

Participation of Portugal in Instruct -ERIC

Maria Arménia Carrondo
ITQB NOVA, Portuguese PCISBIO coordinator

Portugal has set up the **Portuguese Centre for Integrated Structural Biology (PCISBIO)** which was approved as an Affiliate Centre of Instruct in 2011, integrating research groups from seven Portuguese Universities. Instruct-ERIC was launched in 2017 and Portugal was a founding member and is now among its ten current members. A protocol between eight Portuguese institutions was established to secure the Portuguese participation in Instruct-ERIC, in particular the financial contribution as a member country. ITQB NOVA is the direct representative of Portugal to the Instruct-ERIC coordination.

PCISBIO provide support to the structural biology community in Portugal and acts as a key portal to facilities, training and networking through Instruct supported activities, which are accessible to researchers from all Portuguese Institutions and Universities.

Instruct-ERIC Centres provide the organizational framework to deliver Instruct activities to researchers and other stakeholders (technology developers, translational research industries, other research infrastructures, etc.). All Centres have at least one Flagship technology in which they specialize but most also offer open access to a varied range of high quality infrastructure and expertise including major structural biology technologies.

Instruct's core priority is to provide advanced infrastructure access with excellent support to state-of-the-art sample preparation and characterisation facilities, to core structure determination technologies, primarily electron microscopy (EM) with particular emphasis to cryo-EM, NMR, and X-ray crystallography as well as emerging structural biology technologies developing at the interface with cell biology, including cryo-electron tomography, correlative microscopy, X-ray imaging, single molecule techniques and in-cell NMR.

Additional to access, Instruct has also three other programmes: internships, training and pilot projects. Internships provide funding for up to 6-month student placement in cutting edge laboratories in one of its Centres. Training aims at delivering workshops by internationally recognized experts and are organized by scientists from member countries. Pilot projects support novel ideas and strong science.

Since its operational status, many Portuguese proposals were submitted to Instruct programmes, resulting in 26 access approved proposals in a total of 301 from all member countries, 8 approved training courses in a total of 43, 8 internships approved in a total of 22 and 4 pilot projects approved in a total of 35.

Portuguese participation in Instruct activities and programmes has therefore been rather successful in the various programmes, which considering the size of the country and of its scientific community demonstrate the extreme importance and added value of being integrated in this large European community represented by Instruct-ERIC.