FEDERAL RESEARCH PROGRAMME DRUGS



**Submission deadlines:**

**EoI**: 5 September 2024 at 15h00

**Full proposals**: 10 October 2024 at 15h00

EoI and Full proposals to be sent in word and pdf format to **drugs\_call@belspo.be**

**Call for proposals 2024**

**Information File**

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION on the PROGRAMME

# THE FEDERAL RESEARCH PROGRAMME DRUGS

For more information on the programme, please visit [Programme | Programme de recherche Drogues | Drogues | Belspo](https://www.belspo.be/belspo/drugs/program_fr.stm)

## GENERAL

BELSPO (the Public Planning Service Science Policy) organises a programme dedicated to funding research in the field of drugs since 2001. This programme finds it source in the Parliamentary working group on drugs (1996/97) that invited the Federal Government to set up an "integral and integrated drug policy". The response was provided by the government in 2001: a general policy was approved in January 2001 and a budget of 500 million BEF (about 12,5 million EUR) was approved and allocated to federal administrations in charge. BELSPO received about 1 million EUR a year to set up a research programme with the objective to fund research in support of the newly adopted Drugs strategy.

The Strategy also foresees the conclusion of a cooperation agreement between the federal level and the Regions and Communities in Belgium with a view to set up a so-called integral and integrated drug policy which could deal with health and law enforcement measures and whose scope was illegal drugs, but also alcohol, tobacco and psychoactive medication. This agreement was concluded in 2008. One of the measures of this agreement was the setup of the General Cell Drugs Policy, the organ in charge of preparing the Drug Strategy on behalf of the Interministerial Conference Drugs. One of its first tasks was to draft a Common Declaration for an integrated and integral approach on drugs, which was adopted by the Ministers in charge at all levels in 2010. Scientific evidence and scientific research were acknowledged as one of the 5 pillars of the Belgian Drugs Strategy. The Federal Research Programme Drugs fully subscribes to the Belgian Strategy and funds research on the demand and supply side, on illicit and licit drugs and on gambling.

Every two years, a call for proposals is launched to the Belgian scientific community on topics designed in close cooperation with the General Cell Drugs Policy.

## ORGANISATION

For its operationalisation BELSPO is assisted by the General Cell Drugs Policy composed of representatives of the Ministers in charge. This organ discusses and suggests research priorities that BELSPO could include in its call for proposals.

## STRUCTURE

The Research programme supports the global and integrated approach, including topics on the demand side (health, prevention...) and the supply side (trafficking, repression, criminality...), considering illegal drugs but also alcohol, tobacco, psychotropic medication and gambling.

The themes that can be funded in the programme should comply with the following principles:

* *Scientific excellence and international integration;*
* *Concentration around key questions covering multiple competences and offering a coherent framework in which fragmentation is minimized. The themes should support the strategic orientations of the Belgian drug policy as adopted by the Interministerial Conferences on Drugs;*
* *Collaboration with other entities should be fostered (authorities at the federal, regional, community, international level) and flexible funding mechanisms involving these levels should be sought.*

## PROJECT TYPES

The Programme finances **research projects** as described below.

##### SCOPE / PHILOSPHY

The projects must be thematic and interdisciplinary, meaning that they should meet the specific research priorities of a call and must be interdisciplinary in their content.

##### PARTNERSHIP

Projects are submitted by a **network**, composed of at least two partners from at least two different eligible Belgian scientific institutions and from different scientific disciplines.

Networks jointly share obligations and responsibilities during the implementation of the project. The project should be fairly balanced (see budget rules), even if different partners may have different tasks and subsequently different budgets.

The cooperation between research partners of **different Communities or Regions** is encouraged. At equal scientific quality between the proposals submitted, preference will be given to proposals composed of partners from different communities and/or that cover the Belgian territory.

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

* Coordinate all activities to be carried out in the framework of the project;
* Coordinate the internal meetings between the network members;
* Coordinate the meetings with the Follow-up Committee and write the reports of these meetings;
* Coordinate the production of the interim and final project reports intended for BELSPO;
* Inform BELSPO of any problems that might hinder the implementation of the project;
* Coordinate the synthesis and translation of the research results, with a view to applications and support for decision-making;
* Coordinate the publication and dissemination of the research results;
* Organise meetings related to the project's progress between the network and BELSPO.

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

The programme allows for cooperation with international research partners albeit with their own funding.

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

##### DURATION

National thematic interdisciplinary projects will have a duration between 18 and 36 months.

##### BUDGET

There is no maximum budget set for this type of projects. However, networks should take into consideration the total available budget for the call (1,4 million EUR) and the fact that a project should make the most efficient use of public resources.

# CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS FOR SELECTED PROJECTS

## CONTRACTS

For the selected proposals, a contract is concluded between BELSPO and the funded team(s).

For this purpose, the submitters of the selected proposal will be asked at the end of the evaluation and selection procedure to concisely formulate the specifications on the basis of which the contract is to be drawn up. This **Technical Annex** to the contract will be drawn up in consultation with BELSPO and will take into account the recommendations formulated by the foreign evaluators and the Advisory Committees.

Adaptations to the original proposal may relate, among other things, to the content of the research, the composition of the project partnership or Follow-up Committee, the budget, the proposals for valorising the research.

BELSPO grants the selected projects the **funds** required for their implementation. BELSPO shall reimburse at most, and up to the amount specified in the granted budget, the actual costs proven by the partners providing these costs are directly related to the implementation of the project.

## REPORTS AND PROGRESS MEETINGS

The contract foresees the following reports to be submitted to BELSPO:

* Initial report: to be submitted within three months after the start of the project;
* Activity reports: to be submitted annually;
* Final report: to be submitted at the end of the project;
* If deemed useful by BELSPO, an activity report may be requested for an external evaluation of the project;
* BELSPO can ask for a report or other input at any time during the course of the project in order to provide scientific support to valorisation and service actions related to the programme.

These reports are to be included in the project work plan and the cost of preparing them (including possible translations) must be covered by the project budget.

Meetings on the project’s progress must be organised - minimum once a year - between the project partner(s), BELSPO and the user committee. The organisation of these meetings must be included in the project work plan and the project budget.

## DATA, RESULTS, INTELLECTUAL OWNERSHIP AND OPEN ACCESS

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 11 of the General Conditions (Annex II of the 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.

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".

For research areas concerning the marine environment, the Antarctic and biodiversity, researchers must transfer a copy of the analysis and measurement data and/or metadata to specific databases such as:

* BMDC (the Belgian Marine Data Centre) ([http://www.bmdc.be](http://www.bmdc.be/)). The Belgian Marine Data Centre, our federal NODC (National Oceanographic Data Centre), (bmdc@naturalsciences.be), can be contacted for assistance in the development of a DMP for marine applications and/or in choosing the right repository.
* AMD (Antarctic Master Directory) (<https://www.scqr.org/data-products/antarctic-master-directory/>). The Belgian representative of SCADM (the SCAR Standing Committee for Antarctic Data Management) (avandeputte@naturalsciences.be) can be contacted for assistance in the development of DMP for Antarctica related applications and/or in choosing the right repository.
* GBIF (Global Biodiversity Information Facility) (<https://www.gbif.org/>. The Belgian Biodiversity Platform (http://www.biodiversity.be) can be contacted for assistance in the development of DMP for biodiversity related applications and/or in choosing the right repository. See also the guidance document: <https://zenodo.org/record/3448251#.XkagsnDsaUl>

For social and Humanities data, a copy of the data and/or metadata must be transferred to SODA (Social Sciences Data Archive) (<https://sodabelgianproject.wixsite.com/sodaproject>).

The promoters of projects that include tasks in which biological materials are used, must ensure the preservation of this biological material by depositing it in a culture collection (Biological Resource Centre), and preferably one in Belgium. This does not apply to material that promoters can prove has already been deposited in a culture collection or for which existing agreements (Material Transfer Agreement) do not allow it to be deposited. Biological material includes cultivable organisms such as microorganisms, viruses, plant, animal and human cells as well as the replicable parts of these organisms, such as non-modified and recombinant plasmids (including those with DNAc inserts).

## RESEARCH ETHICS

The first code of ethics for scientific research in Belgium was drawn up in 2009 (see http://www.belspo.be/belspo/organisation/publ/pub\_ostc/Eth\_code/ethcode\_en.pdf).

The "Code of Ethics for Scientific Research in Belgium" is a joint initiative of the Académie Royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, the Académie Royale de Médecine de Belgique, the Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België voor Wetenschappen en Kunsten and the Koninklijke Academie voor Geneeskunde van België, with the support of BELSPO.

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.

## GENDER

BELSPO strongly encourages projects to take into account the equality between women and men and to ensure gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the project. The project 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.

PART Ii: CALL INFORMATION

# DOCUMENTATION RELATED TO THIS CALL

The following documents are available on the website of the [Federal research Programme Drugs](http://www.belspo.be/belspo/drugs/index_en.stm):

* Information file: general information on the programme and the call (the present document)
* Gender checklist
* Data Management Plan

# SCOPE AND RESEARCH PRIORITIES OF THE 2024 CALL

1. **Traumas and substance use**

Substance use and traumas are closely intertwined: substance use can be a way to lighten the weight of an existing trauma or traumas could be enhanced by the use of substances. What is less documented however is the question of addressing both substance use AND the trauma in the healing process and the health trajectory.

Scientists are invited to inform policymakers on the state of the art of the place of the traumatic dimension in the health process, on sources of inspiration of initiatives that could exist elsewhere, on the needs in terms of prevention, harm reduction and care of those users who have suffered traumatic episodes. Policy recommendations and good practices, especially in the context of prison, are expected.

A budget of 200.000€ would suffice to address the issue at hand. This indication does not bind applicants who might justify a different budget and timing.

1. **The role of peer support**

Ex-substance users play already an important role within specialised treatment centres where they act as a relay between substance users and the health care professionals. Their experience enables them to be legitimate in establishing a trusted relationship. The integration of their lived experience in rehabilitation programmes is more and more favoured. The recognition of their importance as an asset in public health remains fragmented and raises questions in terms of their professionalisation and their integration in the health trajectory along health professionals. Which institutional place should be given to these peer supports? Which health trajectories suit best their support?

Researchers interested in this topic could review the existing literature, compare practices in Belgium and abroad, point out the strengths and weaknesses and finally provide policy recommendations and good practices.

Additionally, the research team would examine the inclusion of peer support in the pilot project “care models for inmates using drugs”, as recommended in the [RECOPRIS and RECOPRIS](file://C:\Users\bosc\Downloads\A%20number%20of%20obstacles,%20particularly%20in%20terms%20of%20federal%20skills%20but%20also%20linked%20to%20the%20prison%20context,%20prevent%20the%20participation%20of%20experience%20experts.%20By%20taking%20on%20the%20role%20of%20receiving%20and%20accompanying%20prisoners%20(front%20line),%20the%20experience%20experts%20maintain%20a%20direct%20link%20with%20the%20reality%20on%20the%20ground,%20and%20integrate%20the%20point%20of%20view%20of%20those%20entitled%20to%20care.%20This%20front-line%20work%20enables%20them%20to%20identify%20obstacles%20to%20access%20to%20care,%20in%20particular.) Bis studies. A number of obstacles, particularly in terms of federal skills but also linked to the prison context, prevent the participation of experience experts. By taking on the role of receiving and accompanying prisoners (front line), the experience experts maintain a direct link with the reality on the ground, and integrate the point of view of those entitled to care. This front-line work enables them to identify obstacles to access to care, in particular. The present project should seek to implement peer support experts in the pilot project and test it in at least 3 (at least 1NL and/or at least 1 FR) prisons (of the 10 of the pilot). We expect from the scientific team a clearer and evidence-based view of the impact of peer support for detainees using drugs (as compared to those who do not benefit from this support) and the elements that at federal level amper the integration of these peer supports in the prison context.

We believe that a budget of 275.000€ (250.000€ BELSPO + 25.000€ FPS Health) would suffice for this study.

1. **Development of indicators for the interfederal plans on alcohol, tobacco, and gambling**

The interfederal strategy for a global and integrated drugs policy and the interfederal action plans for a smoke-free generation, to combat the harmful use of alcohol and gambling all point out the lack of (and even absence of) indicators to evaluate their implementation and their impact. All strategies and plans call for monitoring systems using newly developed indicators.

The problem is well known and several proposals have been suggested recently to solve this issue. Not all were convincing or satisfactory.

The General Drugs Policy Cell calls the Belgian scientific community to examine closely the Actions Plans Tobacco, Alcohol and Gambling and, on this basis suggest indicators that could allow a monitoring of these plans and the actions they contain, accounting for existing indicators based on existing data, and designing new indicators based on data yet to be collected.

We are seeking for a set of indicators that are rigorously discussed within the scientific community and with decisionmakers in the follow-up committee of the project, and evaluated in terms of their pertinence and the cost efficiency. These indicators will benefit from a wide agreement in the scientific community and decision-makers who will then be able to allocate the funds for data collection and implementation of the methodology and the reproduction of the exercise on a regular basis.

We are seeking for a coordination group who can manage such a large project, from appointing specialised external groups on specific indicators to engaging in a large and democratic review process of the suggested indicators (and the underlying data collections), and finally on preparing a methodological report and supporting administrations in the implementation phase, if possible.

Notwithstanding applicants who can convincingly suggest otherwise, we believe that a budget of 350.000€ would suffice to run this project over a period of max. 30 months.

1. **Social cost of psychoactive substances in Belgium**

We invite the scientific community to provide an update of the last study on social costs of drugs (2016, based on data from 2012). This study needs to be updated and enlarged to incorporate behavioural addictions (gambling for example). This social cost study is essential for policymakers and the intention is to implement the methodology that will be developed in order to continue the monitoring on a stand-alone basis.

A budget of 200.000€ should enable this project to be developed.

1. **Providing an evidence base for alcohol related issues**

Applicants are invited to develop a project including at least two of the following sub-topics:

* An evaluation of Tournée minérale (one month without alcohol) is needed: is it having long standing effects? It is raising awareness on alcohol related harms?
* We need to better understand the social norm that supports and legitimizes drinking behaviour in Belgium, with a view to enable deconstruction and universal prevention of not drinking as the “new normal”. In this respect, what would install a disapproving attitude towards hazardous drinking (in particular binge-drinking) in specific groups (younger people, their parents, people who drink and drive, etc.);
* Low-alcohol and alcohol free drinks: are these beverages substitutes to regular alcoholic drinks or consumed in complementarity? Can they be considered as a good alternative for people with a previous alcohol problem or does it increase the chances of relapse?

Notwithstanding applicants who can convincingly suggest otherwise, we believe that a budget of 250.000€ would suffice to run this project over a period of max. 30 months.

## PROJECT STARTING AND END DATE

The projects selected within the context of the current call will start 15 December 2024. The project contracts will have a duration of 18 to 36 months.

# CONTACTS

Further information can be obtained by contacting the **secretariat**: **drugs\_call@belspo.be**

# COMPLAINTS

BELSPO places great importance on the quality of its service and on improving the way it operates. A special form to handle complaints has been created.

The complaint form is available at the following address:

<http://www.belspo.be/belspo/organisation/complaints_en.stm>

Complaints submitted anonymously or which are offensive or not related to our organisation will not be processed.

A complaint is handled as follows:

* Once your complaint has been filed, a notification of receipt will be sent;
* The complaint will be forwarded to the relevant departments and individuals and will be processed within one month;
* An answer will be sent by e-mail or letter;
* The complaint will be treated with strict confidentiality.

If you are dissatisfied by the initial response to a complaint, you can always contact the Médiateur Fédéral / Federal Ombudsman, rue Ducale / Hertogstraat 43, 1000 Brussels (email: contact@mediateurfederal.be / contact@federaalombudsman.be).