



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
and International Cooperation



Ministry of Innovation,
Science & Technology

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs and
International Cooperation
Italy**

**Ministry of Innovation, Science
And Technology (MOST)
Israel**

Italy-Israel Scientific Research Program

CALL FOR JOINT PROJECT PROPOSALS

For the Years 2024-2026

Deadline for Submissions: Wednesday April 10, 2024

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Within the framework of the Italy-Israel agreement on scientific cooperation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI), and the Ministry of Innovation, Science and Technology of the State of Israel (MOST) have decided to provide financial support and are glad to invite scientists to submit joint proposals for research projects carried out jointly by researchers from both countries.

The aim of this program is to support the development of scientific and technological cooperation between Italy and Israeli researchers and to strengthen the scientific partnership between research groups from both countries, by establishing bilateral research networks, enhancing research cooperation, and promoting the exchange of knowledge between Italian and Israeli scientists.

The joint research shall focus on one of the main areas of cooperation and its subtopics as detailed in Section A, and concentrate on fundamental science and/or technology transfer of research outputs. Qualifying scientific applicants in this framework may receive research grants from MAECI and MOST, respectively, according to the applicable national funding procedures, regulations, and requirements as detailed in this Call.

A. MAIN AREAS OF COOPERATION

Italian-Israeli research teams are hereby invited to submit joint proposals for scientific research projects in any of the following areas:

1. Technologies for healthy soils (i.e. - novel fertilizers, soil implants, soil microbiome etc.)
2. Water technologies, including: drinking water treatment, industrial and sewage water treatment and water desalination
3. Precision optics, electronics and quantum technologies, for frontier applications, such as next generation gravitational wave detectors

B. MODE OF COOPERATION

Cooperation will take the form of planning and performing joint research as well as conducting mutual visits between laboratories for the purpose of facilitating the research. Each joint research team may submit only one project within this program.

Cooperation may also take the form of:

- a) Joint research activities in which interdependent subprojects of a single project are conducted in Italian and Israeli laboratories;
- b) Complementary methodological approaches to a common problem;
- c) Joint use of research facilities, materials, equipment and/or services by cooperating scientists;
- d) Mutual visits between laboratories for the purpose of facilitating the research.

C. LEVEL OF FUNDING AND DURATION OF PROJECTS

It is the intention of the Parties to fund research proposals selected hereunder for a term of **three years (36 months)** and contracts will be signed accordingly. However, funding shall be approved in accordance with the provisions of the research contracts and protocols in each country.

At this time, the Parties plan to support **up to 11 joint projects**, at a maximum, after considering budgetary considerations, including the passing of the State Budget on the Israeli side. The final number of projects to be funded will be determined based on such factors as the merits of the proposals upon scientific evaluation, and budgetary considerations.

The total maximum funding for all research projects approved under this Call is 1,100,000 Euros (equivalent to 4,400,000 ILS), for a 3-years-period.

The maximum funding for every single project will be up to 100,000 Euros for the Israeli side (equivalent to 400,000 ILS), and up to 100,000 Euros for the Italian side for a 3-years-period.

In accordance, research projects should be planned over a 3-year basis beginning approximately in the last semester 2024/first semester 2025. Contracts will be signed accordingly in each country.

Contracts between the institutions issuing the contribution and the beneficiaries will be signed as follows:

In Italy: The financial contribution by MAECI will cover up to 50% of the eligible costs incurred by the applying Italian institution and, as mentioned above, cannot exceed 100.000 euros.

Funding will be granted on the basis of the final financial report and following positive evaluation of the final scientific report by the MAECI scientific evaluation committee.

In Israel: MOST will cover 100% of the documented and eligible costs of the research up to the amount of the approved budget, in accordance with the project proposal, subject to the terms and conditions as specified below and the terms of the standard MOST Procedures Regarding Scientific Projects Funded by MOST” and the “MOST Standard Contract for Scientific Projects”.

Funding for the approved projects depends on the availability of funds and the approval of the State budget in each country. Furthermore, MAECI and/or MOST reserve the right to cancel this call or not to fund the second or third year of research for scientific, -professional, administrative, and budgetary or policy reasons.

D. ELIGIBILITY

Proposals must meet the following preconditions. Proposals not meeting the preconditions will be automatically rejected and will not be passed on to the scientific committee for review and evaluation.

1. Projects must be conducted by collaborating Italian and Israeli scientific research teams.
2. Proposals must be for research projects in one of the main areas of cooperation and its subtopics as detailed in Section A, as well as meet the required Technology Readiness Level (TRL2-4).
3. Each joint research team must be led by a Principal Investigator (PI) from each country.
4. The PI on each side must be affiliated with an academic institution or a research institute ("Affiliated Institution"), or be a professor emeritus who continues working

on research in affiliation with the Affiliated Institution. An Affiliated Institution is determined in each country as follows:

In Israel:

a) An accredited Institution of Higher Education, according to the Council for Higher Education Law, 5718-1958; or a Research Institute which is a nonprofit organization, a government company or a governmental unit. For the purposes of this Call, a "Research Institute" in Israel is a research institute whose main activity is the advancement of cutting-edge scientific knowledge, which possesses appropriate infrastructure and equipment, which employs researchers who, inter alia, publish articles related to their research in leading scientific journals, and who present their research at international symposia.

The project may include the use of sub-contractors from the private sector, if necessary .

b) Additionally, the Israeli PI will meet the requirements for Principal Investigators outlined in the MOST Procedures Regarding Scientific Projects Funded by MOST at the time of submission.

In Italy:

a) A research institution must be a public or private university, or a public or private (no-profit) Research Institute/Centre acting under Italian law. International Research Institutions, including those hosted in Italy, are not eligible for funding. For the purpose of this call, a "Research Institution" is an institution whose primary activity aims at the advancement of cutting-edge scientific knowledge, provided with appropriate infrastructure and equipment, and employing scientists who publish their research results in leading, peer-reviewed, international scientific journals and present them at international symposia.

b) The PI must hold Italian or any other EU nationality and must be legally resident in Italy.

5. Principal Investigators from both countries cannot submit more than one project proposal under the present call. Additionally, in Israel, the PI may not submit a proposal under this Call if they have another research project that will be receiving funding under the international cooperation track during the duration of the proposed research project under this Call or if they have already submitted a proposal to a different Call in the international cooperation track in 2024 as PI.

6. Both PIs and their corresponding Research Institutions are accountable to MAECI and MOST, respectively, for the execution of the project and for the correct final financial report.
7. In Italy: Submitted proposals are considered eligible only if they include all documents described in the "[Norme integrative per la partecipazione italiana ai Bandi per la raccolta di progetti congiunti di ricerca e per la rendicontazione](#)" which are to be taken as part and parcel of the present Call.

8. Experiments Approval:

In Italy, for projects involving experiments with animals, the status of ethics approval by the competent Ethics 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). The authorization must therefore be provided before initiating the experiments. 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 coordinator should provide a self-declaration of adherence to above-cited rules in the Methodology section of the proposal.

In Israel, the procedure and requirements for submitting approvals regarding experiments by the relevant Ethics Committee are outlined in the attached instructions for submission .

Special eligibility provisions for Israeli Researchers:

1. In compliance with MOST's Procedures Regarding Scientific Projects Funded by MOST ("[MOST Regulations](#)"), an Israeli PI that has or will have an active grant from any of MOST's international cooperation programs, whose funding will be concurrent to the funding of this program, is not eligible to apply. No parallel funding is allowed. A researcher who is not eligible to submit a proposal as PI due to an active grant may submit one additional proposal in the international cooperation program as co-PI, if he/she does not have an active grant in the international program in which he/she acts as co-PI.
2. A researcher who has submitted a proposal for any MOST international cooperation call for funding in the 2024 calendar year, **may not submit another proposal for any other MOST international cooperation call for funding in 2024.**

3. Please be advised that after a proposal has been submitted, the status of the members of the research team as PI and/or Co-PI may not be changed for the purpose of compliance with the eligibility requirements listed above.

Special eligibility provisions for Italian teams:

1. The project will not be eligible for funding if the signed "Cooperation Agreement" has not been received together with the other required documents within the requested term.

E. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Joint project proposals must be prepared and carried out jointly by the Israeli and the Italian project partners and should be submitted simultaneously by both Italian and Israeli PIs, to MAECI in Italy and to MOST in Israel. Each joint proposal should be written in English and must be identical for both PIs.

Joint deadline for applications: Wednesday April 10, 2024 at 15:00 (Israeli time) / 16:00 (Italian time). Proposals will not be accepted under any circumstances after the said date and hour.

Further submission instructions for Israeli research teams:

- a) The Israeli PI shall submit the proposal through the Science Forefront system, at <https://kf.most.gov.il>.
In order to apply for the first time, the applicant needs to fill an "account request" at the Science Forefront system. The request should be approved by the Research Authority of the Affiliated Institution. Once approved, the applicant will be notified by email that the account is active. The approval process may take time and therefore should be done well in advance of the application deadline.
- b) **Mandatory Pre-submission:** The Principal Investigator must pre-submit the proposal in English via the Science Forefront system a week before the final Joint Deadline, by **Wednesday, April 3, 2024 at 15:00 local time (Israel). The online system will be closed for pre-submissions after the said date and hour and no pre-submissions will be accepted after that time.**
- c) A proposal that has been pre-submitted can be edited by the PI, in coordination with the Affiliated Institution, until the final joint submission deadline.

- d) The Affiliated Institution must submit the proposal no later than by the final deadline on **Wednesday, April 10, 2024 at 15:00 local time (Israel time)**. Proposals that are not submitted by the Affiliated Institution through the Science Forefront system by this time **will not be accepted**.
- e) Please be advised that technical problems are possible, and the submission process may take a significant amount of time.

It is strongly recommended to fulfil the above steps well in advance of the application deadlines.

Further submission instructions for the Italian research teams:

Italian Principal Investigators must submit their completed applications to MAECI by certified electronic mail to the following address: **dgsp09.accordoisraele@cert.esteri.it**. The PEC object must be: "Italy-Israel joint proposal – 2023 scientific track" followed by the Acronym of the project and by the last name of the Italian PI. The application must be sent by **Wednesday, April 10, 2024 at 16:00 (Italian time)** exclusively and mandatorily, on penalty of exclusion from the evaluation process. Italian applicants must send exclusively the documents as laid down in the above mentioned "Norme integrative per la partecipazione italiana ai Bandi per la raccolta di progetti congiunti di ricerca e per la rendicontazione", according to the "Check List" provided as Annex A.

In addition to the duly signed application in "pdf" format, PIs are requested to submit a working copy in "doc" format without signatures.

For both countries:

A valid project application consists of the appropriate application form **duly filled in and signed**, together with all the necessary application documents required from each side of a joint research team as detailed above, submitted respectively to MAECI in Italy, and to MOST in Israel. **If the applications are not duly received both in Italy and in Israel by the date and hour indicated above and in accordance with the submission instructions, the proposal will be rejected.**

F. FUNDED EXPENSES

Funding provided by this Call is intended to enhance joint collaboration between Italian and Israeli researchers. Therefore, besides staff costs funding may be assigned to costs related to support of the collaboration vectors such as, costs related to the bilateral nature of the project (travel expenses of the researchers, scientific meetings, etc.) as well as to defray costs incurred by the approved research projects (disposables, publication costs, etc.).

In any case, each budget item or expenditure for which reimbursement is requested must conform to the respective national rules of each applicant.

Participating researchers are encouraged to plan visits to their counterparts' institutions and labs, given that such visits are an integral part of the research collaboration. International travel costs and in-country living expenses of visiting scientists, including accommodation, per diem, and any other relevant expenses for each visiting scientist, should be included in their project's budget. In this regard when preparing the budget for each team, please note that each side funds their own travel expenses and should budget accordingly. Funding provided under this Call may only be used for visits taking place in Italy or Israel; visits to third countries are not eligible for financing by project funds.

Further funding provisions for the Israeli side:

Please see full funding provisions on MOST [Procedures Regarding Scientific Projects Funded by MOST \("MOST Regulations"\)](#). All activities and funding pursuant to this Call must be in accordance with MOST Regulations unless otherwise specified.

Further funding provisions for the Italian side:

- The financial contribution for successful Italian applicants will be paid at the end of the project, upon presentation of a financial report of eligible expenses;
- After completion of the administrative procedure, the Italian beneficiary can file a motivated request for advance payment of up to 30% of the contribution awarded. Requests aimed at covering personnel costs for recruitment of research fellows with temporary contracts will be given special consideration.

The Italian Principal Investigator will provide budget details as outlined in Annex 1.

G. RENEWAL OF THE FUNDING

Renewal of project funding for a subsequent year is subject to the submission of the relevant documents and reports, separately by the Italian and Israeli PIs. Italy and Israeli PIs must submit these documents to MAECI and to MOST, respectively, two months before the end of the previous year's contract, according to each country's regulations.

In Israel, an application for the continuation of research funding for the second and third year must be submitted to MOST by the Research Institution of Israeli Principal Investigator on the appropriate forms, at least two months prior to the end of the first year and the second year of the project together with the annual scientific report.

H. INSTRUCTIONS FOR WRITING JOINT PROPOSALS

Each joint proposal should be written in English and the content must be identical in both countries.

Full proposal should include the following sections:

- a) Abstract (should not exceed 3000 characters (including spaces) and should present: Objectives, Methodology, Potential scientific contribution of the proposed research Mode of cooperation and added value).
- b) Description of the research topic, involving the state of the art in the research field and discussion of the scientific and technological background of each element of the project (max 3000 characters including spaces).
- c) Expected impact of the project in all relevant aspects (e.g., scientific, social, economic) (max 1500 characters including spaces).
- d) Detailed research program, including specific goals, methodology and work plan. Key scientific issues should be emphasized. The roles of Italian and Israeli partners in carrying out the proposed research plan should be indicated, and the mode of integrating the work of the teams should be described (max 4500 characters including spaces).

Items b through d are limited to a total of 5 pages, font 12, single space, regular margins.

- e) CV: A short CV for each researcher involved, including: Description of available resources, inventory of relevant equipment (max 1500 characters including spaces).
- f) Description of previous joint cooperation between the two PIs, if any (5 lines)
- g) Compatibility of the proposed research with this call for proposals (5 lines)
- h) **Bibliography**: Bibliography of relevant literature.
- i) **Letter of intent** from the research PIs in both countries affirming their intent to collaborate on the proposed research.
- j) **Additional authorizations needed depending on the type of research** (e.g. Helsinki Committee, animal experiments) shall be submitted along with the proposal. In case the required authorization is still not available at the time of submission, a statement in free text should be attached including the researcher's commitment that if their proposal is approved, the required authorization will be submitted as soon as possible.

In Israel only (Additional data for the Science Forefront system):

- a. Short abstract (up to 1500 characters in Hebrew and English).
- b. Applicability up to 5000 characters in Hebrew.
- c. Importance of the research up to 500 characters in Hebrew/English.
- d. Please specify 5 researchers from outside Israel with expertise in the field of the proposal, who could serve as potential external reviewers (with no conflict of interest: Joint research, from the same department or supervisor/student relationship).

Do not add additional documents beyond what is specified above and in the attached guidelines for submission to the Science Forefront system.

I. PROPOSALS REVIEW

Project proposals will undergo a 2-step selection process: in the first step, the proposals will be separately evaluated by each MOST and MAECI. As part of this process, they may send proposals to external reviewers for evaluation. In step 2, the assessment will be carried out by the Sub Joint Committee including representatives of the two Ministries to jointly select the projects recommended for funding. Both MOST and MAECI commit not to release any information on the evaluation process until the agreed minutes of the Joint

Sub Committee are officially affirmed in accordance with their respective internal procedures.

In the event that more than 35 joint proposals are received in both countries and meet all the eligibility requirements, a pre-selection procedure will be introduced. To this end, all proposals will be screened and ranked by at least two Committee Members and only the top 35 ranking proposals will be recommended for full review and will therefore proceed to the two-step selection process described above.

The proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Scientific level (20%): scientific and technological excellence, the scientific basis of research;
2. Innovation (20%): the degree of innovation and originality of the proposed research in comparison to the state of the art;
3. Methodology (20%): the extent to which the proposed method of conducting the research is qualitative, feasible and consistent with the proposed objectives;
4. Applicability potential (30%): the research contribution to the development of new applied scientific and technological advancement in the field;
5. Capability of the researcher and level of bi-national cooperation (10%): based on the experience, previous achievements and skills of the researchers and level of collaboration and compatible skills of partners.

J. NOTIFICATION OF THE RESULTS

Principal Investigators whose projects have been selected by the Sub Joint Committee will be informed of the results in Italy and in Israel by means of official letters.

In Italy, the list of selected projects will also be published in the MAECI website at the following URL:

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

K. CONTRACTS, PAYMENTS AND REPORTS

1. **Contracts:**

Upon approval of a particular project proposal, separate contracts will be signed in Italy and Israel, between MAECI and the Affiliated Institution of the Italian PI and between MOST and the Affiliated Institution of the Israeli PI.

In Italy, once the selection process has been completed, the MAECI will inform the Institution of the PI of the amount and conditions of the grant awarded. The Ministry will finalize the administrative procedures for the allocation of the grant upon receipt of formal acceptance by the beneficiary.

Additionally, the approved Israeli and Italian research teams and their respective Research Institutions shall enter into a "Cooperation Agreement" regarding Intellectual Property rights on the output of the funded project (template attached as Annex B). There is no requirement on the Israeli side to submit this contract to MOST for review.

2. Payments:

Payments will be made by MAECI and MOST to the Affiliated Institution of each Principal Investigator, respectively, in keeping with the provisions of the contracts referred to above, according to the regulations and practices in force in each country.

3. Interim and Final reports:

Reporting requirements for each national research team are set out in the research agreements between each team's Research Institution and the relevant Party to this call.

For the Israeli Party: In accordance with the terms of the "standard MOST Procedures Regarding Scientific Projects Funded by MOST" and to "MOST Standard Contract for Scientific Projects ." Within three months of the conclusion of the project, Israeli PIs must submit a final report in English to MOST at Reports@most.gov.il or through the Science Forefront system. It should include a final scientific and financial report covering the work and cooperation carried out during the entire 3-year project period, in accordance with the contract's requirements

For the Italian Party: The Italian Principal Investigator has to submit the following documents to MAECI:

1. An interim scientific and financial report, according to the above-described correspondence with the Ministry.
2. A final scientific and financial report, covering the work carried out during the three-year project, within 30 days after the conclusion of project activities.

Each PI and each Affiliated Institution are accountable to MOST or MAECI, respectively, for the execution of the project.

L. MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

For both sides:

It is strongly recommended that the Italian and Israeli research teams and their Institutions enter into an agreement regarding Intellectual Property rights from the output of the financed project prior to the commencement of the collaborative activities.

For Israeli Applicants:

All procedures and activities under this Call or the projects approved hereinafter, including the eligibility of Affiliated Institutions via which applications must be filed, are subject to MOST Regulations and to MOST Standard Contract for Scientific Projects ("[Standard Terms](#)").

Applicants are required to familiarize themselves with the Standard Terms before filing an application under this Call. Filing an application constitutes a declaration that the applicant has done so and agrees to be bound by the Standard Terms' provisions thereof.

Please note any updates made to the standard terms publicized before the final submission date will apply to proposals submitted to this Call.

M. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information can be obtained as follows:

ISRAEL:

On administrative matters:

Israeli researchers should consult administrative matters directly with the Research Authority at their Affiliated Institution. The Institution will contact the Ministry in case of necessity.

On scientific matters:

Research topics	Contact person
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Technologies for healthy soils (i.e - Novel fertilizers, soil implants, soil microbiome etc.)	Dr. Moshe Ben Sasson Director, Agriculture, Environment, and Water Technologies
Water technologies, including: drinking water treatment, industrial and sewage water treatment and water desalination	Tel: 972-2-5411134 Email: MosheBS@most.gov.il
Precision optics, electronics and quantum technologies for frontier generation detectors, such as gravitational wave detectors	Dr. Fadil Salih Scientific Director of Physics and Applied Math Office: +972 (2)5411816 fadils@most.gov.il

Representative of the Division of International Relations for this CFP:

Mrs. Claire Levaton

Division for International Relations

E-mail: claire@most.gov.il

MOST website: www.most.gov.il

Italy:

On administrative / scientific matters:

Italian PIs and/or administration officers should contact via email the competent office of MAECI (Direzione Generale per la Promozione del Sistema Paese - Ufficio IX) for any kind of information concerning the submission of proposals for the present Call.

E-mail: accordo.italiaisraele@esteri.it

Certified Electronic Mail to file applications and any other formal message:

dgsp09.accordoisraele@cert.esteri.it

MAECI website: <https://www.esteri.it>