

PROTOCOL ON SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL CO-OPERATION
BETWEEN
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PORTUGUESE REPUBLIC
AND
THE ISMAILI IMAMAT

11 February 2026



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The Government of the Portuguese Republic, acting through its Ministry for Education, Science, and Innovation (the “Government of the Portuguese Republic”), and the Ismaili Imam (the “Ismaili Imam”), hereinafter referred together as “Signatories”,

Considering:

- The increasing relationship between the Government of the Portuguese Republic and the Ismaili Imam, reflected in certain documents including: (i) the Protocol of Co-operation between the Government of the Portuguese Republic and the Ismaili Imam, signed on 19 December 2005, (ii) the Protocol of International Co-operation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Portuguese Republic and the Ismaili Imam, signed on 11 July 2008, (iii) the Agreement between the Portuguese Republic and the Ismaili Imam, signed on 8 May 2009, regarding the status of the Ismaili Community in Portugal (iv) the Agreement between the Portuguese Republic and the Ismaili Imam for the Establishment of the Seat of the Ismaili Imam in Portugal, signed on 3 June 2015 (published in the *Diário da República* on 27 October 2015) (the “Seat Agreement”), and (v) the Protocol of Co-operation between the Ismaili Imam and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education of the Portuguese Republic on Science and Technology, signed on 12 May 2016 (“2016 Protocol of Co-operation”);
- That the Seat Agreement, amongst other provisions, contemplates in its Article 16 (Support for scientific and economic development), paragraph 1, that “*the Ismaili Imam shall actively support the efforts of the Portuguese Republic to improve the quality of life of all those living in Portugal, particularly through the development in Portugal of world-class research projects in the said area*”, and that the Signatories agree that such support includes the fields of academic, scientific and technological development;

- That, in Clause 5 of the 2016 Protocol of Co-operation, the Ismaili Imam at made a financial commitment of 10 (ten) million euros over 10 (ten) years, to be channeled to research projects in the areas of co-operation set out in the 2016 Protocol of Co-operation, including “to advance academic, scientific and technological co-operation” (cf. Clause 1);
- The establishment of the Seat of the Ismaili Imam at in Lisbon and the long-term efforts of the Ismaili Imam at to improve quality of life and the welfare of peoples living in diverse geographic areas, including Portuguese-Speaking African Countries (“PALOP”, in the Portuguese acronym), as well as the wide experience of the entities together comprising the ‘Aga Khan Development Network’ (“AKDN”) in the fields of scientific and technical research;
- The work developed by the Aga Khan University (“AKU”), a member entity of AKDN, to improve quality of life and AKU’s goal to be “*on the frontiers of scientific and humanistic knowledge, radiating intelligence and confidence, research and graduates, into flourishing economies and progressive legal and political systems.*”;
- The creation of the ‘Agency for Research and Innovation’ (AI2, in the Portuguese acronym) and the pending approval of the Portuguese Law for Science and Innovation, both aimed at building a stronger, more efficient National System for Science, Technology and Innovation, notably through a framework of sustainable international scientific co-operation;
- The recent creation of the General Directorate for Studies, Planning and Evaluation (DGEPA, in the Portuguese acronym) by the Portuguese Ministry for Education, Science and Innovation, which will strengthen international co-operation in all areas, notably in PALOP and other countries in Africa;
- The Portuguese Cooperation Strategy 2030 (ECP 2030), set out in Council of Ministers Resolution (RCM) No. 121/2022, which prioritises the development of scientific and technological capabilities, the promotion of innovation, and international cooperation, including with PALOP, within the framework of its pillars: ‘People, Peace, Prosperity, and Planet’.
- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) established by the United Nations, notably SDG 3 - Good Health and Well-Being; SDG 4 Quality Education; SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth; SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure; SDG 13 - Climate Action; and SDG 17 - Partnerships for the Goals;

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- The progress made by artificial intelligence (“AI”) and other technologies, and its impacts on all fields related to improving quality of life, as well as unequal access to AI tools, ‘large language models’ and research;
 - The common interest of the Government of the Portuguese Republic and of the Ismaili Imamat to foster scientific and technical research promoting advances in the use of AI and other technologies, to improve the quality of life of the peoples living in Africa, in particular in PALOP;

Now, in consideration of the above, the Signatories decide as follows:

CLAUSE 1

Object

1. The purpose of this Science and Technology Co-operation Protocol (“Co-operation Protocol”) is to continue the work initiated under the 2016 Protocol of Co-operation, which this Co-operation Protocol replaces effective the date hereof, without prejudice to projects that are ongoing under the 2016 Protocol of Co-operation.
2. The Signatories agree to maintain continuity of the spirit underlying the 2016 Protocol of Co-operation, committing to develop academic, scientific and technological cooperation with developing countries and regions through the promotion of research capacity, notably through the use of AI tools and other technologies, targeting established, promising, researchers timely addressing topics of global importance, encouraging multidisciplinary collaboration, and securing sufficient resources in terms of magnitude and duration to promote a more significant impact in the said countries and regions.

CLAUSE 2

Terms of cooperation

1. The Signatories commit to underwrite a portfolio of competitive and collaborative research grants, for durations considered appropriate, normally 2 to 5 years, with emphasis on building scientific capacity in Portugal and in countries in Africa.
2. Invitations to apply for such grants related to one or more dimensions of use of AI and other technologies to foster quality of life, will be extended to joint research teams from Portugal, AKDN, AKU, and/or African countries. Applications will be evaluated through an independent peer review process, as provided in Clauses 4 and 6 below.



3. This cooperation shall take into account the organisation of advanced studies workshops and high-level international conferences, where relevant.
4. The Signatories agree that the Government of the Portuguese Republic may assign to the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology ("FCT"), or any successor entity, any and all of its rights and obligations under this Co-operation Protocol. Equally, the Ismaili Imamat may assign to one or more AKDN entities its rights and obligations under this Co-operation Protocol.

CLAUSE 3

Scientific areas for collaborative research

Topics eligible for collaborative research should emphasise emerging tendencies in the context of the use of AI and other technologies, to the extent they are connected with the following non-limitative list of areas:

- a) Education;
- b) Health;
- c) Telecommunications and Energy;
- d) Climate;
- e) Water and Environment;
- f) Agriculture.

CLAUSE 4

Criteria for the evaluation of applications for collaborative research funding

1. The criteria for evaluating funding applications shall include the following items:
 - a) Relevance of the proposed research topic;
 - b) Quality of the research plan contents and degree to which the latter may build research capacity in African countries, where applicable;
 - c) Competence and success track record of the researchers involved in the work;
 - d) Level of reciprocal cooperation between Portuguese researchers and researchers in African and AKDN institutions;
 - e) Appropriateness of the proposed budget;
 - f) Feasibility of producing results within five years that is to say likely to have a meaningful impact in African countries and to apply in other developing countries and regions;
 - g) African countries participation.

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2. Grant applications must (a) identify the principal researcher as well as the relevant institutions based in Portugal or in African countries or originating from the AKDN, and (b) specify the amount of financial support sought. Grant applications must also describe all the items mentioned in paragraph 1. above, including existing resources and expertise that will contribute to the success of the research.
 3. To maximise the impact of the collaborative research projects accepted by the Joint Research Assessment Committee (see Clause 6 below), the grant amount for a given project are intended to range between 100,000 (one hundred thousand) euros and 2 (two) million euros and to cover periods of 2 to 5 years.
 4. In order to be eligible to a grant award, collaborative research project submissions must clearly identify their ultimate objective and must include detailed illustrations of how such projects will contribute to the development of scientific capacity in the African countries in focus. The said submissions must also include a description of the mechanisms and instruments that will foster networking of scientists and researchers.

CLAUSE 5

Financing

1. Under this Co-operation Protocol, the financial commitment of the Ismaili Imamat is of 5 (five) million euros (including unused funds committed by the Ismaili Imamat under the 2016 Protocol of Co-operation that are not set aside for the purpose of Clause 10.3 below) to be applied over a 10 (ten)-year period ("Ismaili Imamat Financial Commitment"), to be channeled to research projects through FCT or any successor entity.
2. If the Signatories were to consider that additional funds are required, they will make their best efforts to try and identify sources of funding, e.g. FCT or any successor entity, other agencies, foundations and individuals interested in the use of AI and other technologies in connection with the improvement of quality of life in African countries, as well as institutional support from universities in Portugal, AKU and other universities based in Africa.
3. The Ismaili Imamat Financial Commitment will be paid to FCT or any successor entity by way of periodic payments as the Signatories will decide when approving research grant budgets.

4. FCT or any successor entity will issue annual reports of all investments and expenditures made under this Co-operation Protocol. Such reports will be submitted to the Ismaili Imamat for its review and approval prior to any disclosure to third parties.

CLAUSE 6

Joint Research Assessment Committee for Collaborative Research

1. The Signatories will establish a Joint Research Assessment Committee, comprising a panel of scientists with experience in Africa.
2. The Joint Research Assessment Committee will be charged with the calls for proposals, the assessment of grant proposals and the awarding of grants, as set out in Clause 4 above. Unless otherwise decided by the Signatories, the announcement of grant awards will be made by the Government of the Portuguese Republic or any entity that it may designate.
3. The Joint Research Assessment Committee will set up procedures to review grantees research progress throughout the course of the projects.
4. The administrative support to the Joint Research Assessment Committee and the management of the grants shall be provided by FCT or any successor entity.

CLAUSE 7

Joint Implementation Committee

1. The Signatories will establish a Joint Implementation Committee, comprising 6 (six) members, 3 (three) designated by the Ismaili Imamat and 3 (three) designated by the Government of the Portuguese Republic, as soon as possible following the signature of this Co-operation Protocol with a view to guaranteeing its implementation.
2. The Joint Implementation Committee shall continue the work developed by the Joint Implementation Committee established under the 2016 Protocol of Co-operation. The Joint Implementation Committee may be supported by any person (including volunteers) with the consent of its members.
3. The Joint Implementation Committee will submit to the Signatories an implementation programme, which, if approved, will be implemented



by FCT or any successor entity. The programme will set out a process for attracting and evaluating collaborative research projects submissions, consistent with the principles outlined in this Co-operation Protocol, and for monitoring project progress.

4. The Joint Implementation Committee will consult the relevant AKDN entities with a view to:
 - a) defining the characteristics of the abovementioned implementation programme;
 - b) advising on how best to elicit interest from potential funders, with reference notably to anticipated programme outcomes; and
 - c) providing its views on projects progress.
5. The Joint Implementation Committee will meet in Portugal at least twice a year throughout the duration of this Co-operation Protocol and will submit to the Signatories an annual evaluation report.

CLAUSE 8

Calendar

The Signatories decide on the following tentative initial steps:

- a) By the 1st of May 2026 at the latest: first formal announcements and call for collaborative research projects submissions;
- b) By the 1st of October 2026 at the latest: completion of the review process regarding submissions received;
- c) Early 2027: start of the first set of projects.

CLAUSE 9

Amendments

This Co-operation Protocol may be amended by the Signatories by written mutual consent.

CLAUSE 10

Entry into force

1. This Co-operation Protocol enters into force on the date hereof for a duration of 10 (ten) years. It replaces the 2016 Protocol of Co-operation, without prejudice to the provisions of paragraph 3 below.
2. Either Signatory may terminate this Cooperation Protocol before the end of the above-mentioned period of 10 years by giving 12 months

written notice to the other Signatory notifying its decision to terminate this Cooperation Protocol by the end of the said notice period.

3. Notwithstanding any such early termination, grants already awarded by the Joint Research Assessment Committee as of the date of termination of this Cooperation Protocol shall continue to be implemented as approved prior to termination, always subject, as regards the Ismaili Imamat contribution, to the Ismaili Imamat Financial Commitment ceiling.

Signed in Lisbon, on 11 February 2026, in two original and identical copies in Portuguese and English languages, one for each of the Signatories.

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE
PORTUGUESE REPUBLIC



HELENA CANHÃO
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR
SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

FOR THE ISMAILI IMAMAT



NAZIM AHMAD
THE DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE ISMAILI IMAMAT TO THE
PORTUGUESE REPUBLIC