for all fellows where the following criteria apply:

- All fellows will be reimbursed for their travel expenses from their place of residence to Tunis as well as the return journey (e.g. flight - economy class; train - 2nd class, etc.). Original receipts and boarding passes must be presented at the MECAM Coordination Office. If the total cost of the flight (economy) and additional travel expenses exceed 1,000 EUR and there is no cheaper alternative flight, scholars should contact the MECAM Coordination Office before booking. In addition, the re-location costs to Tunis, such as fees for extra luggage and visa fees, are reimbursed. Furthermore, accommodation costs in Tunis are also reimbursed by providing proof of expenses up to a maximum of 600 dinars (approx. 190 EUR) per month. The basis for this amount is the rent index for Tunis in a residential area estimated by the real estate agency Tecnocasa and the website [www.expats.com](http://www.expats.com).
- All fellows will be reimbursed for proven research costs up to an amount of 500 EUR.

### **3. Does the MECAM Fellowship involve compulsory social insurance?**

The MECAM-Fellowship does not establish an employment relationship. For this reason, MECAM does not make any contributions to pension and unemployment insurance.

### **4. Is the MECAM Fellowship tax free?**

The stipend is tax-free in Germany. It is up to the Fellows to clarify whether this tax exemption is also recognized in their home country.

### **5. Is the release of the Fellows from other obligations at their home institution a precondition for MECAM's Fellowships?**

The precondition for a MECAM Fellowship is the complete or partial release of the Fellow from other obligations at their home universities or other institutions. Which functions can be carried out further, in the sense of a partial release, is negotiated individually.

## Research stay

### **1. How is MECAM's Fellowship structured?**

The MECAM Fellowship runs for four months and is designed as a residential Fellowship at MECAM in Tunis/Tunisia. Each Fellow is part of an Interdisciplinary Fellow Group (IFG). The primary objective of all Fellowships is to create a high-quality and flexible environment for exchange and debate between researchers from different countries, disciplines, and at different stages of their academic careers. Therefore, virtual and personal forms of cooperation on topic-specific research questions are central to individual research projects and beyond. If the current pandemic situation prevents a stay in Tunis, Fellowships can be arranged in hybrid and/or sur-place forms, whereby the Fellowship holder remains at her/his current place of residence for part of or for the entire duration of the Fellowship.

### **2. What exactly do you mean by "hybrid" or "sur-place"-Fellowships?**

If there are travel restrictions due to the Corona pandemic, the model of a hybrid or sur-place Fellowship can be negotiated in exceptional cases.

A hybrid Fellowship means that the Fellow remains in her/his place of work and residence for a larger part of the Fellowship and - if the health situation permits - comes to Tunis for a shorter period of presence only. A sur-place-Fellowship means that the Fellow remains at her/his usual place of residence for the entire Fellowship period. In both cases, the Fellow needs to revise her/his work plan with regard to mobility restrictions and submit it to MECAM's coordination office. The rights and obligations of hybrid- or sur-place Fellows remain the same as those of resident Fellows, the financial conditions of the grant will be made according to the respective context. The model cannot be applied to cases other than the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **3. What is expected from the MECAM Fellows?**

Expectations for each Fellow are contractually defined in the document "Terms & Conditions", which is signed with the acceptance of the Fellowship. These include, among others, to take up residence in Tunis; to work on the Fellow's individual research project and to participate regularly in the activities and seminars of the IFG. The IFG programme includes:

- 1) weekly personal or virtual colloquia with lectures and presentations of individual research projects
- 2) collective writing groups aiming at the preparation of a joint working paper by all IFG members;
- 3) a first and/or final personal or virtual workshop, bringing together all IFG members, possibly involving external guests and researchers;
- 4) participation in MECAM activities and events in general;
- 5) use of the workspace provided by MECAM;
- 6) writing of a final report on the progress of the individual research and evaluating the MECAM stay within one month after the end of the Fellowship.

### **4. What are the residential obligations during my MECAM fellowship?**

The MECAM Fellowship is designed as a residential Fellowship in Tunis, with regular presence at the MECAM site. For absences of four to six days, the Fellow is expected to inform the MECAM coordination office in advance. Longer absences (more than seven days) should be negotiated with



one of the directors of MECAM and would require the director's approval in order to avoid a reduction of the Fellowship. MECAM Fellows are not entitled to a full monthly grant instalment if they are absent for more than seven days at a time or for a total of more than 14 days. MECAM reserves the right to make corresponding reductions in the payment of the Fellowship. Participation in academic conferences, research trips and visits to archives or libraries which are essential for the implementation of the project are not considered as absences if they do not last longer than one week (uninterrupted) or 14 days in total (over the duration of the scholarship).

**5. May I shorten or extend my Fellowship?**

No, in principle the MECAM Fellowship can neither be shortened nor extended. At the beginning of the research stay in Tunisia the Fellow is only entitled to her/his first full stipend if they arrive/start by the third working day of the first Fellowship month. Fellows who arrive after this date are not entitled to a full payment in that month. In the last Fellowship month, the Fellow is expected to be present at least until the 27th of the month. Fellows who leave Tunisia before this date are not entitled to a full stipend payment of their Fellowship for that month.

In exceptional cases, such as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, a hybrid and/or sur-place arrangement may be granted in which the Fellow remains in her or his place of usual residence for part or all of the Fellowship period.

**6. Can you help me find accommodation during my Fellowship period?**

The search for accommodation should be organised by the Fellow, but support by MECAM's Coordination Office is offered.

**7. I would like to come to Tunisia with my family. Do you take care of the organisation of childcare?**

Childcare should be organised by the Fellow, but support by MECAM's Coordination Office can be granted.

**8. What happens if there are travel restrictions due to Covid-19?**

If there are travel restrictions due to the Corona pandemic, the model of a hybrid or sur-place Fellowship can be negotiated in exceptional cases (see above).