

*"Two elements saved us from the Covid pandemic: solidarity and science. This programme combines these two aspects, with the aim of learning from the past and exploring what can be done better in the future. I think this is positive and essential: it is the only way to prepare together for tomorrow's challenges. I expect very concrete recommendations on the broad welfare and health front: what impact have we not yet identified and what has worked well, and how can we as a government take this into account or even adjust now?"*, concludes the **Minister of Social Affairs Frank Vandenbroucke**.

*"It is of the essence to study the various aspects of the COVID crisis and draw the necessary lessons from it. This scientific work should allow us to prepare for the aftermath of the COVID pandemic and for any possible other pandemics. If there is one positive effect of this crisis , it is that it has put science more firmly on the map. Scientific research has managed to mitigate the impact of the crisis, it is now also our responsibility to provide the necessary resources to learn from it. Incidentally, this is the first time that a comprehensive multi-annual programme is being launched focusing on research in support of policy priorities. We are doing this in close cooperation with the minister and the FPS Public Health to ensure the link between science and policy. This research programme will serve as a model for reforming future research programmes. In this way, we support evidence-based policy,"* says the **State Secretary in charge of Science Policy Thomas Dermine**.

# INFORMATION SESSION

26/04/2023

## CALL FOR RESEARCH PROPOSALS – COVID

Building an evidence base and lessons  
learned for future preparedness

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## HOW TO ASK QUESTIONS AFTER THIS PRESENTATION

Given the number of persons registered to this Information Session, questions will be addressed as follows:

- Participants will **write the questions in the CHAT** (do not raise hands).
- BELSPO will read them out loud and answer them.
- You can be given the floor to clarify your question.

Any general Q&A that remains unanswered due to lack of time will be included in the FAQ section of the website.

Specific questions will be answered by email, so make sure to **state your name and surname in the chat**.



**Note** that questions on whether a specific proposal is in the scope of this call, will not be answered in this session.

*The aim of this programme is to fund scientific projects that aim at a close examination of the **long-term impact of the COVID crisis on the Belgian society**, with a view to **produce key messages and lessons learned for the federal government.***

## 1. EXCELLENCE

Proposals that demonstrate **excellence** in:

- 1) Scientific approach
- 2) Implementation
- 3) Exploitation of results

Type of proposals:

- ✓ **Beyond** state of the art  
-> Pure scientific innovation
- ✓ **Within** state of the art  
-> Reproducing studies conducted elsewhere, but producing new and important insights for Belgium

## 2. INTERNATIONAL/ EUROPEAN DIMENSION

Proposals must **integrate** the **international** and especially **European context** in their approach; Ranging from simple contextualization to one-to-one comparison.

Belgian teams **may involve foreign partners** providing the latter bring own funding.

## 3. IMPLEMENTATION

The way the scientific teams propose to **implement** their **proposal in practice**;

- ✓ Quality of the network
- ✓ Complementarity of expertise
- ✓ Workplan and timing
- ✓ Data management plan
- ✓ Ethical approach
- ✓ Division of tasks into work packages
- ✓ Budget
- ✓ ...

## 4. VALORISATION

The **valorisation** is of **importance** for this call. Each team will have to propose a **promotion plan** to address:

- ✓ Scientific public
- ✓ **Non-scientific public!**

Essential stage: translating the scientific results into **recommendations** for **federal decision-making** by actively involving the federal actors.

**1-6 months** for implementation of the impact plan

## 5. IN SCOPE

The research to be funded must **fit** unambiguously **into** the (sub)**themes** of the call

The "**In scope**" character of the proposals is taken into account in the scientific evaluation.

The core of the proposal and its end result must lie within the **competences** of the **federal state**.  
(See Screening Step)

## 6. PLURI-TRANS- MULTI- DISCIPLINARITY

The intention of the programme is to combine or intersect the scientific approaches around the same research object. This implies that only teams that form a **trans-multi-disciplinary network** are eligible.

The scientific networks must consist of **at least two different research institutions** (federal scientific institutes, universities, colleges, public research centers, non-profit organisations with the pursuit of scientific research stipulated in their statutes).

## 7. DURATION OF THE PROJECTS

The projects will have a duration of **24 to 30 months**, plus **1-6 months** for the implementation of the impact plan.

**25-36 months in total**

## 8. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY, OPEN SCIENCE, OPEN DATA, ETHICS

- 1) Intellectual Property Rights
  - 2) Open access, open data
  - 3) Ethics in research
  - 4) Gender
- (See information file)



## WHAT ARE THE PROJECT TYPES?

Projects must be submitted by a network of researchers composed of **at least two partners** from two different eligible Belgian scientific institutions.

The project may require specific or punctual expertise (in Belgium or elsewhere), which can be delivered in the form of **subcontracting**.

Networks jointly share obligations and responsibilities during the implementation of the project. The project **should be balanced**, even if different partners may have different tasks and subsequently different budgets.

The participation of **Federal Scientific Institutions (FSIs)** and the **cooperation** between research partners of **different Communities or Regions** is encouraged. In the final selection step, in case of a tie between proposals equally ranked by the Panel of experts, priority will be given to networks in which one or more FSIs are involved and/or to networks composed of partners from different communities and/or that cover the Belgian territory.

## WHAT ARE THE PROJECT TYPES?

The cooperation with **non-Belgian scientific researchers** is possible, provided that these bring their own funding sources to the project. Since foreign researchers are not signatories to the research contract, the responsibility of their input to the project falls entirely under the responsibility of the coordinator of the project.

The programme promotes **equality between men and women in research**. The projects should therefore seek for a **balanced network composition**.

A **coordinator** (belonging to a Belgian research institute) must be appointed in each proposal.

## 1. Well-being

2. Inequalities & Vulnerabilities
3. Democratic Governance
4. Pandemic Intelligence

## 1. Well-being

- Mental well-being
- Interpersonal relations and dynamics
- Populations in specific settings
- Specifics groups of people
- Relation to work
- Values, norms, lifestyles and the way we see our own well-being
- Well-being of the health workforce
- Mental health services

More information on the themes is included in the **Information File**



**Note that pure virological and clinical research topics are not within the scope of this call.**

1. Well-being
- 2. Inequalities & Vulnerabilities**
3. Democratic Governance
4. Pandemic Intelligence

## 2. Inequalities & Vulnerabilities

The crisis did ultimately not result in an increase in inequality and poverty. Notwithstanding these positive overall outcomes there remain important **blind spots** regarding the **social impact** of the **COVID-crisis**. Preparing future crises, but also in view of improving social cohesion in non-crisis times, more knowledge is required on evolution of poverty and inequality during the second COVID year; situation of marginalized categories; categories who fell between protection schemes; impact on job security; efficiency of protective measures; digital divide;...

More information on the themes is included in the **Information File**



**Note that pure virological and clinical research topics are not within the scope of this call.**

1. Well-being
2. Inequalities & Vulnerabilities
- 3. Democratic Governance**
4. Pandemic Intelligence

### 3. Democratic Governance

The management of the COVID crisis has proved how hard it can be for governments (in Belgium and elsewhere) to **maintain public trust** and to **explain democratic governance** when taking hard restrictions to civil rights in an emergency.

- Reasons behind adherence to – or desistance from sanitary measures
- (dis)trust in public discourse
- Role of social media
- Public opinion on scientific discourse
- Role of international and European cooperation
- ...

More information on the themes is included in the **Information File**



**Note that pure virological and clinical research topics are not within the scope of this call.**

1. Well-being
2. Inequalities & Vulnerabilities
3. Democratic Governance
4. Pandemic Intelligence

**The 3 first themes are closely intertwined.**  
Applicants can either choose to examine a specific topic **within the theme** it belongs to or investigate it **across the different themes.**

More information on the themes is included in the **Information File**



**Note that virological and clinical research topics are not within the scope of this call.**

1. Well-being
2. Inequalities & Vulnerabilities
3. Democratic Governance
4. **Pandemic Intelligence**

## 4. Pandemic Intelligence

A strong government also implies a strong scientific basis ('evidence-based') to legitimise the policies pursued. In the framework of further development of the preparedness capacity, the identification of risks, their assessment, and prioritisation is essential. Further analysis is needed on how to strengthen 'epidemic intelligence' in the context of future pandemic preparedness, and the first concrete steps towards a structural network should be taken.

More information on the themes is included in the **Information File**



**Note that pure virological and clinical research topics are not within the scope of this call.**

## WHAT IS THE PROPOSAL'S BUDGET AND WHAT DOES IT COVER ?



The **total budget for this call is 7M€**, 5M€ distributed across the first three themes (Well-being; Inequalities & Vulnerabilities; Democratic Governance) and 2M€ for the last theme (Pandemic Intelligence).

There is not a fixed number of projects to be accepted for funding; the 7M€ will be exhausted according to the quality and cost-effectiveness of the proposals in view of its objectives. **Each proposal must estimate their own budget.**

The **requested budget per project** is distributed into Staff, Overheads, Operating costs, Equipment and Subcontracting, according to the Budget Rules (*see Information File & Proposal description*). There is NO minimum and maximum budget, and no 'typical budget'; **all projects must explain their budget and demonstrate 'value for money'**.

**Subcontracting** is allowed to **max. 25% of the budget of the partner** who lists it.



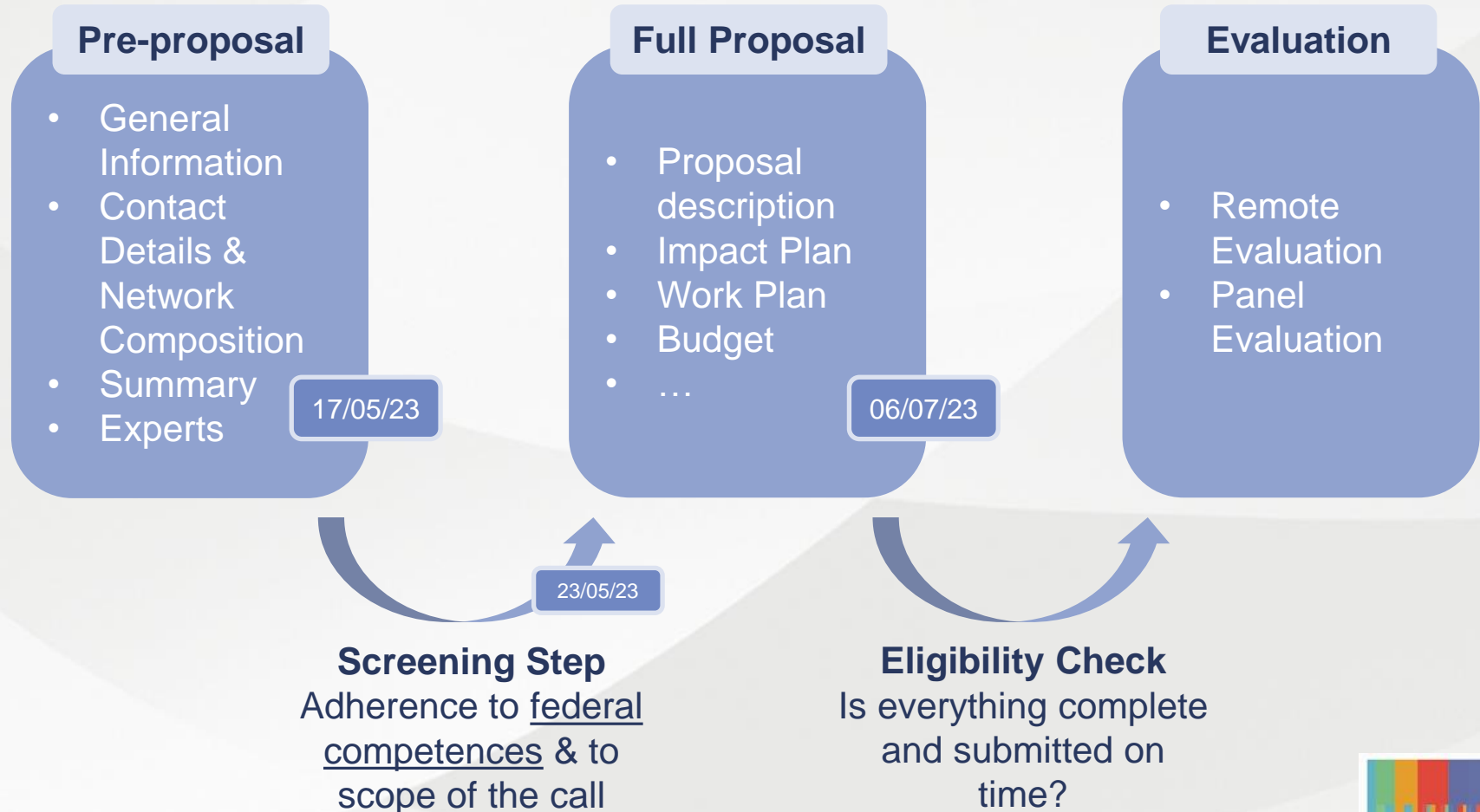
# ! ATTENTION !

Due to the specific budget modalities of this programme, the project beneficiaries will get an **advance of 100% of the allocated project budget**. To this end, all project partners **MUST submit an invoice to BELSPO** for their complete project budget **at the latest on 15 December 2023**.

If no invoice is received by this date, the project cannot be financed.

Project beneficiaries will be asked to open a dedicated and blocked account.

## WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT STEPS IN THE SUBMISSION PROCEDURE?



## WHICH ARE THE STEPS IN THE EVALUATION PROCEDURE ?

The **evaluation** of the **Full proposals** takes place in 2 steps:

- ✓ **Remote individual evaluation** (3 international experts / proposal)  
With an adequate combined expertise in the topic of the proposal

**Consensus report**  
drafted from the 3 Remote  
Evaluations



**Pre-drafted Panel Funding Scenario**  
Translation of evaluations in  
arithmetical ranking of the proposals

- ✓ **Panel evaluation** (International experts – number depends on topics and expertise)  
With a broad expertise on the research addressed in the call

## HOW WILL THE CRITERIA BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT FOR THE EVALUATION ?

Full proposals are evaluated against a set of **4 main criteria**, divided into sub-criteria (See Evaluation Form):

- In/out of scope
- Scientific quality
- Quality and efficiency of the implementation
- Impact

Remote Evaluators must mark the statements they most adhere to in order to score the proposals and provide comments justifying their choice. E.g.:

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Poor Quality – Insufficient Information	Medium Quality	Good Quality	High Good Quality	Exceptional
The catch-up effort with respect to the state of the art is non-existent and/or will not generate valuable results for Belgium.	The catch-up effort with respect to the state of the art is rather limited and will result in poor added value for Belgium.	The catch-up effort with respect to the state of the art is correct and promises to generate interesting results for Belgium.	The catch-up effort with respect to the state of the art is good and might generate useful results for Belgium.	The catch-up effort with respect to the state of the art is very good and will deliver important results for Belgium.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## HOW WILL THE CRITERIA BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT FOR THE EVALUATION ?

Using the 3 remote evaluation forms, a **Consensus Report** will be drafted by one of the panel members for each proposal. The consensus reports will be discussed and finalized in the plenary session of the panel.

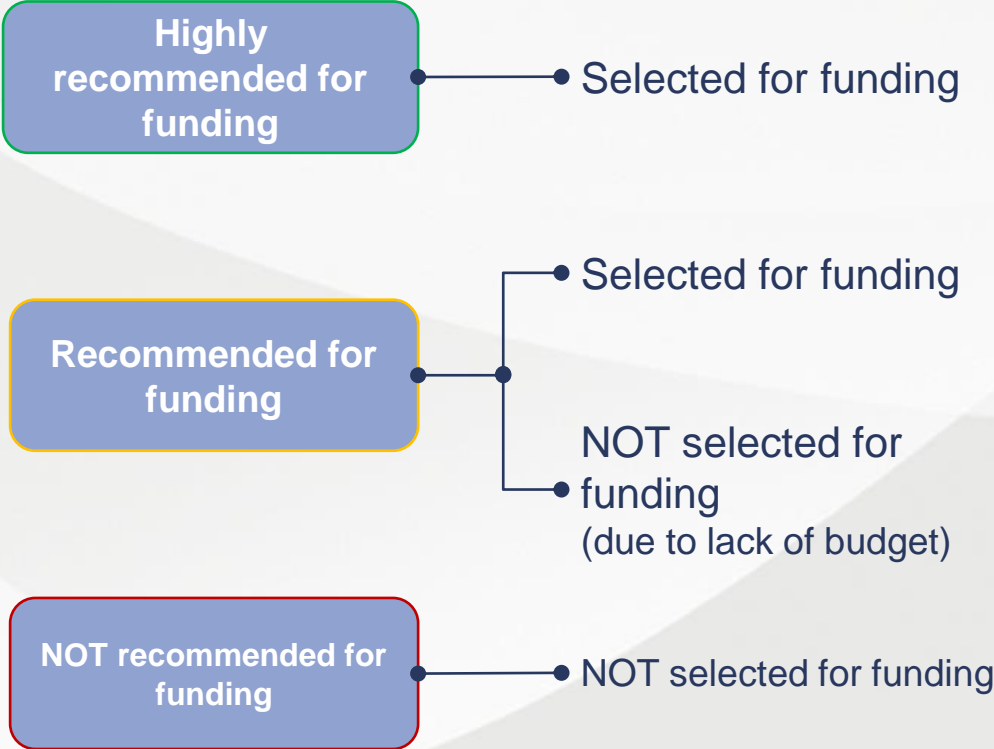
In preparation of the panel meeting, BELSPO will **translate** each consensus evaluation **into a numeric score**. Therefore, proposals can be ranked arithmetically. This **ranking** (pre-drafted Panel Funding Scenario) serves as input to the discussion in the panel. In practice, this will be done as follows:

1. Translating the appreciations given to each sub-criterion into scores.
2. Adding the scores of the sub-criteria to obtain a total for each criterion.
3. Performing a weighted sum of the criteria in the following way:

WEIGHT OF THE DIFFERENT CRITERIA	
Scientific quality	40%
Quality and efficiency of the implementation (incl. budget)	20%
Impact	40%

# HOW IS THE FINAL SELECTION OF PROPOSALS MADE?

The outcome of the Panel is a **finalized ranking list** where proposals are allocated in one of the following categories :



The **final selection decision** of proposals to be funded is made by the State Secretary in charge of Science Policy and the Minister of Public Health based on the Funding proposal by the Programme Committee.

- Strategic selection due to budget constraints**
- **Coverage of the call:** willingness to cover all themes of the call
  - **Complementarity and critical mass:** select proposals that are complementary to each other
  - **Transversal criteria:** the gender criterion, national coverage, proposals associating teams from the north and the south of the country



## PRE-PROPOSAL

### Documents to be submitted (2):

- ✓ PART A: General Information, Summary and Contact Details (in Word & PDF)
- ✓ PART B: Evaluators (in Excel)

See templates on the [website](#) the call

Submission by the coordinator via email to [POST-COVID@belspo.be](mailto:POST-COVID@belspo.be).

**!DEADLINE!**

17/05/2023 @14:00

# FULL PROPOSAL

## Documents to be submitted:

- ✓ Full Proposal description
- ✓ Letter(s) of Support (Follow-up Committee and interested Stakeholders)

See templates on the [website](#) the call

Submission by the coordinator via email to [POST-COVID@belspo.be](mailto:POST-COVID@belspo.be).

## DEADLINE

06/07/2023 @14:00



## Call for proposals 2023 - POST-COVID

Attention: this call is still under construction and awaits final approval by the Council of Ministers before launching.

### Information on the programme

The aim of this programme, launched in collaboration with the FPS Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment, is to fund scientific projects that aim at a close examination of the long-term impact of the COVID crisis on the Belgian society, with a view to produce key messages and lessons learned for the federal government.

The budget of this call for proposals is 7 million €, of which 5 million € for the themes Well-being, Inequalities & Vulnerabilities and Democratic Governance, and 2 million € for the theme Pandemic Intelligence.

Pure virological or clinical research are not within the scope of this particular call. This call is open to a wide array of disciplines/research such as; criminology, sociology, epidemiology, economics, communication sciences, history, political sciences, philosophy, pedagogy, psychology,...

### Indicative Calendar

Activity	Deadline
Launch of the call	Second half of April 2023
Information Session	26/04/2023 @ 10:00
Deadline Pre-proposal	11/05/2023 @ 14:00
Deadline Full Proposals	06/07/2023 @ 14:00
Evaluation	July - September 2023
Communication of results	November 2023
Start projects	December 2023

### Duration of the projects (24-36 months)

- 24-30 months: Scientific part
- 1-6 months: Implementation of impact plan

### Deadlines (Provisional)

- Information session: 26/04/2023 @ 10:00
- Submission Pre-proposal: 11/05/2023 @ 14h00
- Submission Full Proposal: 06/07/2023 @ 14h00

The completed Pre-proposals and Full proposals need to be send via email to [POST-COVID@belspo.be](mailto:POST-COVID@belspo.be) for submission.

### Information Session - Register now

- Online meeting
- Registration: [registration is required](#)
- Date: 26/04/2023 @ 10:00
- Presentation: available after the information session

### Documents

#### Templates for the Pre-proposal:

- Part A: General Information, Summary and Contact Details
- Part B: Evaluators

#### Documents for the proposal:

- Full Proposal Template
- Letter of Support (For members of the Follow-up Committee and interested Stakeholders)

#### Information Documents:

- Pre-announcement
- - DRAFT - [Information File](#) (including call topics, eligibility criteria etc.)
- Evaluation Form
- Evaluators eligibility
- Gender Checklist
- Ethics Checklist
- Data Management Plan Checklist

### Contact

✉ [POST-COVID@belspo.be](mailto:POST-COVID@belspo.be)

Templates for the  
**Pre-Proposal**

Templates for the  
**Full Proposal**

Documents with  
**more information**  
on the call  
i.e. the Information  
File, Evaluation  
form,  
Evaluator Eligibility  
and Checklists

**Email for**  
Submission of Pre-  
/Full Proposal,  
questions, ...

[Website of the call](#)



- ***How many projects are you aiming to fund?***
- ***Is the call purely related to Covid or is it the intention to be generically applicable to other types of epidemics that can (and will) occur in the future? (=backwards analysis or forward prediction, or both)?***
- ***Are there any specific deliverables to be met?***
- ***To what extent does the scope of the call opens up for research that links decision-making in COVID-response, social policies and environmental policies?***
- ***How strict is the separation between the 4 categories and their budgets. Can for instance a project combining relevant aspects of wellbeing with epidemic intelligence be considered.***
- ***Are international partners eligible to participate in this call?***



- ***What is the estimated budget for every consortium? Is participation of non-academic actors incentivized (ASBL, NGOs, etc.)? What is the maximum of the budget that can go to subcontracted non-academic partners?***
- ***Is the emphasis in this call on long-term health and well-being effects, or would the call also be open to an exploration of public engagement with science, and how the COVID pandemic affected trust and use of evidence?***
- ***o what extent is seniority/previous success with funding taken into account or not?***
- ***It says that the State Secretary/Minister of Health have a final say: can they overrule the rankings proposed by the expert committee?***

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
Launch of the call	End of April 2023
Information Session	26/04/2023
<b>Introduction Pre-Proposals!</b>	<b>17/05/2023</b>
<b>Introduction Full Proposals</b>	<b>06/07/2023</b>
Evaluation	July – September 2023
Communication of Selection	November 2023
<b>Start of Projects</b>	<b>December 2023</b>

# Contact

POST-COVID@belspo.be