



Belgium - China Research Cooperation

CALL FOR PROPOSALS 2023: SUPPORT OF RESEARCH PROJECTS
Projects' period: 2023-2026

Research area:

Biodiversity (Nature based solutions) and **Climate Change** (Co-designing climate services with stakeholders services)

Research Grant

INFORMATION DOCUMENT

Acronym of the proposed network (Maximum 8 letters):		
Full title of the research proposal		
Research focus (Please indicate at least 1 of both possibilities):	Biodiversity: Nature based solutions	
	Climate Change: Co-designing climate services with stakeholders	

CALL DEADLINE: 14 September 2023 at 3 p.m. in Belgium and around mid September in China.

Any proposal submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

Background, context, area of cooperation

Background

The present call is launched within the framework of the 'Agreement on the development of economic, scientific and technological cooperation between the Belgian-Luxemburg Economical Union and the People's Republic of China'¹ (25/11/1979).

The administrations in charge of the implementation of these agreements (BELSPO and MOST) agreed on jointly organizing a call in 2023 to support research projects.

Aims of the Call

The present call aims to:

- Contribute to scientific advancement in the 2 countries.
- Gather expertise from the concerned countries leading to innovative solutions and/or opening new research perspectives. The aimed research should be impact-oriented and of societal relevance.

Area of Cooperation

• Biodiversity

The biodiversity part of the call is focused on **Nature-based solutions (NbS)**.

This type of research is solution-oriented and relevant to society.

International programs point clear gaps in NbS research on some ecosystems (like marine, drylands, freshwater and mountains) and NbS are also part of solutions to counteract extreme events.

In 2022, at COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh and COP15 in Montreal, the term "Nature-based solution" has been included in both the [Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan](#) and in the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#).

NbS are defined as "actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems, which address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human well-being, ecosystem services and resilience and biodiversity benefits".

Topics

- ⇒ Advance knowledge for sustainable and effective Nature-based solution design and implementation
- ⇒ Monitoring and assessing role of biodiversity, ecosystem functioning and ecosystem services for NbS
- ⇒ NbS to foster transformative change
- ⇒ Knowledge to help promote the investment case for NbS

• Climate Change

The Climate Change part of the call is focused '**Co-designing climate services with stakeholders**'.

Decision-relevant scientific information - when delivered as a climate service - can help our societies to face current and future impacts of climate change (CC) on our economic, social and environmental systems. We define climate services as user-driven development, translation and transfer of climate knowledge from science to policy and decision-making (practitioners) with the aim to support climate action. This includes knowledge stemming from understanding the drivers of CC, its impacts as well as guidance for practitioners in policy and business. Climate services can also enable opportunities related to the transformative changes

¹ Translated from the original title (available in French and Dutch).

in society and help building resilience. Proposals under this call will address research gaps that exist between the diverse needs of user communities and the research community in climate science and in particular:

- ⇒ Advance the co-design and joint development of climate services with users to provide tools for decision-making in both the public and private sector.
- ⇒ Provision of new sets of projections based on identified user needs as well as of relevant impact and vulnerability indicators.
- ⇒ Co-design of adaptation options, pathways and assessments and comprehensive guidance documentation.

Proposals have to include engagement and communication strategies with stakeholders for the period of the project and in the longer term.

For both focus areas research will be global in scope; regional differences (concerning the countries involved) and similarities should also be addressed.

Pluri-trans-multidisciplinarity

Within the framework of this call the intention is to combine or intersect the scientific approaches, where relevant, around the same research object. This implies that teams that form a trans-multi-disciplinary network are in particularly recommended. It also implies that the evaluators will be asked to pay attention to the way these disciplines will work together and build integrated results.

The scientific networks can thus consist of several research institutions (federal scientific institutes, universities, colleges, public research centers, non-profit organisations with the pursuit of scientific research stipulated in their statutes).

Who can apply?

From the **Belgian side**: the call is addressed to Belgian universities, public scientific institutions, university colleges and non-profit research institutions.

The participation of Federal Scientific Institutions is encouraged. For equal scientific quality of submitted proposals, the preference will be given to consortia with participation of Federal Scientific Institutions.

List of Federal Scientific institutions: see **annex I** in the submission dossier.

China applicants can find Belgian partners, among others, via the BELSPO website ([BRAIN I \(call ≥2015\)](#), [BRAIN II](#)), [STEREO](#), ; [UNESCO-MAB](#)) including also multi-lateral initiatives co-funded by BELSPO (such as JPI's and ERANETs/ COFUNDs related to biodiversity and climate change) or bi(tri)lateral actions funded by BELSPO in these domains.

From the **Chinese side**: the call is open to the legal entities based in China, including universities and research institutes. Further details can be found in the Chinese call published on the website of MOST (<https://service.most.gov.cn>). See **Annex III** for MOST National Eligibility Criteria for further details.

Each application must designate 2 Principal Investigators (PI), one from each country, who will bear the main responsibility for the project activities, including its technical and administrative coordination as well as scientific and financial reporting.

How will support be granted?

The funding of the joint research projects is based on the **principle of reciprocity**. Each country finances the costs for activities carried out on its own territory: personnel costs, working costs (including field missions) and, if needed, subcontracting, whereas the international travel costs are borne by the respective sending country.

The budget available for this call is:

- **From BELSPO:** 250 000 euro. The maximum budget per proposal to be granted is 130 000 euro.
- **From MOST:** 3 million RMB. The maximum budget per proposal to be granted is 2 million RMB.

Participation of relevant partners from other countries is also possible but will not be funded by BELSPO or MOST. If such a partner is proposed, he or she should be indicated as "other self-funded partner" in the application form. Self-funded partners may be part of the consortium if they are able to clearly demonstrate an added value to the project and secure their own funding. They must provide a signed official letter of support from their Head of Department, Financial Director, or equivalent position, stating the commitment of the organisation to provide the necessary funding. That letter must be included as an appendix to the proposal Application Form.

Expected start of the granted research projects: December 2023.

Duration of the research projects: between 2,5 and 3 years.

How will proposals be reviewed and selected?

Once the call is closed, all proposals will be examined according to the call general eligibility criteria and in accordance with the national eligibility criteria of each country:

- see **Annex II** for BELSPO eligibility criteria (check list)
- see **Annex III** for MOST national eligibility criteria

Following the check list at each side (Belgian, Chinese), jointly agreed eligible proposals will be submitted by both sides, **in parallel**, to a **written peer review process**.

Proposals will be reviewed by BELSPO on the basis of the submitted documents only.

MOST will follow the official internal multi-stage review rules.

The review criteria (to be applied by all the funders) are:

A. Scientific quality of the proposal

- Clarity of the objectives and of the tasks
- Relevance, applicability and replicability of the methodological approach
- Scientific originality (positioning of the proposed research vis-à-vis ongoing research in the field in question)
- Consideration of the gender dimension (please see Checklist).

B. Quality of the network

- Added value of the proposed international cooperation
- Expertise of the candidates
- Complementarity of the competences among proposed partners
- Interdisciplinary nature of the network
- Distribution of tasks between the partners (workplan adequacy)
- Coordination, management, synthesis and communication skills of the PI's.

C. Potential impact for science, society and decision-making

- Expected results
- Dissemination of the project results

D. Adequacy of resources

- Distribution of resources between partners
- Realism of means deployed (duration, budget, personnel) along with workplan adequacy and feasibility
- Gathering and/or accessibility of data necessary for the project

The final **selection** will be jointly agreed by BELSPO and MOST.

BELSPO and MOST will inform the Belgian and Chinese applicants respectively of the final selection.

Intellectual property, open science, open data and ethics

The research contract that will be concluded between the selected teams and **BELSPO** contains certain dispositions that applicants need to take into consideration when writing their proposals.

1. Intellectual Property Rights: The Foreground - the results (including information) produced by the project - shall be the property of the institution carrying out the work generating this foreground, as mentioned in article [12 of the General Conditions \(Annex II of the BELSPO contract\)](#). As regards existing information and data, ownership remains the same. Each institution shall ensure that the foreground of which it has ownership, is disseminated as fast as possible and free of charge. The State can however freely use (without licence) the foreground for internal purposes.
2. Open access, open data: In accordance with the relevant BELSPO Open Research Data Mandate, each Institution undertakes to make the foreground and background relating to research data, available as soon as possible and free of charge in an approved data repository (Open Research Data Repository). This concerns data that supports the research results, with its metadata and other contextualised (curated) and/or raw data mentioned in the Data Management Plan (DMP) submitted by the grant applicant. The data must comply with the FAIR principle (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable) and must be accessible according to the principle "As open as possible, as closed as necessary".
3. Ethics in research: The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2017) serves as ethical reference and self-regulatory framework for research projects funded by BELSPO. <https://allea.org/code-of-conduct/#toggle-id-8>. The code originally published in 2014 by ALLEA (All European Academies) and then revised in 2017. All projects must take this code of ethics into account in their research. If necessary, the Ethical Board of the institutions concerned by a project must be consulted before submitting a proposal.
4. Gender: BELSPO strongly encourages to take into account the equality between women and men and to ensure gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the project. The proposal should include this both in the choice of the researchers and, where relevant, by integrating the gender dimension into their research. All statistics produced, collected and commissioned are, where appropriate, disaggregated by sex and gender indicators are established where relevant.

How to apply?

Applications must be submitted to BELSPO (by the Belgian coordinator) and to MOST (by the Chinese coordinator) via the attached research grant **Application Form**.

- The Application Form is submitted, **at Belgian side**, by e-mail (in 'Word' and in 'pdf', with signatures).
- The Application Form is submitted, **at Chinese side**, through the submission platform (further details can be found in the call published on the website of MOST).

Deadline for submission: **14 September 2023** at 3 p.m. CET. in Belgium and around mid September in

China. **Contact persons**

Belgium (BELSPO)

Brigitte DECADT

Brigitte.decadt@belspo.be

secr.coord@belspo.be

China (MOST)

Lian JIACAN

lianjc@most.cn

zfy@cstec.org.cn

Privacy of applicants and beneficiaries

BELSPO is committed to protecting and respecting the **privacy of Applicants and Beneficiaries**.

Applicants are the legal entities that apply for funding through the submission of proposals.

Beneficiaries are the successful Applicants, i.e. participants in funded research projects

The evaluation of proposals, the management of grant agreements (if your proposal is successful) as well as the dissemination activities requires the processing of personal data and is therefore subject to the European Regulation 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 (entered into force on 25 May 2018) on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (GDPR) and to the Belgian law of 30 July 2018 on the protection of the privacy with regard to the processing of personal data. This means among others that BELSPO undertakes to take the necessary technical and organisational measures to protect the data against accidental or unauthorised destruction or accidental loss, as well as against modification, access and any other unauthorised processing of data.

The related Privacy Statement of BELSPO that outlines, in the framework of this call, the practices relating to the protection of personal information for proposal is attached in the Application form (**annex II**) and can be accessed on the BELSPO weblink related to the call.

Compliant Policy

BELSPO has a global procedure to handle complaints. If, at any time, in the course of the call, you have the feeling that your application is not handled properly, please fill in the complaint form that you will find on this webpage: https://www.belspo.be/belspo/organisation/complaints_en.stm. Your complaint will be treated independently and with strict confidentiality.

Annex I

The Belgian Federal Scientific Institutions

Institution	Website
Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (KBIN-IRSNB)	www.naturalsciences.be
Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA)	www.kikirpa.be
Royal Belgian Institute for Space Aeronomy (BIRA-IASB)	www.aeronomie.be
Royal Observatory of Belgium (KSB-ORB)	www.astro.oma.be
Royal Meteorological Institute of Belgium (KMI-IRM)	www.meteo.be
Royal Museums of Art and History (KMKG-MRAH)	www.kmkg-mrah.be
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium (KMSKB-MRBAB)	www.fine-arts-museum.be
Royal Museum for Central Africa (KMMA-MRAC)	www.africamuseum.be
Royal Library of Belgium (KBR)	www.kbr.be
National Archives and State Archives in the Provinces (ARA-AGR)	www.arch.be
Sciensano	www.sciensano.be
National Institute of Criminalistics and Criminology (NICC-INCC)	www.nicc.fgov.be
War Heritage Institute (WHI)	www.warheritage.be



Annex II

Belgium- China Research Cooperation

Call for Proposals 2023

BELSPO Check list 'ELIGIBILITY of Proposals Call 2023

The Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO) ensures that proposals meet all the eligibility criteria listed below. Proposals that do not meet one or more eligibility criteria will not be evaluated.

The Principal Investigators of ineligible proposals will be informed by BELSPO. The eligibility of each proposal is verified on the basis of information provided by the submitters in the submission file.

List of criteria

Each proposal is checked on the following criteria. Only proposals fulfilling ALL criteria will be evaluated.

➤ The submission dossier is submitted to BELSPO the latest on 14 th September 2023, at 15h	
➤ The submitted dossier fits to the content of the call (in/out of scope)	
➤ The submission dossier is provided in electronic version, in Pdf and in Word format and signed by the 2 coordinators (PI's)	
➤ The research team consists of participants from universities and/or public scientific institutions, and/or non-profit research centres	
➤ The proposal concerns a research project with at least 1 principal investigator from each country	
➤ In case that a self-funded partner participates in the project, the letter mentioning its funding by a funding source different from BELSPO or MOST (China) is included in the submission dossier	
➤ The proposal complies with the rules written in the rubric 'budget' of the submission dossier	
➤ The budget requested from BELSPO does not exceed 130 000 EUR	
➤ The box related to the privacy consent is checked	
➤ De duration of the proposed project is between 2,5 and 3 years	



Annex III

Belgium - China Research Cooperation

Call for Proposals 2023

MOST ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Project application must fulfil the following eligibility criteria:

I. Recommendation procedure and proposal preparation

1. A recommending organization as defined in the project application guidelines issues a letter of recommendation within the specified time frame.
2. A proposal can only be submitted through a single recommending organization. Either submission through multiple recommending organizations or duplicate submission is not allowed.
3. The contents of proposals (including preliminary and full proposals) must conform to the priority areas specified in the guidelines.
4. The proposal and its attachments must be prepared in the format as required.

II. Requirements for individuals

1. The principal investigator is not over the age of 60 (see the guidelines for detailed age requirements) and possesses a senior professional title or a PhD degree.
2. Foreign scientists and scientists in the Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions and Taiwan may serve as principal investigators if they work full- or part-time for Chinese mainland employers. In the former case, the applicant is required to submit a valid certificate issued by his or her Chinese mainland employer. In the latter case, the applicant is required to submit valid certificates issued by his or her Chinese mainland employer and full-time employer separately.
3. The principal investigator is subject to the limit on the number of applications per applicant. See the guidelines for detailed requirements.
4. Participants in the preparation of the guidelines are ineligible for application.
5. The applicant should have a sound track record of research integrity, with no punishments in force for serious research misconducts, and are not on the "blacklist" in social credit.
6. Civil servants in both central and local governments (including personnel responsible for managing S&T programs) are ineligible for application.

III. Requirements for organizations

1. Legal entities registered in the Chinese Mainland, including research institutes, universities and businesses are eligible, with the exception of government departments and agencies.
2. It has been more than one year since registration. See the guidelines for detailed requirements.
3. The organization should have a sound track record of research integrity, with no punishments in force for serious research misconducts, and is not on the "blacklist" in social credit.