

GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS CALL 2026

FOR JOINT SCIENTIFIC MOBILITY PROJECTS BETWEEN THE NATIONAL NATURAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION OF CHINA (NSFC) AND THE RESEARCH FOUNDATION – FLANDERS (FWO)

From April 2nd to June 8th, 2026, the call is open for two-year joint mobility projects between research groups from China and Flanders in the framework of the Cooperation Agreement signed by the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) and the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO) on the 18th of December 2023.

Please be aware that the guidelines as stated in this document are to be respected by the research team(s) in Flanders. For specific guidelines for the research team(s) in China, we kindly refer to [the NSFC website](#) and the NSFC contact person (see below, section V).

I. Definition and Objectives of the Collaboration

To strengthen collaboration in scientific research between China and Flanders, joint scientific mobility projects will be funded with a **duration of two years**. Please note that the project duration will be as follows (both at FWO and at NSFC side): **01/01/2027 - 31/12/2028**.

Proposals for joint mobility projects between researchers from Flanders and China can be submitted for **fundamental research** in the fields of natural sciences, engineering sciences, management sciences and medical sciences. More precisely:

- 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 disciplines please consult: https://www.nsf.gov.cn/english/site_1/about/9.html.

Joint mobility projects should increase and develop cooperation between both scientific communities, **with specific focus on junior researchers**.

II. Guidelines for Applicants

The proposals should meet the usual requirements for scientific research quality and meet the specific requirements for scientific cooperation projects of the funding organisation they are submitted to (i.e. FWO or NSFC).

Please be aware to always check, before starting your application, **if there are no restrictions in place regarding international cooperation in FWO funding instruments**. The FWO is keen on promoting international collaboration as a driver for excellence. However, a number of risks and challenges are present when collaborating internationally, regardless of the foreign funding partner. In order to safeguard fundamental values and avoid dual-use or military applications and to avoid breaches of academic freedom, integrity and ethics, the FWO is compelled to take some additional measures, also in its calls for joint mobility projects.

For the 2026 call for joint NSFC-FWO mobility projects, **Flemish research teams are encouraged to consult their Institutional Research Offices (or equivalent), before preparing their application**, to learn more about the specificities of this particular call.

2.1. How to apply?

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

- **Who?** Projects must be endorsed by the **Principal Investigators** (PIs, being the supervisor-spokespersons), **one Chinese and one Flemish**, duly authorized to conduct research and providing the guarantees on the operational (financial) resources.

Since the NSFC-FWO joint mobility projects are focused on **junior researchers**, both at FWO and at NSFC side, PIs are required to have a PhD degree, and the first PhD degree can be obtained maximally 12 years before the submission deadline (08/06/2026) of the project, to be counted from the date of obtaining the doctoral degree.

In Flanders: PIs must hold, throughout the entire period of the project, an appointment of at least 50% at:

- a university in the Flemish Community (including the academic programmes within the corresponding association), or to
- a federal or Flemish scientific institute as scientific staff of the Dutch-speaking community, or to
- a university hospital in the Flemish Community as scientific staff, or to
- a hospital with an academic character recognized as research center in the Flemish Community as scientific staff.

Please be aware: at Flemish (FWO) side, in the framework of this call with NSFC, you can only act **once** as a supervisor-spokesperson or co-supervisor.

In China:

- Chinese applicants should already have an ongoing NSFC grant which should at least run until the 31st of December 2026.

- Please consult the [NSFC call document](#) (only available in Chinese) for more specific details. Further announcements like “eligible proposal announcement” and “funded proposal announcement” will be at <https://www.nsf.gov.cn/p1/2828/2831/tzgg11.html> .
- **How?** Applications should be **submitted simultaneously** to NSFC by the PI in China and to FWO by the PI in Flanders, respecting the submission deadline and by using the respective application forms of each funder. **Lack of submission** of the application to one of the funders **and/or reception after the deadline** will cause the application to be considered **ineligible**. Please note that at FWO side the proposals should be **written in English**. At NSFC side, the proposal should primarily be written in Chinese while certain parts should be both in Chinese and English. The title, names of the Flemish and Chinese PIs, project description, methodology, work packages, etc. in the research proposal submitted by the Flemish and Chinese PI should be **identical**.

In Flanders:

- At Flemish side, the application should be submitted through [the FWO E-portal](#) by using the specific **digital** application form under ‘International collaboration / Mobility projects’. Please note that each online FWO submission is automatically confirmed by a confirmation email. If you did not receive such an email, please verify whether you properly submitted your application.
- Visits must be indicated in the application form, duly justified, including their duration, the estimated dates and names of the involved researchers.

Specific points of attention FWO application:

- Please note that, as a **mandatory upload** in the **digital** application form, the **‘Template Curriculum Vitae’** (to be found [on the FWO webpage](#)) needs to be completed for **each** involved Flemish and Chinese (co-)supervisor(-spokesperson). Please note that only the Flemish supervisor-spokesperson can upload these CVs in the FWO application.
- In addition, only the **Flemish supervisor-spokesperson should register at FWO by creating an online profile including an overview of academic positions and an updated list of publications on the FWO E-portal** before the submission deadline. Please note that the registration of your login/password **can take up to 24 hours**. It is therefore strongly advised to start well in advance.

Please be aware: Guidelines on formal requirements in application forms and accompanying documents of application programmes shall be **strictly** followed. If these are violated, the application may be declared inadmissible.

In China:

- The Chinese research group should submit the project proposal and the project members’ CV through the NSFC Grants system (<https://grants.nsf.gov.cn/>).
- Please note that the ‘Exchange Programme Agreement’ is an obligatory attachment to the NSFC submission.

2.2. Funding Principles

The funding within the frame of granted NSFC-FWO mobility projects shall be used to cover the **travel, accommodation and living expenses**. Both funders agree to immediately approve the funding for the complete two-year duration of the mobility project.

Each funder bears the full costs of its own researchers. Missions shall be funded as follows:

- FWO offers researchers from Flanders a daily living allowance of € 66 (or max. € 1,650 per month) on top of the travel expenses towards/from China, to be booked through [a travel agency authorized by the FWO](#).
- NSFC provides a fixed total amount of funding per mobility project for a fixed period of years, max. 150,000 RMB (approx. € 18,700) for 2 years. This funding can be used by the Chinese researcher(s) for the international travel costs from China to Flanders, and the accommodation and living expenses in Flanders.

These amounts may be altered, if necessary, with the consent of both funders.

*During their travel and stay abroad, all researchers from the Flemish research team involved in an allocated NSFC-FWO mobility project and independent of nationality, can rely on a **travel and assistance insurance** ('reis- en bijstandsverzekering') and repatriation covered by FWO, upon providing to FWO the obligatory 'Notification for a stay abroad' form. This insurance is not a health insurance. Regardless of the aforementioned insurance, all researchers should have a valid health insurance entitling the holder to free emergency medical treatment in the host country.*

*The responsibility for the provision of adequate **insurance against accidents** that may occur during the stay in the host country ('arbeidsongevallenverzekering') **rests with the research institution to which the researcher stays affiliated** during the joint scientific mobility project. The research institution to which the researcher is travelling, shall provide the visitor with all indispensable organisational assistance in situations requiring such steps.*

2.3. Evaluation

In a first phase, the eligible applications are evaluated separately by FWO and NSFC according to their own evaluation mechanisms.

At FWO side

Please be aware that **at Flemish side proposals will be evaluated by [the Cross-Domain Panel](#)**, an international panel composed of members with a broad variety of scientific expertises. **Therefore you are kindly advised to write your proposal for a wide scientific audience.**

The evaluation criteria [on FWO side](#) are:

- Scientific quality of the proposal
 - Expected impact/importance
 - Originality

- Feasibility
- Focus
- Methodology
- Scientific track record, output and other impact of the applicants (Flemish and Chinese)
- Added value of the collaboration of the research teams
- Complementarity in expertise of the research teams involved
- Balanced contribution of both research teams
- Necessity of the planned stays and exchanges

At NSFC side

At Chinese side, the evaluation criteria that apply are the following:

- Connection with the ongoing support NSFC grant
- Role in creating cooperation
- Feasibility of exchange plan
- Justification of budget
- Expected outcomes of cooperation

In a second phase, based on the separate evaluation results, proposals are classified and ranked by NSFC and FWO in order to **jointly select the projects recommended for funding**. Only projects evaluated positively on both the FWO and NSFC side can be funded.

III. Exchange Visits

Since the NSFC-FWO joint mobility projects are focused on junior researchers, both at FWO and at NSFC side, visits can only be performed by **junior researchers**, i.e. first PhD degree can be obtained maximally 12 years before the submission deadline (08/06/2026) of the project, to be counted from the date of obtaining the doctoral degree.

At FWO side, the research team may apply for **a total of 6 months per project (for the entire project duration of 2 years)**. This annual quota can be divided into **maximum 6 visits per year (or max. 12 visits per project)**. The unused exchange quota cannot be carried forward to the following year. Visits can only be performed by researchers (from PhD level onwards) holding, throughout the entire period of the exchange visit, an appointment of at least 50% at one of the eligible institutions in Flanders as listed under section 2.1.

1. Individual visits in the frame of granted two-year NSFC-FWO projects need to obtain an approval from FWO.

In order to obtain such visit approval:

- The involved researcher in Flanders needs to apply (at least two months before departure) **by e-mail to interprog@fwo.be** with the 'Notification for a stay abroad' form which can be downloaded at [the FWO website](#);

- The involved researcher in China is not required to submit any files to NSFC before the actual exchange will take place.
2. The sending Party should provide the host Party with all the details concerning the planned visit and the involved researcher(s), hereby requesting a final approval of the visit towards the host country.
- Researchers in Flanders should detail in the ‘*Notification for a stay abroad*’ form the profile of the researcher(s) involved, dates and destination of the stay abroad, and a detailed scientific programme of their stay abroad. The request should include an invitation letter of the host institution of the receiving country.

At NSFC side, there is no limitation regarding the number of visits and the duration of the visits. However, the maximum financial contribution for researchers in China is 150,000 RMB (approx. € 18,700) for 2 years. Researchers in China should include the intended dates, destination and the programme of the stay abroad in the NSFC application form.

IV. Timetable

- Launch of the new call for applications: April 2nd, 2026
- **Deadline for submissions: June 8th, 2026:**
 - **At NSFC: submission possible until 4 pm Beijing time**
 - **At FWO: submission possible until 5 pm Belgian time**
- Evaluation procedure: June-November 2026
- Announcement of results: November-December 2026
- Start of the joint mobility projects (both at FWO and NSFC side): January 1st, 2027

V. Contact Details

Contact information at the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC):

Division II

Department of International Programs

Dr. SUN Hui

Program Director

Tel: +86-10-6232-6747

sunhui@nsfc.gov.cn

Contact information at the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO):

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