

# FEDERAL RESEARCH PROGRAMME DRUGS

## Call for proposals 2022 Information File

### Submission deadlines:

Eol: 6 May 2022 at 15h00

Full proposals: **28 June** 2022 – 15:00

## PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME

### 1. THE FEDERAL RESEARCH PROGRAMME DRUGS

For more information on the programme, please visit

#### 1.1. GENERAL

BELSPO (the Public Planning Service Science Policy) organises a programme dedicated to funding research in the field of drugs since 2001. This programme finds its source in the Parliamentary working group on drugs (1996/97) that invited the Federal Government to set up an "integral and integrated drug policy". The response was provided by the government in 2001: a general policy was approved in January 2001 and a budget of 500 million BEF (about 12,5 million EUR) was approved and allocated to federal administrations in charge. BELSPO received about 1 million EUR a year to set up a research programme with the objective to fund research in support of the newly adopted Drugs strategy.

The Strategy also foresees the conclusion of a cooperation agreement between the federal level and the Regions and Communities in Belgium with a view to set up a so-called integral and integrated drug policy which could deal with health and law enforcement measures and whose scope was illegal drugs, but also alcohol, tobacco and psychoactive medication. This agreement was concluded in 2008. One of the measures of this agreement was the setup of the General Cell Drugs Policy, the organ in charge of preparing the Drug Strategy on behalf of the Interministerial Conference Drugs. One of its first tasks was to draft a Common Declaration for an integrated and integral approach on drugs, which was adopted by the Ministers in charge at all levels in 2010. Scientific evidence and scientific research was acknowledged as one of the 5 pillars of the Belgian Drugs Strategy. The Federal Research Programme Drugs fully subscribes to the Belgian Strategy and funds research on the demand and supply side, on illicit and licit drugs and on gambling.

Every two years, a call for proposals is launched to the Belgian scientific community on topics designed in close cooperation with the General Cell Drugs Policy.

#### 1.2. ORGANISATION

For its operationalisation BELSPO is assisted by the General Cell Drugs Policy composed of representatives of the Ministers in charge. This organ discusses and suggests research priorities that BELSPO could include in its call for proposals.

#### 1.3. STRUCTURE

The Research programme supports the global and integrated approach, including topics on the demand side (health, prevention...) and the supply side (trafficking, repression, criminality...), considering illegal drugs but also alcohol, tobacco, psychotropic medication and gambling.

The themes that can be funded in the programme should comply with the following principles:

- *Scientific excellence and international integration;*
- *Concentration around key questions covering multiple competences and offering a coherent framework in which fragmentation is minimized. The themes should support the strategic orientations of the Belgian drug policy as adopted by the Inter ministerial Conferences on Drugs ;*
- *Collaboration with other entities should be fostered (authorities at the federal, regional, community, international level) and flexible funding mechanisms involving these levels should be sought;*

#### 1.4. PROJECT TYPES

The Programme finances **research projects** as described below.

##### SCOPE / PHILOSOPHY

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The projects must be thematic and interdisciplinary, meaning that they should meet the specific research priorities of a call and must be interdisciplinary in their content.

##### PARTNERSHIP

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Projects are submitted by a **network**, composed of at least two partners from different at least two eligible Belgian scientific institutions and from different scientific disciplines.

Networks jointly share obligations and responsibilities during the implementation of the project. The project should be fairly balanced (see budget rules), even if different partners may have different tasks and subsequently different budgets.

The cooperation between research partners of **different Communities or Regions** is encouraged. At equal scientific quality between the proposals submitted, preference will be given to proposals composed of partners from different communities and/or that cover the Belgian territory.

A **coordinator** (belonging to a Belgian research institute) must be appointed in each proposal. The coordinator shall:

- Coordinate all activities to be carried out in the framework of the project;
- Coordinate the internal meetings between the network members;
- Coordinate the meetings with the Follow-up Committee and write the reports of these meetings;
- Coordinate the production of the interim and final project reports intended for BELSPO;
- Inform BELSPO of any problems that might hinder the implementation of the project;
- Coordinate the synthesis and translation of the research results, with a view to applications and support for decision-making;
- Coordinate the publication and dissemination of the research results;
- Organise meetings related to the project's progress between the network and BELSPO.

The project may require specific or punctual expertise, which can be delivered in the form of **subcontracting**.

The programme allows for cooperation with international research partners:

- **African research partners of Least Developed Countries<sup>1</sup>** can benefit from financing of maximum 20% of the total project budget. Note: in the project phase (one of) the Belgian project partner(s) will be responsible for the follow-up of the tasks carried out by the African partner(s) and will also be responsible for the flow of information to and from the African partner(s). The budget allocated for the African partner will contractually be added to the budget of this Belgian partner.
- **Other international research partners** can officially participate to the proposal, albeit with their own funding.

It is the responsibility of the Belgian partner(s) to check the eligibility of the African research partner(s) and/or the International research partner(s).

The programme promotes **equality between men and women in research**. The projects should therefore seek for a balanced network composition.

## DURATION

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National thematic interdisciplinary projects will have a duration between 18 and 36 months.

## BUDGET

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There is no maximum budget set for this type of projects. However networks should take into consideration the total available budget for the call (1,4 million EUR) and the fact that a project should make the most efficient use of public resources.

## 2. CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS FOR SELECTED PROJECTS

### 2.1. CONTRACTS

For the selected proposals, a contract is concluded between BELSPO and the funded team(s).

For this purpose, the submitters of the selected proposal will be asked at the end of the evaluation and selection procedure to concisely formulate the specifications on the basis of which the contract is to be drawn up. This **Technical Annex** to the contract will be drawn up in consultation with BELSPO and will take into account the recommendations formulated by the foreign evaluators and the Advisory Committees.

Adaptations to the original proposal may relate, among other things, to the content of the research, the composition of the project partnership or Follow-up Committee, the budget, the proposals for valorising the research.

BELSPO grants the selected projects the **funds** required for their implementation. BELSPO shall reimburse at most, and up to the amount specified in the granted budget, the actual costs proven by the partners providing these costs are directly related to the implementation of the project.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://unctad.org/en/Pages/ALDC/Least%20Developed%20Countries/UN-list-of-Least-Developed-Countries.aspx>

## 2.2. REPORTS AND PROGRESS MEETINGS

The contract foresees the following reports to be submitted to BELSPO:

- Initial report: to be submitted within three months after the start of the project;
- Activity reports: to be submitted annually;
- Final report: to be submitted at the end of the project;
- If deemed useful by BELSPO, an activity report may be requested for an external evaluation of the project;
- BELSPO can ask for a report or other input at any time during the course of the project in order to provide scientific support to valorisation and service actions related to the programme.

These reports are to be included in the project work plan and the cost of preparing them (including possible translations) must be covered by the project budget.

Meetings on the project's progress must be organised - minimum once a year - between the project partner(s), BELSPO and the user committee. The organisation of these meetings must be included in the project work plan and the project budget.

## 2.3. DATA, RESULTS, INTELLECTUAL OWNERSHIP AND OPEN ACCESS

Foreground - the results (including information) produced by the project - shall be the property of the institution carrying out the work generating this foreground, as mentioned in article 11 of the General Conditions (Annex II of the contract). As regards existing information and data, ownership remains the same.

Each institution shall ensure that the foreground of which it has ownership, is disseminated as fast as possible and free of charge.

In accordance with the relevant BELSPO Open Research Data Mandate, each Institution undertakes to make the foreground and background relating to research data, available as soon as possible and free of charge in an approved data repository (Open Research Data Repository). This concerns data that supports the research results, with its metadata and other contextualised (curated) and/or raw data mentioned in the Data Management Plan (DMP) submitted by the grant applicant. The data must comply with the FAIR principle (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable) and must be accessible according to the principle "As open as possible, as closed as necessary".

For research areas concerning the marine environment, the Antarctic and biodiversity, researchers must transfer a copy of the analysis and measurement data and/or metadata to specific databases such as:

- BMDC (the Belgian Marine Data Centre) (<http://www.bmdc.be>). The Belgian Marine Data Centre, our federal NODC (National Oceanographic Data Centre), ([bmdc@naturalsciences.be](mailto:bmdc@naturalsciences.be)), can be contacted for assistance in the development of a DMP for marine applications and/or in choosing the right repository.

- AMD (Antarctic Master Directory) (<https://www.scqr.org/data-products/antarctic-master-directory/>). The Belgian representative of SCADM (the SCAR Standing Committee for Antarctic Data Management) ([avandeputte@naturalsciences.be](mailto:avandeputte@naturalsciences.be)) can be contacted for assistance in the development of DMP for Antarctica related applications and/or in choosing the right repository.
- GBIF (Global Biodiversity Information Facility) (<https://www.gbif.org/>). The Belgian Biodiversity Platform (<http://www.biodiversity.be>) can be contacted for assistance in the development of DMP for biodiversity related applications and/or in choosing the right repository. See also the guidance document: <https://zenodo.org/record/3448251#.XkagsnDsaUl>

For social and Humanities data, a copy of the data and/or metadata must be transferred to SODA (Social Sciences Data Archive) (<https://sodabelgianproject.wixsite.com/sodaproject>).

The promoters of projects that include tasks in which biological materials are used, must ensure the preservation of this biological material by depositing it in a culture collection (Biological Resource Centre), and preferably one in Belgium. This does not apply to material that promoters can prove has already been deposited in a culture collection or for which existing agreements (Material Transfer Agreement) do not allow it to be deposited. Biological material includes cultivable organisms such as microorganisms, viruses, plant, animal and human cells as well as the replicable parts of these organisms, such as non-modified and recombinant plasmids (including those with DNAC inserts).

#### 2.4. RESEARCH ETHICS

The first code of ethics for scientific research in Belgium was drawn up in 2009 (see [https://www.belspo.be/belspo/organisation/publ/pub\\_ostc/Eth\\_code/ethcode\\_en.pdf](https://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.

#### 2.5. GENDER

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. All statistics produced, collected and commissioned are, where appropriate, disaggregated by sex and gender indicators are established where relevant.

## PART II: CALL INFORMATION

### 3. DOCUMENTATION RELATED TO THIS CALL

The following documents are available on the website of the [Federal research Programme Drugs](#):

- Information file: general information on the programme and the call (the present document)
- Evaluators eligibility: eligibility rules of proposed experts for the evaluation of the proposal
- Submission and evaluation guidelines: overview proposal content and corresponding evaluation criteria for the promoters and foreign evaluators
- Evaluation matrix: overview of the evaluation ratings
- Gender checklist
- Budget rules: overview of the budgetary rules to be applied
- Platform Submission guidelines: information on the use of the submission platform
- Institution Request Form
- Platform Evaluation guidelines: information on the use of the evaluation platform
- Strategic Committee members
- FAQ

### 4. SCOPE AND RESEARCH PRIORITIES OF THE 2022 CALL

#### Scope of the call

This call for proposals is destined to enable the Belgian research community to submit projects that can support one or more dimensions of the Belgian drug strategy that was recently adopted on 23 March by the Interministerial Conference on Drugs.

This call text will briefly present the different areas of this strategy. **Researchers are free to either submit a project that can support one or more areas of the strategy in any way they see fit and/or to submit projects that provide a response to more targeted priorities that are highlighted in this call text for each area.**

In this programme, eligible projects can either seek innovation (e.g. addressing a gap in research that would push the boundaries of science, or innovate in their methodological approach) or seek to reproduce existing results and/or techniques that were not yet implemented in Belgium. In any case, projects should clearly seek to provide input to decision-makers and other non-academic stakeholders and design appropriate **pathways to reach out to these audiences**. Valorisation of results, during and after the research, is essential and shall receive special consideration by applicants. A valorisation pathway cannot be reduced to a mere presentation of academic results to a specific audience. Applicants should seriously consider the way these results can reach out the largest possible audience with a view to make an impact and induce changes.

It should be noted that clinical trials are not eligible in this programme.

The **gender dimension** receives a specific focus in all areas of the Drugs Strategy. Therefore, applicants shall pay specific attention in taking this dimension onboard with the greatest care. In this respect, the scientific community is invited to examine gender sensitive treatments (especially in prison) for people who use drugs.

Eligible projects shall be submitted by a multidisciplinary team of promoters who are free to combine different scientific approaches to address the topic under study. Projects can also mix teams from the the south and north of the country in order to enable a national coverage of their study. In case of equality of scores in the evaluation process, preference will be given in the final selection to multidisciplinary projects and/or projects that cover the whole of Belgium.

Projects should have **duration** between 18 and 36 months. The **budget requested shall be determined by the applicants themselves** with the greatest care, bearing in mind that the total budget of this call is 1,4 million EUROS. Projects are expected to start in September 2022.

## Areas of the Drugs Strategy

The ministers concerned by the drugs problem, at federal, regional and community level, gathered in an interministerial Conference on Drugs to adopt a new Drugs Strategy. Applicants should consult these documents on the following link ([Réunion Thématique Drogues | Santé Publique \(belgique.be\)](#) - [Thematische Vergadering Drugs | Volksgezondheid \(belgie.be\)](#)) as the text below refers explicitly to it.

This strategy is composed of the following dimensions:

### 1. Alcohol plan 2022/2028

The overall aim - or mission - of the plan is to limit, when possible, the harmful use of alcohol. Harmful use can be a dependency, an over consumption with respect to international standards, driving under the influence of alcohol etc. The strategy is not aimed at the usual and socially accepted consumption. This mission will be complemented in the months to come by clearly defined objectives, measurable and scientifically sound indicators. The plan will pay special attention to minors and to the gender dimension.

Projects can be submitted to support this overall mission.

Specific research priorities are suggested to researchers:

- A specific priority that deserves consideration is to investigate the effects of beverages with a low alcohol level that are popular in younger groups of the population.
- What is the impact on the behaviour of consumers and producers of a policy that is differentiated on the basis of percentage of alcohol ?
- experiences abroad, in particular in Nordic countries in which alcohol is strongly regulated, can shed useful light on the vision adopted in Belgium.

### 2. Tobacco plan 2022/2028

The vision of the plan is to drastically reduce the consumption of tobacco in the general population and to move towards a *tobacco free generation* amongst younger people in the future. The strategy aims at helping the smokers and pay attention to specific groups and to the gender dimension. A set of 14 specific objectives are formulated.

Projects can be submitted to support the overall aim of the strategy. Applicants can also wish to respond to the more specific priorities detailed below.

The following specific priorities are the following:

- publicity on alcohol and tobacco on social media (including the role of influencers);



- study of prevalence of combustion-free tobacco based products;
- e-cigarettes are in a dark area and further studies are needed to gain knowledge on their benefits/harms;
- in line with one of the action points of the plan, a priority would be to study new tendencies of tobacco-based products. How popular are these? To whom? etc.
- In how far has the tobacco strategy, and in particular the raise in taxes, altered the consumption?

### 3. Gambling plan 2022/2028

This new plan contains measures to better regulate (online) gambling in order to prevent problem gambling and people developing a gambling addiction. The action plan aims at a coordinated action and touches upon both the demand and supply side with a view to protect players and prevent a rise in the number of problematic gamblers. The current legislation, the regulatory organ, education, prevention etc. are concerned by this plan.

We welcome research projects that can sustain the vision contained in this plan.

Additionally, we call upon the scientific community to develop projects that can inform authorities on specific issues:

Unlike the UK, we do not have figures on the number of players in the population, of how much they gamble (e.g. % of their income), how close gambling is associated to over-indebtedness? What is the effect of weekly limits set to gambling? What is the impact of advertising on the behaviour of gamblers, on minors and on society as a whole? Are the current restrictions for people younger than 21 well observed and how do young people below this age group react to this restriction? How effective is the EPIS system (Excluded Persons Information System)? This EPIS system offers the possibility to gamblers to excluded themselves by putting their name on this list. Is this effective? How many people used this possibility? There is also a need to have a clear view on the risk factors of the onset of gambling (addiction) and the effect of age limits.

### 4. Drug consumption rooms

A previous Belspo study has examined the conditions of setting up consumption rooms. Several have been implemented since in Belgium: in Liège and in Brussels.

In the frame of a large reflexion on these consumption rooms at intergovernmental level, and in the light of possible multiplication of these consumption rooms in the country, this study should set the basis for an evaluation of the facility in Liège and Brussels. we are calling the research community to set up **an independent and solid evaluation of the existing rooms**. We are seeking for an evaluation that embraces all aspects of these settings, with the objective to provide also strong recommendations and methodological guidelines on further monitoring of these settings by Belgian authorities (yet to be determined) in order to enable a reproduction of this evaluation by governmental agencies. The core of the evaluation is the (cost) efficiency - **or added value** - of the instrument. This could include an analysis of the profile of *users* and the way they evolve over time (criminality, use of substitution substance, treatments...), an analysis and follow up of the *activities* of these rooms (number of users, number of medical and paramedical consultations, number of overdoses...), an analysis at the level of the neighbourhood (reduction in criminality and other nuisances, acceptance by the local population, collaboration with police and justice)... This multi-layer (cost-benefit) analysis of consumption rooms could integrate a comparison with other tools (such as prevention of overdoses interventions, residential formulas (e.g. Zorghostel in Antwerp).

Such an evaluation should be a milestone in providing strong elements and guidance for new Rooms to open in the country.

## 5. Law of 1921

It is the law of 24 February 1921 that regulates illicit drugs. Ministers in charge wanted to open a large reflection on an eventual revision of this law.

Applicants are invited to contribute to this reflection.

Additionally, the following topic is flagged as a priority that researchers could pick up: In how far does criminalisation of drug users creates difficulties for certain prevention and risk reduction practices?

### 4.1. PROJECT STARTING AND END DATE

The projects selected within the context of the current call will start 15 September 2022 at the earliest. The project contracts will have a duration of 18 to 36 months.

## 5. CONTACTS

Further information can be obtained by contacting the **secretariat**: [drugs\\_call@belspo.be](mailto:drugs_call@belspo.be)

## 6. COMPLAINTS

BELSPO places great importance on the quality of its service and on improving the way it operates. A special form to handle complaints has been created.

The complaint form is available at the following address:

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

Complaints submitted anonymously or which are offensive or not related to our organisation will not be processed.

A complaint is handled as follows:

- Once your complaint has been filed, a notification of receipt will be sent;
- The complaint will be forwarded to the relevant departments and individuals and will be processed within one month;
- An answer will be sent by e-mail or letter;
- The complaint will be treated with strict confidentiality.

If you are dissatisfied by the initial response to a complaint, you can always contact the Médiateur Fédéral / Federal Ombudsman, rue Ducale / Hertogstraat 43, 1000 Brussels (email: [contact@mediateurfederal.be](mailto:contact@mediateurfederal.be) / [contact@federaalombudsman.be](mailto:contact@federaalombudsman.be)).