

Bilateral Scientific Research Cooperation Projects

Between the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO) and the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC)

Guidelines call 2018

1. Introduction

Science is increasingly global. Many research questions and “grand challenges” cannot be resolved without cross-border collaboration between scientists. Flanders and China wish to invest in joint research projects, creating a leverage for scientific excellence.

This intention will be realized through the implementation of a call for proposals, to be launched jointly in Flanders and China. Each proposal should be an integrated Flemish-Chinese research project with both partners from Flanders and China that join their strengths to execute a joint research project. Applicants are expected to propose a **coherent research project, in which the added value of both the Flemish and Chinese partner, and the complementariness of both teams, is clearly shown**. The research should be carried out both in China and Flanders.

The research proposal must be submitted both at FWO and NSFC according to each agency’s own regulations and procedures. The evaluation will be organised by FWO and NSFC together. In a first step, both FWO and NSFC will invite external referees to assess the applications. In a second step, a joint scientific committee consisting out of Flemish and Chinese experts will rank the proposals based on their scientific value. The boards of FWO and NSFC will thereafter ratify the ranking made by the joint evaluation panel. The Chinese part will be funded by NSFC according to its own rules and procedures; the Flemish part by FWO according to its rules and procedures.

2. Scope of funding

Proposals for bilateral research projects between researchers from Flanders and China can be submitted in the fields of natural sciences, engineering sciences, management sciences and medical sciences. More precisely (NSFC scientific departments):

- Mathematical & physical sciences
- Chemical sciences
- Life sciences

- Earth sciences
- Engineering & material sciences
- Information sciences
- Management sciences
- Health sciences

For more information on the NSFC scientific departments please consult: <http://www.nsf.gov.cn/Portals/1/fj/pdf/06-01.pdf> or <http://www.nsf.gov.cn/Portals/1/fj/pdf/03-01.pdf>.

Project proposals within humanities and/or social sciences are not eligible.

3. Project duration

The projects, all starting on January 1st 2019, have a duration of **three years**. Please note that the project duration must be the same on both sides.

4. Application procedure

4.1. How to apply?

In order to be eligible, a proposal must meet the following criteria:

- Proposals should always involve both a Flemish principal investigator (PI) and a Chinese PI. If needed co-promotors can be included both in Flanders and China. Please be aware that on the Chinese side, up to maximally 10 researchers (including the Chinese PI) from no more than 3 different institutes and universities can be included in the application. So the maximum amount of participating Chinese institutes or universities in one project is three;
- Proposals must be submitted by the Flemish PI at FWO and the Chinese PI at NSFC. In Flanders it can only be submitted according to the regulations of FWO; in China it can only be submitted according to the regulations of NSFC;
- Please be aware that Chinese applicants should have a senior title and should be the PI of an NSFC on-going or completed project with a duration of 3 years or longer. Please consult the NSFC contact point (see below) for more specific details on the eligibility criteria at Chinese side;
- Proposals must be submitted by the **deadline, 03 May 2018:**
 - **5 pm local time for FWO** and
 - **4 pm Beijing time for NSFC;**
- Proposals must be submitted, using the appropriate application forms, which are available through the [website of FWO](#) for Flanders and through the [website of NSFC](#) for China. At FWO

the full proposal needs to be submitted in English. At NSFC the full proposal must be submitted in Chinese and in English. **Please note** that in the NSFC application, the Chinese PI should include a PDF upload of the research proposal that is uploaded in the tab 'Project Outline' of the Flemish application as submitted to the FWO.

- All PIs and co-promoters of **both the Flemish and Chinese research team** must have an **online profile including an updated list of publications** on the [FWO E-portal](#) before the submission deadline. **Please note that the registration of your login/password takes 24 hours.** It is therefore strongly advised to start well in advance;
- **In Flanders, a researcher may participate in only one project submitted in this call.**

The proposal should be clearly integrated and contain one central issue to be investigated, as well as a methodology and an implementation plan; the project description in the proposal submitted by the Flemish and the Chinese research team should be identical; the work packages and budget should be specified clearly and separately for respectively the Flemish and Chinese part of the project. At FWO the Chinese budget (in CNY) must be added in the online application tool by adding the foreign host institution and subsequently allocating budget to it. In addition, as a **proof of partnership**, a 'Collaborative Research Agreement', signed by both the Flemish and the Chinese PI, **should be included in the NSFC application** form. Afterwards, upon approval of the project proposal, a partnership agreement will be required lying out topics such as Intellectual Property Rights.

After the deadline, FWO and NSFC will check whether the proposals have been submitted simultaneously in Flanders and China. They will inform each other of the results. **If a proposal is submitted only in one country and/or received after the deadline, it will be declared ineligible.**

4.2. What can be applied for?

The Flemish part of the project budget can only be used for one or more of the following cost categories:

- Scientific staff;
- Consumables;
- Equipment;
- Travel costs of Flemish researchers going to China;
- To cover accommodation, daily allowances and local travel costs of Chinese researchers staying in Flanders;
- To cover production costs of joint publications.

In the frame of this bilateral collaboration with China the budget for **staff and consumables** on the Flemish side is minimally 45.000 EUR and **maximally 75.000 EUR annually per project**. In case one of the project partners requests only funding for consumables, the lower limit for this partner is set at 20.000 EUR. For equipment a maximum of 150.000 EUR in the first year can be applied for with

matching funding also up to 150.000 EUR. No overhead costs may be charged by the host institutions on the Flemish budgets.

The Chinese budget per project is fixed at 2.000.000 RMB/3 years and should primarily be used for one or more of the following cost categories:

- Consumables;
- Small equipment;
- Travel costs of Chinese researchers going to Belgium;
- To cover accommodation, daily allowances and local travel costs of Flemish researchers staying in China;
- Some other necessary research costs;
- Please be aware that salaries for researchers cannot be covered.

During their stay abroad and travel from and to Belgium/China, taking place in the frame of an approved joint FWO-NSFC project, all researchers involved on an allocated FWO-NSFC project and independent of nationality, can rely on a travel and assistance insurance and repatriation covered by FWO. This insurance is NOT a health insurance. Social security remains a responsibility of the home country.

4.3. Application timeline

The call for 2018 will be published in February 2018. The timeline is as follows:

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| • 01 February 2018 | Opening of the call |
| • 03 May 2018 (5 pm local time) | FWO deadline for proposals |
| • 03 May 2018 (4 pm Beijing time) | NSFC deadline for proposals |
| • May-September 2018 | Eligibility check and peer review |
| • October-November 2018 | Joint scientific committee appointed by FWO/NSFC |
| • November-December 2018 | Ratification panel decision/communication results |
| • 01 January 2019 | Start of the projects |

5. Evaluation

5.1. Evaluation Procedure

The applicants shall respect the evaluation procedure outlined by FWO and NSFC. The projects will be evaluated using a two-step procedure.

1. In a first step the proposals submitted at NSFC will be subjected to the peer-review procedure of NSFC. The proposals submitted at FWO will be peer-reviewed according to the standard procedure at FWO.

Each eligible application submitted at FWO will be peer-reviewed by international external referees. The Flemish applicant is requested to provide a list of 10 potential referees that are eligible according to the [Regulations FWO - Internal and External Peer Review](#). Please carefully read and respect these regulations. E.g. **the proposed international referees cannot be appointed to a Belgian university, research institute or other organization. Moreover, the proposed international referees cannot be appointed to similar institutions and organizations in China. Please note that there can also not be a conflict of interest between the external referees and both the Flemish and Chinese partner(s).**

2. A joint selection panel comprising of experts designated by the FWO and the NSFC will evaluate all eligible proposals and allocate the funding.

The boards of FWO and NSFC will thereafter ratify the ranking made by the joint evaluation panel.

5.2. Evaluation criteria

- International scientific level of the research groups including the composition of the research team
- Complementarity of the included research teams and their expertise
- Methodology
- Originality and innovative nature of the project
- Importance of the project
- Purposefulness of the project
- Feasibility/focus of the project
- Collaboration and coordination between research departments
- Scientific context (appropriateness, expertise, and infrastructure) of the research departments
- Necessity for the budgeted resources

In addition, great importance is attached to the added value of the international collaboration, the complementarity/synergy between the partners, the contribution/coordination of research tasks, and the exchange of researchers.

6. Contact information

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