



**ITALY - the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
P.R. China - National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC)
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COOPERATION
CALL FOR JOINT RESEARCH PROPOSALS FOR THE YEARS 2023-2025**

CLOSING DATE: May 25, 2022
in Italy at: 12 p.m. CEST – in P.R. China at: 16 p.m. CST

BACKGROUND

In the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding signed in Beijing on November 17, 2015 between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Italy and the National Natural Science Foundation of China, the Directorate General for Cultural and Economic Promotion and Innovation, Office IX of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the Bureau of International Cooperation of the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC), hereinafter referred to as the “Parties”, are opening a call for Joint Research Projects in the field of natural sciences for the years 2023-2025. Proposals shall concern activities which exhibit strong bilateral impact either by strengthening existing or creating new links targeting relevant scientific objectives.

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 FUNDING SCHEMES

With regard to the present call, the funding scheme available is:

- **“Joint Research Projects”**: the expenses for research activities are co-funded by both Parties. This funding scheme is aimed at supporting joint research activities. Inclusion of early career scientists will be positively evaluated.

Details regarding the priority research areas are given below.

1.2 ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Project proposals:

- shall be written in English;
- shall have a duration of 36 months.

Each Principal Investigator (PI):

- can submit only one proposal. PI shall not be part of other proposals’ teams within the same call.

Italian Party:

- the call is open to public or private (no-profit) research institutions;
- PI shall have Italian or any other EU nationality, legal residence in Italy, work in a public or private (no-profit) Italian research institution, and hold a permanent position, or a temporary position covering at least the entire duration of the proposed project.

Chinese Party:

- Applicant’s support organization must have registered at the NSFC;
- For other requirements, please refer to the call for proposal on NSFC’s website.

1.3 REASONS FOR EXCLUSION

- Lack of any one of the eligibility requirements listed above;
- incomplete application (including additional documents where applicable - see point 3 below);
- proposals submitted in different priority research areas by the collaborating PIs in the two countries;
- proposals submitted in only one of the two countries.

Other reasons that NSFC considers as ineligible include:

- not complying with the rule that the total number of the programs a researcher with senior rank (title) applies for (either as applicant or PI) and undertakes (either as applicant or PI) shall not exceed two;
- not complying with the rule that applicants shall only apply for one type of programs once in a year;
- invalid application code;
- no signature on the additional document, i.e., the collaborative agreement;
- for other eligibility rules, please refer to the NSFC call for specific rules and regulations.

2. PRIORITY RESEARCH AREAS

Project proposal must be submitted in one of the following topics:

- **Environment and Energy**
 - Environment with particular reference to air, water and soil pollution and remediation
 - Energy with reference to renewable energies and advanced distributed generation
- **Sustainable Urbanization and Smart Cities**
 - green transportation and urban mobility
- **Agrifood**
 - food quality and safety through innovative scientific models of evaluation and monitoring
- **Life Sciences, Health and Wellness**
 - risk factor analysis in healthcare and studies on the impact of viral diseases on populations
- **Interdisciplinary projects to be performed on Large Italian and Chinese research infrastructures¹**

Proposals submitted in other research areas will not be considered for evaluation. There is a possibility that not all the above listed research areas may be funded, depending on the scientific quality of the submitted proposals

3. SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

Joint proposals shall be submitted to both Parties. The proposals shall be written in English and have a duration of three (3) years: 2023-2025.

Italian Party:

- Proposals shall be submitted exclusively online, by filling the dedicated form at the following link: <http://web.esteri.it/pgr/>. For any inquiry concerning the present call, please contact the following email address: dgsp-09bandi2@esteri.it
- For projects involving experiments with animals, the status of ethics approval by the competent Ethics

¹The Research infrastructures located in Italy or in the P.R. China suitable for this call are facilities, resources and services that are used by the research communities to conduct research and foster innovation in their fields. They include major scientific equipment (or sets of instruments), knowledge-based resources such as collections, archives and scientific data, e-infrastructures, such as data and computing systems and communication networks and any other tools that are essential to achieve excellence in research and innovation.

Committee must be provided when submitting the proposal. Please note that formal authorization by the competent Ministry of Health is mandatory to start the activities (D.Lgs 26_04/03/2014 and Directive 2010/63 EU). Proof of submission to the institutional OPBA (*Organismo Preposto al Benessere degli Animali*) is acceptable at the proposal submission stage. Projects involving experiments with human beings must be performed in accordance with the Directive 536/2014/EC. **The Italian Principal Investigator should include a self-declaration of adherence to the rules cited in the Methods section of the proposal.**

- Italian applications must be accompanied by an endorsement letter², written in Italian and signed by the legal representative of the applying Institution or by her/his officially authorized delegate, providing official acceptance of all conditions listed in the call text, including institutional co-funding. The strategic significance of the bilateral cooperation can also be included. A template is provided within the call documents. The signed letter must be uploaded in the indicated section of the submission portal (<http://web.esteri.it/pgf/>)

Chinese Party:

- The Chinese Principal Investigator shall submit the application in Chinese through the NSFC's dedicated online platform: <https://isisn.nsf.gov.cn>. The Chinese Principal Investigator shall upload the English proposal jointly written as well as an attachment. A Collaboration Research Agreement is also supposed to be uploaded as an attachment in which both the Chinese and Italian partners will reach a consensus on issues such as the research plan, division of labour and intellectual property. For more information on the submission, please refer to the Chinese call text at <https://bic.nsf.gov.cn/Show.aspx?CI=22>
- Any inquiry concerning the present call can be sent to: xujin@nsfc.gov.cn

4. EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS AND SELECTION AT NATIONAL AND BILATERAL LEVEL

4.1 Evaluation process

After the call closure, all submitted proposals will undergo a formal eligibility check before moving to the two-step evaluation process.

The first step will be performed at national level to identify a shortlist of proposals.

The second step of the evaluation will be performed at bilateral level. The two Parties will reach consensus on the final list of projects eligible for funding during the meeting of the representatives from both countries, in the framework of Art. 3 of the above cited MoU. The selected proposals will be attached to the Agreed Minutes signed by both Parties at the end of the meeting and will be eligible for funding. The list of these projects will be posted on the websites of both Parties at the end of the process (see point 4.2 below).

Project proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Scientific relevance of the proposed research
- Methodology and documentation
- Qualification and expertise of the research teams
- Added value of the bilateral cooperation
- Involvement of early career scientists
- Exploitation and dissemination of the results
- Budget adequacy

Preference will be awarded to:

Proposals involving more than one national public/private research organization

²A fac simile of the endorsement letter is available at the URL: [Avvisi di Incarico e Bandi - Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale](#).

4.2 Outcome of the evaluation

Italian Party The official text of the agreement, including the list of selected projects, will be published on the MAECI website at the following link:

https://www.esteri.it/it/diplomazia-culturale-e-diplomazia-scientifica/cooperscientificatecnologica/programmiesecutivi/accordi_programmi_culturali_tecnologici/

Only PIs of the selected projects will be directly informed by e-mail of the outcomes of the selection process.

Chinese Party: For the Chinese Party, the list of selected projects, will be published on the NSFC website at the following link:

<http://bic.nsf.gov.cn/Show.aspx?CI=41>

Both parties commit not to provide information on selected/excluded projects (excluding the outcomes of the formal eligibility check mentioned in the point 4.1 above) until the end of the process, with the signature of the Agreed Minutes.

5. FUNDING PROCEDURES

Funding will be granted to the selected projects within the limits of the available annual resources of each Party.

5.1 Funding scheme “Joint Research Projects”

Italian Party: Funding for projects selected and listed in the Joint Statement will be provided on a yearly basis. In particular, according to the Italian law Nr. 401/90, and in accordance with the specific call issued by Office IX of the Directorate General for Cultural and Economic Promotion and Innovation of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the PIs of the projects listed in the Joint Statement will be invited to submit a request for funding at the beginning of each year of project activity.

The coordinating Institution is expected to anticipate all project expenses and will be reimbursed on a yearly basis, upon submission of the financial documents and positive evaluation of the corresponding scientific report.

The contribution granted by MAECI to “Joint Research Projects” is intended as co-funding support for the project, and therefore co-funding by the coordinating Italian institution of approximately 50% of the total costs of the project is mandatory. Co-funding can include salaries of the involved personnel and indirect costs. Any other financial contribution from public or private, Italian or Chinese Institutions will be evaluated.

The average financial support of each project is up to a maximum of 35.000 Euros per year, not including co-funding by the applying institution.

Chinese Party: the maximum funding for Chinese partners is 2,000,000 RMB per project for 3 years. After the proposal is approved, the Chinese PI shall submit a progress report at the end of each year and the final report after the project is completed.

6. CONTACT INFORMATION

For additional information on the present call, applicants can refer to the following contacts:

In Italy

Office IX – Directorate General for Cultural and Economic Promotion and Innovation

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