



## **Belgium - South-Africa Research and Technology Cooperation**

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS 2022**

**SUPPORT OF NETWORKING ACTIVITIES**

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## 1. Background

In line with the Science and Technology Agreement that was signed in January 2017 between South Africa and Belgium, the South African National Research Foundation (NRF) and the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office (BELSPO) decided to launch the third call for supporting joint networking research activities between South African and Belgian researchers. Applications for this call should be submitted by a date not later than 20 September. Networking activities should start in 2023.

## 2. Aims of the joint call

- To contribute to scientific advancement in both countries through the funding of researchers' networking and mobility activities in specified research fields.
- To provide an opportunity for next generation and emerging researchers to cooperate in an international setting.
- To support the advancement of basic and applied research.
- To contribute to research and innovation capacity enhancement.

## 3. Supported areas of cooperation

Applications should be submitted only in the following domains:

- Cultural heritage
- Marine sciences
- Microbiological biobanks research and biotechnology
- Natural heritage
- Space

**Specific foci<sup>1</sup>** : For the Marine sciences as well as for the 'Heritage related' areas, focus is highly encouraged on joint activities aligning or synergizing with relevant international initiatives (like UNESCO's programs [MAB](#), [IGGP](#), [WHP](#), [MOW](#) as well as with the priorities of the 'Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Developments' (<https://en.unesco.org/ocean-decade>) or the 'All Atlantic's' initiative ([All-Atlantic-ocean-research-alliance](#) (marine ecosystems, pollution, natural resources and food). For all areas proposed for cooperation, proposals linking up to objectives and topics dealt with in Horizon Europe or specific African programmes is most welcomed. Also linking up to programs coping with climate change and striving to sustainable development is part of the focus. Trans-disciplinary networks including partners from different disciplines are particularly encouraged. Cooperation activities with the potential to lead to future bilateral and multilateral research and innovation projects will be highly appreciated. The Networking activities are considered as a leverage mechanism to pave the way to longer lasting Research cooperation, to be supported by other funding frames.

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<https://en.unesco.org/international-geoscience-and-geoparks-programme> IGGP

<https://en.unesco.org/mab> Man and the Biosphere Program MAB

[https://www.eu4oceanobs.eu/regional\\_initiatives/atlantic/](https://www.eu4oceanobs.eu/regional_initiatives/atlantic/) & [All-Atlantic-ocean-research-alliance](#) (EU regional initiatives : Atlantic oceans and coasts, linked with the All-Atlantic Ocean Research Alliance)

<https://en.unesco.org/ocean-decade> United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030)

<https://whc.unesco.org/> World heritage program (natural and cultural heritage [WHP](#))

<https://en.unesco.org/programme/mow> Memory of the World Program [MOW](#)

In terms of human capital development, South African applications from previously disadvantaged researchers are encouraged, as is the involvement of historically disadvantaged higher education institutions.

#### 4. Eligible activities

The purpose of this call is to support the networking research activities and mobility of researchers (and their postgraduate students) between the two countries. Research activities as such will not be supported by this call; they are supposed to be financed by other funding sources.

The present call's funds can be used for:

- Networking events (i.e. joint workshops, seminars, conferences, symposia, lecturer presentations, meetings, regional conferences, etc.).
- International travel of researchers, including accommodation, subsistence and local travel.
- Short-term exchanges of the partnering researchers' postgraduate students.
- Other networking activities motivated by the partnering researchers.
- Preparation of joint proposals to submit in other Research and Innovation funding frames.

The funding of the bilateral networking activities is based on the **principle of reciprocity**. Each country supports the costs of activities carried out on its own territory whereas the international travel costs are borne by the respective sending country. E.g. the organisation of a workshop in Belgium will be covered by Belgium/BELSPO but the international travel costs of the South- African researchers who will attend will be borne by South Africa/NRF.

#### 5. Duration of projects

Table 1: Planned Call Schedule

Call Process	
Monday, 4 July 2022	Launch of the call
Tuesday, 23 September 2022	Call deadline for all applicants
Friday, 30 September 2022	Call deadline for Designated Authorities at South African universities and science councils ( <i>only relevant to South African applicants</i> )
October to mid-December 2022	Screening and reviews of eligible applications
December 2022 – January 2023	Decision making, awards and signing of contracts with successful candidates
February – March 2023	Start of funded project activities
December 2025	End of funded project activities
End February 2026	Submission of final report by researchers

Although the funders endeavor to abide by the abovementioned dates, it should be noted that the nature and complexity of the bilateral programme require synchronization of all processes and alignment of different academic and financial years. Funders, therefore reserve the right to change and amend the abovementioned dates without prior notification to applicants.

Joint networking activities will be supported for **maximum 3 years** (starting in 2023 and until 2026).

## 6. Eligibility criteria

- Commercial institutions and private education institutions are not eligible to apply under this Programme.
- An application must designate two Principal Investigators, one in South Africa and one in Belgium, who will bear the main responsibility for the project activities. That will include the technical and administrative coordination of the network as well as scientific and financial reporting (see also point 10 hereafter).
- Additional research partners based in South-Africa and/or Belgium can also participate in the joint projects and form part of the networking team provided there is strong motivation for value add.
- Each PI is allowed to submit only one proposal meaning that a researcher cannot serve as a PI or networking partner on more than one proposal.
- Former South-African - Belgian beneficiaries (BELSPO-NRF calls) are welcomed to participate in this call however a clear motivation should be provided should the submitted proposal build on the former project, while deepening or broadening the network.

### **South Africa:**

This call is open to working researchers residing in South Africa and affiliated with a recognised higher education or research institution such as a university, university of technology or science council. The South African applicant must be in possession of a PhD. Proposals submitted by a PI based at a Historically Advantaged Institution without a research partner from a Historically Disadvantaged Institution (HDI) will be ineligible and will not be submitted for review. The research partner from an HDI in this case can serve as a co-applicant in the proposal. Please note that co-applicants are also required to be in possession of a PhD. Only the following eight universities will be recognised as HDIs in line with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) November 2021 Ministerial Statement on university funding: University of Limpopo (UL), University of Fort Hare (UFH), University of Venda (Univen), Walter Sisulu University (WSU), University of the Western Cape (UWC), University of Zululand (UniZulu), Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), and Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU).

### **Belgium:**

This call is open to the scientific community of both countries: universities, university colleges, public scientific institutions and non-profit research centres may apply.

An information source, among others, to find Belgian potential PI's active in the focus cooperation areas for this call can be, the BELSPO's website: [www.belspo.be](http://www.belspo.be) →Fedra →Research actions.)

BELSPO encourages in particular cooperation with research teams from the Belgian federal scientific institutions;

Information on the federal scientific institutions can be found in [Annex I](#).

## 7. Funding regulations

- Funding will be available for a maximum of 3 years.
- Proposals must be jointly developed and completed by the partnering researchers on both sides.
- Should you be successful you will be funded only for activities within the scope of the networking guidelines.
- In both countries, apart from the financial support, for networking, from the two parties, institutions and universities are encouraged to solicit other funding resources as needs be.

A maximum of 10 projects will be funded for this call.

Scientific networking and financial reporting on the project are an obligatory condition of funding in subsequent years.

**South Africa:** The NRF funding total amount should not exceed **R600 000**. Funding will be made available for a 3 year project, to be paid in annual instalments and exclusively for activities starting the beginning of 2023.

**Belgium:** The maximum budget per proposal to be granted to the Belgian partner is **30 000 EUR**.

Participation of another relevant non-South African or non-Belgian partner in the network is possible, but will not be funded by BELSPO nor by NRF. Such partner should be indicated as '**optional partner**' in the application and a declaration of self-funding is to be included in the Application dossier. For inclusion of African partners emphasis is placed on partners from any of the 16 African countries whose ministries and granting councils are a participating member in the Science Granting Council Initiative (SGCI). The list of the SGCI African countries can be found here: <https://sgciafrica.org/councils/>.

## 8. Application procedure

The onus is on the applicant to find their own research partner(s). Proposals must be received in due time in both South Africa and in Belgium (via the **Application Form**). Proposals which have only been received in either South Africa or Belgium, but not both countries, will not be considered for funding. The call process is highly competitive therefore application does not guarantee funding.

Both sides have different submission formats. Belgian side applicants should fill the format from Belgian website.

### **South Africa:**

The South African PI must submit their consortia proposals through an online application process to the NRF on the NRF Connect system at <https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za>. Rejected applications during the screening phase will be given a maximum of 3 working days from date of email receipt, to query the outcomes thereof. Please make use of the '*General Application Guide 2023*' for assistance on the steps to follow when applying for international research grants.

The link to the guide can be found on this web page: <https://www.nrf.ac.za/funding/call-documents/nrf-call-for-proposals-for-funding-in-2022-and-2023/>.

PIs **must** attach the required **compulsory documents** in PDF format in the following order:

- CVs of all consortia partners.
- Budgets of the Belgian Principal Investigator.
- Budget division of the South African team, in particular budget sharing between the historically advantaged and historically disadvantaged institutions.

Failure to submit compulsory documents will result in the disqualification of the application and will make the entire project consortium ineligible.

### **Belgium:**

Applications are to be submitted at BELSPO by the Belgian coordinator via the **application form, by e-mail** (in 'Word, AND in 'pdf' with signatures). Applicants are encouraged to use the checklist with regard to the eligibility before submission of the proposal checklist in annex II to this document).

Belgian submission file is including a part 'budgetary detail', to be filled in in Dutch or French language by the Belgian PI.

Short CV's of the PI's should be attached to the Application Form in order to complement the 'scientific argumentation' of the grant regarding the description of expertise and skills for each partner with elements on their professional background, max.3 top publications relevant for the proposal (indicating the international peer-reviewed ones), list of the research projects carried out over the past five years in the field under consideration or related areas (including project and funding source), list of their (inter)national contacts/networks to which they belong within the context of the proposal, the scientific quality, management and communication skills of the coordinator. If possible, include web links.

## **9. Review process**

Following the eligibility check at each side, eligible proposals will be submitted in parallel at Belgian and at South-African side, to both a written and a panel review evaluation.

Reviewers will evaluate each proposal based on the following criteria:

- Scientific technical and societal merit
- Potential of the networking activities to lead to a long lasting sustained 'research cooperation' partnership
- Suitability and feasibility of the work plan
- Budget fitting to the work plan (value for money)
- Human Capacity Development: the potential of the project to strengthen the international prospects of postgraduate students.

Please note that other national criteria may be applicable in line with the national policies and regulations of the partnering countries. Following national evaluation, a shortlist of projects to be funded will be constituted through consultations between NRF and BELSPO based on the results of the expert evaluations done in both countries.

The final selection will be jointly made by the NRF and BELSPO. Both the NRF and BELSPO will inform the Belgian and the South African applicants of the outcomes of the selection process.

The written review will be followed by a panel review including recognized local experts in the various fields of research represented by the proposals.

## 10. Projects follow-up and reporting

- A final scientific and financial report will be submitted, in English, by both the South African and the Belgian Principal Investigators, at the end of the project.
- The report will describe the outputs of the 'networking' projects compared with the objectives and aims of the proposal. It will also mention the joint efforts done to explore mechanisms and the perspectives for longer lasting 'research' cooperation among the project partners.
- The joint publications, if any, by the researchers will mention the support from the NRF and BELSPO.

## 11. Intellectual property

The researchers of each country, particularly the PIs, must take adequate steps to ensure the protection and sharing of the intellectual property that could result from the joint projects.

## 12. Ethical considerations

### South Africa:

In conjunction with the institution, it is the responsibility of the grant-holders to ensure that all research activities carried out in or outside South Africa comply with the laws and regulations of South Africa and/or the foreign country in which the research activities are conducted. These include all human and animal subjects, copyright and intellectual property protection, and other regulations or laws, as appropriate. A research ethics committee must review and approve the ethical and academic rigor of all research prior to the commencement of the research and acceptance of the grant. The awarded amount will not be released for payment if a copy of the required ethical clearance certificate, as indicated in the application, is not attached to the Conditions of Grant (CoG). Please also refer to the "Statement on Ethical Research and Scholarly Publishing Practices" on the NRF website <https://www.nrf.ac.za/statement-on-ethical-research-and-scholarly-publishing-practices/>.

### Belgium:

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](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 equality: 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.

## 13. Protection of personal information

### South Africa:

The National Research Foundation ensures compliance with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), Act 4 of 2013, committing to ensure the privacy of those submitting applications and proposals to the NRF on the NRF Connect system (<https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za/>). The National Research Foundation will protect the personal information provided by applicants or the third party against misuse, loss, unauthorised access, modification, or disclosure.

The Privacy Policy of the NRF outlines the practices relating to the protection of personal information and can be accessed on the NRF website at <https://www.nrf.ac.za/privacy-policy>.

### Belgium:

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 (for projects selected for funding) as well as dissemination or statistical activities with regard to the executed project. require the processing of personal data and are 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 engages to take the necessary technical and organisational measures to protect the data against accidental or unauthorized destruction or accidental loss, as well as against modification, access and any other unauthorized 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 proposals can be accessed on the BELSPO website at [http://www.belspo.be/belspo/coordination/biCoop\\_SouthAfrika\\_en.stm](http://www.belspo.be/belspo/coordination/biCoop_SouthAfrika_en.stm) (general web place, specified on 4th July).

## 14. Submission deadline

The deadline for submission is **23 September 2022**.

Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

Please note that neither the NRF nor BELSPO will be held responsible for applications not received.

Researchers are advised to ensure that their research partners' applications are submitted, are complete and are received in the partner country.

## 15. Contact details

### BELSPO

Brigitte Decadt  
Tel +32 (0)2 238 35 70  
Email: [Brigitte.DECADT@belspo.be](mailto:Brigitte.DECADT@belspo.be)

### NRF

#### For content related queries

Teuns Phahlamohlaka  
Tel: +27 12 481 4385  
Email: [T.Phahlamohlaka@risa.nrf.ac.za](mailto:T.Phahlamohlaka@risa.nrf.ac.za)

#### For technical queries

Stephen Dlamini  
Tel: +27 12 481 4037  
Email: [SM.Dlamini@risa.nrf.ac.za](mailto:SM.Dlamini@risa.nrf.ac.za)

### 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: [http://www.belspo.be/belspo/organisation/complaints\\_en.stm](http://www.belspo.be/belspo/organisation/complaints_en.stm).

Your complaint will be treated independently and with strict confidentiality.

## **Annex I: Belgian Federal Scientific Institutions**

The Belgian Federal Scientific Institutions that may be relevant for this call

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Website</b>
<b>Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (KBIN-IRSNB)</b>	<a href="http://www.naturalsciences.be">www.naturalsciences.be</a>
<b>Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA)</b>	<a href="http://www.kikirpa.be">www.kikirpa.be</a>
<b>Royal Belgian Institute for Space Aeronomy (BIRA-IASB)</b>	<a href="http://www.aeronomie.be">www.aeronomie.be</a>
<b>Royal Observatory of Belgium (KSB-ORB)</b>	<a href="http://www.astro.oma.be">www.astro.oma.be</a>
<b>Royal Meteorological Institute of Belgium (KMI-IRM)</b>	<a href="http://www.meteo.be">www.meteo.be</a>
<b>Royal Museums of Art and History (KMKG-MRAH)</b>	<a href="http://www.kmkg-mrah.be">www.kmkg-mrah.be</a>
<b>Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium (KMSKB-MRBAB)</b>	<a href="http://www.fine-arts-museum.be">www.fine-arts-museum.be</a>
<b>Royal Museum for Central Africa (KMMA-MRAC)</b>	<a href="http://www.africamuseum.be">www.africamuseum.be</a>
<b>Royal Library of Belgium (KBR)</b>	<a href="http://www.kbr.be">www.kbr.be</a>
<b>National Archives and State Archives in the Provinces (ARA-AGR)</b>	<a href="http://www.arch.be">www.arch.be</a>
<b>Sciensano</b>	<a href="http://www.sciensano.be">www.sciensano.be</a>

## Annex II: Check list: Eligibility of proposals

### Belgian - South-African research and technology cooperation

#### CALL FOR PROPOSALS 2022: SUPPORT OF NETWORKING ACTIVITIES

BELSPO checks if the proposals fulfil the eligibility criteria listed below.

The eligibility of each proposal is checked on the basis of the information provided by the applicants in the application file.

Promoters of proposals that are not eligible are informed by BELSPO.

#### List of criteria

All proposals are checked on the following criteria. Only proposals fulfilling all criteria will be evaluated.

➤ The application file is received at latest on 20 September 2022 at 3h PM CE time <sup>2</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ The application file is transmitted in electronic format, (Word AND Pdf with signatures)	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ The part of the application form addressed to BELSPO includes the 2 requested correctly filled in parts (English form + Budget related form in Dutch or French)	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ The network consists of participants from universities and/or public scientific institutions, and/or non-profit research centres	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ The network is composed of at least one Belgian partner and one South-African partner.	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Optional partners provide their own funding	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ The proposal concerns networking activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ The proposal responds fits to the focus of the call as described in the information file	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ The budget requested from BELSPO does not exceed 30.000 EUR	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ The duration of the proposal is maximum 3 years	<input type="checkbox"/>

<sup>2</sup> An acknowledgement of receipt will be delivered.