Policy 4 Science

Information File

Call for proposals 2024 -2025

Updated on 28/04/2025

Submission deadlines
23/04/2025 @ 14h00 Expressions of Interest
03/06/2025 @ 14h00 Full Proposals

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PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. P4Science: Multi-year framework programme for research for the FSI

For more information regarding the programme, please visit the P4Science website

1.1. General information

On 9 February 2024, the Council of Ministers approved the launch of the P4Science (Policy for Science) research programme, implemented under the responsibility of the Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO).

This programme aims to support and reinforce the **scientific excellence, research capacity and scientific services of the Federal Scientific Institutions**[1] (FSI), ensuring their stability in terms of expertise and scientific capacity by funding projects based on their specific **research priorities**. P4Science promotes a bottom-up approach, where research priorities featured on the calls derive directly from the **Research Strategy** of each FSI.

P4Science aims to:

- Support and strengthen scientific excellence of FSI.
- Increase and/or create critical mass by strengthening expertise, research capacity and cooperation
- Favour inter- and transdisciplinary collaboration among institutions.
- Better position FSI at the EU/ International level.
- Link/integrate FSI research to/in (inter)national initiatives
- Link FSI research with federal infrastructures, equipment and collections

A call for proposals will be launched every two years containing a number of research priorities that respond to the needs of the FSI. In preparation of each call, a list of strategic priorities is prepared based on the long-term strategic research calendar.

1.2. Organisation

BELSPO is responsible for the implementation and management of the programme, holding a supporting role towards the FSI, and assisted by the **P4Science Programme Committee**.

[1] The 10 Federal Scientific institutions (FSI) that fall under BELSPO: BIRA-IASB, KMI-IRM, KBS-ORB, KBIN-IRSNB, KMMA-MRAC, KIK-IPRA, KMKG-MRAH, KMSKB-MRBAB, ARA-AGR, KBR, plus the 3 that fall under other Federal Departments: Sciensano, NICC-INCC, and WHI, as defined in the Royal Decree of 30 October 1996 – including possible legal successors.

Composition of the P4Science Programme Committee:

- One effective and one substitute representative from each BELSPO-FSI "pole" (art, nature, space, documentation) on a rotating basis between FSI across calls.
- One effective and one substitute representative from Sciensano, from NICC and from WHI.
- Four independent members of the Federal Council for Science Policy, appointed for the duration of the programme.

Mandate of the P4Science Programme Committee:

- Advise on the long-term priority research and call calendar.
- The elaboration of a number of research priorities within the calls based on the long-term priority research and call calendar.
- Advise on the research projects to be funded within each call based on the peer-reviewed evaluation of project proposals.

Further information regarding the composition and Terms of Reference of the P4Science committee is available on the website.

1.3. Project partnership, roles, and eligibility for funding

The Project partners are the research institutions. All **research projects** within the P4Science programme are **initiated and coordinated by an FSI**.

Projects may be implemented by a **single FSI** or a **network** of FSI whether or not in collaboration with other eligible Belgian and/or international research institutes.

Belgian research institutes (universities, colleges of high education, public scientific institutions, and non-profit research centres) may participate in projects receiving funding and/or contributing in-kind. International research institutes cannot receive funding and may only contribute in-money and/or in-kind.

	Role	Institution type	Receive funding?	Contribute in-money or in-kind?	Sign the project contract?
Belgian funded Partner	(C=P1) Coordinator	FSI.	Yes. Mandatory.	May also partially contribute in-kind	Yes.
	(P2…) Promotor	FSI, Belgian universities, colleges of high education, public and non-profit research centres.	Yes.	May also partially contribute in-kind	Yes.
Non-funded Partner	(O1…) Other	FSI, Belgian universities, colleges of high education, and	No.	Yes.	No.

		non-profit research centres.			
		Foreign and International research institutes.	No.	Yes.	No.
		Non-research organisation	No	Yes	No

Types of partner:

- **Belgian funded partner:** FSI, Belgian universities, colleges of high education, public and non-profit research centres. They are funded within the project.
- **Non-funded partner**: Foreign and (inter)national research institutes or non-research organisations not funded within the project but providing a substantial contribution (in-money or in-kind) to the project. In case of participation of private companies care should be taken to avoid indirect state aid.

Partner roles:

- **Coordinator:** Researcher within the funded FSI responsible for the initiation, management, and coordination of the project. The coordinator is always funded.
- **Promotor:** Researcher within the funded Belgian partner institution financed by the project.
- **Other:** person pertaining to a foreign, (inter)national research institute or non-research organisation that is not receiving funding within the project.

The project may require specific or punctual expertise, which can be delivered in the form of subcontracting. The subcontractor is not an official project partner. Their specific expertise may be of scientific nature or not. The subcontractor can be a foreign, (inter)national research institute or non-research organisation. The selection of the subcontractor should be based on a competitive tendering process.

1.4. P4Science indicative budget and budget distribution

The indicative budget for the 2024-2025 call is 15.261.890 €.

The budget is split in 2 categories: (a) 20% is **competitive**, accessible to all FSI, and (b) 80% is **non-competitive**, allocated to each FSI specifically - using a repartition key[2] for the 10 BELSPO-FSI and a flat rate for the other 3 FSI[3] - under the condition that the proposals pass the minimum scientific quality assessment.

[2] For more information regarding the distribution key and the flat rate please consult the Note to the Council of Ministers in French (https://www.belspo.be/belspo/P4Science-S4Policy/doc/Nota_fr.pdf) or Dutch (https://www.belspo.be/belspo/P4Science-S4Policy/doc/Nota_nl.pdf).

[3] Sciensano, NICC-INCC, and WHI.

For the 2024 -2025 call, the budget is distributed as follows:

	Institution	Call 2024 – 2025 Available Budget Envelope	Budget already committed to international calls
Competitive budget *(20% of total call budget)*	All FSI	2.852.380 €	250.000€
Non-competitive budget *(80% of total call budget)*	KBIN – IRSNB	1.883.060 €	-
	KMMA – MRAC	1.220.590 €	-
	KMI – IRM	959.290 €	-
	KBS – ORB	1.097.500 €	-
	BIRA – IASB	1.151.720 €	-
	KMKG – MRAH	962.520 €	-
	KMSKB – MRBAB	594.530 €	-
	KIK – IRPA	1.185.650 €	-
	ARA – AGR	1.696.340 €	-
	KBR	555.110 €	-
	Sciensano	563.760 €	15.000€
	NICC – INCC	393.260 €	-
	WHI	131.180 €	-

1.5. Calendar of calls (updated on 28/04/2025)

The budget allocated to each call covers two consecutive budget years, meaning for a call budget year 202X-202Y, projects will either begin end 202**(X)** or beginning 202**(Y)**.

Calendar call 2024 – 2025:

Period / date	Phase
20 January 2025	Call launch
23 April 2025	Expression of Interest deadline
03 June 2025	Full proposal deadline
	Evaluation of proposals
	Selection of proposals
1 December 2025	Start of projects

The specific deadlines and the indicative timing of future calls can be found on the website.

2. Contractual obligations for selected projects

2.1. Contracts

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

This contract is composed of 3 parts:

- **Base contract:** This part of the contract contains general administrative information of the project, such as (but not limited to) the participating institutions, start and end dates of the project, budget. The Base contract is signed by the persons responsible for the institutions: BELSPO's president, General Directors of FSI, Rectors of universities...
- **Annex I – Technical annex:** This part of the contract contains the specifications on the basis of which the contract is drawn up; this is, the technical information of the project: objectives, methodology, impact, workplan and calendar, budget distribution, etc. The Technical annex is drawn up by the coordinator and the promotors of the selected proposals in consultation with BELSPO. The coordinator will be asked at the end of the evaluation and selection procedure to concisely write these specifications together with the other members of the project, considering the recommendations formulated by the evaluators and/or the P4Science Programme Committee. Adaptations to the original proposal may relate, among other things, to the content of the research, the composition of the project partnership or Stakeholder Committee, the budget, or the proposals for valorising research. The technical annex is signed by the programme manager in charge of the follow-up of the project at BELSPO, the coordinator and the promotors of the project.
- **Annex II – General conditions:** This part of the contract states the general conditions that apply to it. It does not require signing and is available on the website.

BELSPO grants the selected projects the approved 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.

2.2. Project and progress reporting

The contract foresees the following **reporting** to be submitted to BELSPO via the online project management platform:

- **Initial report:** To be submitted by the promotor and – in case of a project network - each promotor within 3 months after the start of the project. This report provides a beginning status of the project for each research group.
- **Annual activity report:** To be submitted by the coordinator, at the times specified in the Technical annex. This report provides information regarding the state of advancement of the project, encountered problems and possible solutions.
- **Annual personnel report:** To be submitted by the coordinator and – in case of a project network - each promotor in case there are any changes in the staff working for the project.
- **Final report:** To be submitted by the coordinator. This report provides a full description of the project, the results achieved and their possible scientific and technological applications and indicates the extent to which the objectives were achieved.

This reporting is to be included in the project work plan and project budget.

Besides these standard reports, BELSPO can ask for a specific report or other input at any time during the project in order to provide scientific support to valorisation and/or service actions related to the programme.

2.3. Meetings

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

2.4. Data, results, intellectual ownership and open access

Foreground - the deliverables (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 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 relates to data that supports the research deliverables, 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, biodiversity and social science and humanities, 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).
  The Belgian Marine Data Centre, our federal NODC (National Oceanographic Data Centre), (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). The Belgian representative of SCADM (the SCAR Standing Committee for Antarctic Data Management) (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). The Belgian Biodiversity Platform 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.
- For social and Humanities data, a copy of the data and/or metadata must be transferred to SODHA (Social Sciences and Digital Humanities Archive).
- 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).

2.5. Research ethics

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. Applicants are required to fill out the **ethics form** with their proposal. If necessary, the Ethical Board of the institutions concerned by a project must be consulted before submitting a proposal.

The code of ethics for scientific research is available here:
http://www.belspo.be/belspo/organisation/publ/pub_ostc/Eth_code/ethcode_en.pdf

2.6. Gender

BELSPO is committed to gender equality. The term 'gender equality' refers both to gender balance in the research teams (choice or researchers) and to the gender dimension of the research (content and implementation) and should be considered as a transversal aspect of the project. All statistics produced, collected and commissioned are, where applicable, disaggregated by sex/gender, and indicators are established where relevant.

If the institution(s) applying to the S4Policy programme have developed a Gender Equality Plan, they are required to disclose it as a weblink in the appropriate sections of their project proposal. Applicants are required to disclose the gender balance and the gender dimension of their project(s) in the appropriate sections of the proposal.

In any case, applicants are encouraged to consult the **gender check list** provided by BELSPO to ensure the gender aspect is correctly and fully considered throughout the entire proposal.

The gender check list is available on the website of the call.

PART II: RESEARCH PRIORITIES OF THE CALL

3. Research priorities of the call

General rule:

- **Proposals must be in line with the research strategy of each FSI participating in the proposal.**
- When relevant, interdisciplinarity, synergies between FSI's or collaboration with other partners is encouraged, keeping in mind that budget for external partners (like universities) needs to be subtracted from the FSIs budgetary envelope

3.1. Enhancing Heritage Sciences through Digital Technologies, Open Data Repositories and AI

Information and communication technologies (ICT), machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI) are revolutionizing sciences. These technologies open new research possibilities for the federal scientific collections (physical, digital or data collections), focussing e.g. on the development of innovative methods and tools to improve the digital accessibility, analysis, preservation, valorisation, secondary reuse and/or public engagement of the collections, or on the exploration of new approaches to further enrich these collections.

Maintaining high-quality standards and cutting-edge technologies for our digital collections and for the integration of digitised or collected sources – e.g. through high-resolution scanning, 3D modelling, data profiling and synthetic data or novel surveillance infrastructure- ensures the integrity and sustainability of our federal (digital) collections. Further expanding our federal data archives and catalogues with open access ensures that data is findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable (FAIR) for research, education and public engagement.

In this context research under this topic may focus on:

- Findability | e.g. AI-driven definition or suggestion engine of metadata dictionaries, ontologies, potential analysis and interpretation pipelines (e.g. code), translation tools and multilingual search capabilities to allow users from different language, scientific or educational backgrounds to access, understand and reuse our scientific collections.
- Valorisation | e.g. New digital tools and techniques to better exploit the collections to improve the scientific return from past and current observational missions (data from research infrastructures including the Belgica, space missions, long-term atmospheric datasets, surveillance of communicable and non-communicable diseases, food or air quality metrology, etc.)
- Accessibility | e.g. Make the scientific assets available to the scientific community and general public through Open Science and Open Data Repositories and Data Portals by developing new tools and strategies following the FAIR principles.
- Interoperability | e.g. automatic (text or image) recognition and transcription tools for documents, objects or raw data assets, as well as metadata enhancement and metadata standards alignment through automatic extraction and semantic enrichment techniques or geolocation.
- Reusability | e.g. digital tools for advanced material and data analysis providing insights into objects and/or data, thus – amongst others – contributing to a better understanding, profiling condition and quality assessment of objects and data and exploring and developing (new)

curation strategies. This may also include an improved possibility of the (re-)use of data across different domains to allow their exploitation for different purposes and across various FSI domains.
- Scouting | e.g. Development and optimisation of tools related to collections and collection management for different purposes and across various FSI domains.
- Outreach | e.g. Integration of digital resources into FSI presentations, expositions, communications or educational material to improve visitor engagement and educational activities.

By advancing digital technologies in ICT, Open Data, and AI this research should improve our efforts for preserving our science collections, scientific data and information for future generations, democratize its accessibility, foster global collaborations, and further stimulate innovation in technology and scientific research.

3.2. New techniques – New methods

The main mission of the FSI's is to integrate sciences in the functioning of the Federal State, be it as a support to federal policies or in the context of federal research and museum infrastructures. One of the key challenges, in this mission, is to develop new capabilities, new techniques and new methodologies.

BELSPO is seeking proposals that leverage the adoption of new technologies that keep the capabilities of the FSI at the international cutting edge as well as develop original methodology for addressing the challenges of the FSI. These new technologies or methodologies should e.g. enable the FSI to develop new or improved observational or numerical modelling capacity, perform new scientific analysis or to improve analysis, conservation, forecasting monitoring, surveillance, or risk monitoring capabilities (reliability, efficiency, sensitivity, robustness, safety ...), crowd-sourced science and opportunistic sensing. The scope includes (but is not limited to) AI-applications, data science, digital twin developments, modelling by data-driven machine learning, data assimilation, new analytical, numerical, or measurement (remote sensing, imaging, ...) technologies, conservation methodologies, risk assessment, health impact assessment, data collection, surveillance, data valorisation, bioinformatics, data visualization and innovative scientific communication. The scope also includes research in humanities or social sciences, e.g. novel collection-based approaches or prospective studies.

3.3. Heritage collection research

The call aims to develop research based on the scientific exploitation of the federal collection.

Projects are defined on the basis of heritage collections, which include not only paintings, archives, books, drawings, objects, academic and administrative publications etc.) preserved in one (or more) FSI's, but also a huge diversity of biological specimens, (pathogen) strains, tissue samples, ... that are currently preserved in FSI's with different methods. In this way genomic sequences have become an integral part of collection management. Projects may therefore also focus on these types of 'objects', both in relation to the preservation as to the management of the collection. In addition, federal data collections can also be included.

Sets, sub-sets, archive holdings, types of objects or parts of these sets must be clearly identified in the proposals submitted.

All fields of research may be considered, including research relating to the valorisation of the federal collection (e.g. museology). However, proposals must be in line with the research strategy of each FSI.

3.4. Understanding and Mitigating Global and Climate Change

Scientific evidence put forth by the IPCC conclusively indicates that human activities have a significant impact on societal, terrestrial, marine, freshwater and atmospheric systems, leading to environmental and climate changes that have adverse and lasting impacts for society, the biosphere and for the habitability of our planet. This call aims at deepening our understanding and monitoring of the causes, evolution and consequences of global and climate change on local, regional and global scales, as well as developing innovative solutions to mitigate their impact.

Specific objectives:
This call aims to support dedicated research at the FSIs and to encourage interdisciplinary and collaborative research where appropriate (between FSIs, museology & research and maximise use of collections where possible) in the following areas:

- Understanding the causes, evolution and impacts of past and present global and climatic change on the biotic and abiotic systems:
  (1) reduce scientific uncertainties in past, present and future climate through improved observations, model development and data science, in line with and contributing to the state of the art of the IPCC Assessment Reports. This includes the creation of Belgian climate scenarios with a strong interaction with the Belgian climate stakeholders.
  (2) improve the quantification of the consequences, risks of tipping points and the attribution of climate change at local, regional and global scales;
  (3) analyse the past, current and future signatures of global/climate change and its impacts on health and society, natural environments (i.e. land use and land-use change, bio- and geodiversity, biogeochemical cycles) and their climate-related risks
  (4) assess the consequences of the impacts of the changing Earth system in time and space with a focus on the environment-human-animal interactions to explore best practices, methodologies and solutions.
- Investigate mitigation of and adaptation to Global and Climate change:
  (1) Investigate and develop adaptation options and disaster risk reduction (DRR), to mitigate the impacts of global and climate change on human communities, infrastructure & resources, agriculture (soils), public health, and other vulnerable sectors at risk
  (2) Feasibility and sustainability assessment of possible mitigation strategies
  (3) explore technological innovations, public policies, and governance mechanisms needed to implement climate change mitigation options, e.g., reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, development of renewable energy solutions, CO2 storage, fostering a low-carbon economy transition, nature-based solutions and improved weather forecasts to deal with future extreme weather events
  (4) develop effective communication strategies to raise public awareness about global and climate change issues, encourage private sector and citizen engagement, and promote a culture of sustainability and environmental responsibility, develop climate storylines and tales of future weather, develop and maintain a strong climate stakeholder dialogue, develop a climate attribution protocol and future crisis management methodology of hazards linked to global or climate changes.

3.5. Exploratory Research

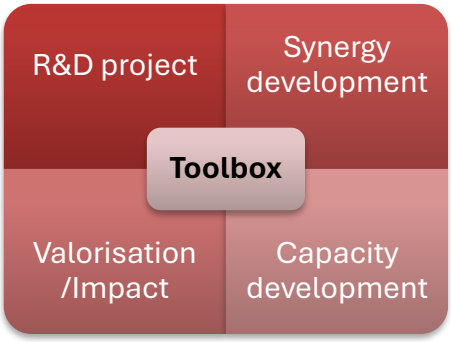
The call theme 'Exploratory research' invites researchers to investigate novel or uncharted territories within the research domains of the 13 FSI and to propose bottom-up research exploring new ideas, hypotheses, or phenomena.

It is encouraged, but not mandatory, to select topics that open a potential to build synergies among FSIs or that are of transdisciplinary nature. The aim is to generate new insights or to exploit datasets to generate added-value datasets or numerical models for usage by stakeholders or other research communities, or to uncover areas for further study

Research proposed under this thematic can also pave the way for more advanced or innovative research in the future within the FSIs and/or among the FSIs.

4. The research toolbox

Research project proposals under P4Science can take up different forms. A toolbox is provided from which FSI can choose a range of tools that best fit their research needs within 4 broad categories:



- **R&D project:** Research and development projects at national, European and/or international level. Short-term, long-term, new, existing, network, bilateral, etc. Planned activities (set of tasks) carried out by one or more partners aimed at achieving a set of coherent research actions and/or developments within a given time frame and budget. Time frame and budget can be set by the applicants, or given by the type of project, or respond to constraints imposed by the federal government or administration.
- **Synergy development**: seed money for exploration, impuls, launch, design, development, cluster and/or incubation actions. The funding covers the cost of synergy or networking activities instead of research and as such is used to organise events, short-term missions, communication activities, development of virtual networking tools, etc. This also includes seed money to help the FSI develop/start-up/trial an expertise/centre of expertise.
- **Valorisation/Impact**: Set of initiatives or actions aimed at promoting the use of research knowledge and deliverables, by making scientific insights available and usable for policymakers, society and/or industry.
- **Capacity/skills development**: investments to acquire, expand or enhance, maintain research skills needed to achieve the strategic scientific objectives for the sustainable development of the

FSI (education, training, and professional development activities). Possible phases/steps/levels: [1] acquire skills [2] expand skills [3] achieve proficiency.

The P4Science programme toolbox also includes funding for research initiatives that fall under the Federal, inter-federal and international coordination service of BELSPO (INCO initiatives).

Only one category of the toolbox can be selected. The main objective/finality of the project will define which category from the toolbox must be selected.

Evaluation criteria will be set in function of the category of research tool applied within the research proposal. The different evaluation criteria in function of the different tools are detailed in a separate document available on the website of the call.

Capacity/skills development	R&D project	Synergy development	Valorisation/Impact
Investment to acquire, expand or strengthen, maintain skills required to achieve strategic scientific objectives for the sustainable development of FSI. It includes activities related to education, training and professional development. Possible phases/steps/levels: [1] acquiring skills [2] advancing skills [3] achieving skill proficiency.	**Research and Development projects. Short term, long term, new, existing, network, bilateral, …** Planned activities (ensemble of tasks) performed by one or more partners aimed at achieving a set of coherent research actions and/or developments within a given timeframe and budget. Timeframe and budget may be fixed by the applicants, or given by the type of project, or respond to constraints imposed by the federal government or the administration.	**Seed money for impulse / launch / design / develop / cluster / incubation actions.** The funding covers the expenses of synergy or networking activities rather than research and as such is used to organise events, short-term missions, communication activities, development of virtual networking tools, …	**Ensemble of initiatives or actions directed towards promoting knowledge and deliverables,** by making scientific insights available and useable to policy makers, society, the scientific community and or industry.
PhD: Funding of a person holding a master degree for the purpose of accomplishing a PhD thesis within an FSI on FSI research priorities (to develop the potential of the FSI), in collaboration with a university (Belgian or foreign) under the following conditions: (a) The person will be inscribed at the Belgian or foreign university. (b) The person will be (partially) funded by the FSI. (c) The research in the PhD thesis will be in line with the research priorities of the host FSI. (d) The implementation of the PhD research will be done at the FSI.	**National R&D project:** created to support the scientific potential of FSI in their specific areas of expertise and/or missions, national R&D projects can only be submitted by FSIs. These projects with a duration of 2 to 4 years may or may not be implemented in collaboration with other FSI and/or (inter)national research institution partners.	**Development of new research or development of ideas**: explore new ideas, transdisciplinary approaches, complementarities/partnerships for R&I cooperation, matchmaking exercises, … enabling growing in excellence and /or contribution to global challenges.	**Knowledge valorisation:** activities directed towards promoting knowledge and technology use, capturing or enhancing value from science, by engaging in science communication activities and making scientific insights available and useable to policy makers, society and/or industry, scientific actors from other disciplines, …
Talent in Belgium: Recover, by an FSI, of an active researcher, either Belgian or who has studied or worked in Belgium, but currently working outside Belgium, to engage in research activities within said FSI. This initiative	**EU/Int research initiatives**: participation in an EU/international research initiative or call for projects. ***(a) This funding will be used to finance said initiative or project:***	**Knowledge hub**: help FSI to develop a knowledge hub to actively transfer knowledge and build capacity in their specific areas of expertise or missions, including in Open Science and Open Research Data.	**Open science initiative:** activities directed towards the spreading knowledge and data as soon as it is available using digital and collaborative technology, expert groups, publications, services, news, media, and events.

aims at encouraging international mobility and is open to (i) Belgian citizens with the purpose of recovering (Belgian) talent (ii) international/EU citizens with the purpose of attracting foreign talent.	(i) within the EU/international funding scheme: if the project/initiative is selected for funding (ii) outside the EU/international funding scheme (seal of excellence): if the project/initiative, of high quality, is not selected for funding due to lack of budget of the partner funding agencies, AND provided the FSI can demonstrate the project is worth implementing as stand-alone. ***(b) This funding will 'return' to the FSI budget if:*** (i) the project is not selected for funding due to lack of sufficient quality, OR (ii) the FSI cannot demonstrate its value as stand-alone project.	These gateways/platforms serve regulators and policy makers, facilitators, the community, direct visitors to the existing and emerging initiatives most suited to their needs, provide links to repositories, marketplaces, databases, projects, …	
Shared researcher: recruitment of a researcher working part-time in an FSI and part-time in another Belgian research institution to develop sustainable joint research activities between the FSI and other research institutes.	**Matching funds international research initiatives** Participation in an international research initiative for which the FSI is recognised as a strategically important partner for joining the research consortium or network but without BELSPO listed as funding agency and without full direct funding of FSI costs by the initiating organisation.	**Networking/coordination action (bilateral/EU/international):** help FSI to develop and/or extend interdisciplinary research networks and partnerships, bringing together researchers, innovators and other professionals including private/industry/commercial specialists, who are based in Europe and beyond, to collaborate on research topics within and outside research domains of the FSI, for a limited time period.	**Science reporting**: activities intended to document the process, progress, and or results of (i) technical or scientific research or (ii) of the state of a technical or scientific research problem, if possible, including recommendations and/or conclusions of the research (services).
Staff exchange/scientific mobility: temporary internship of FSI researcher in another host institution or a (foreign) researcher in an FSI, with the aim to acquire, advance or achieve proficiency in particular relevant skills, methods, or fields of knowledge, which may take place unilaterally or in the	**Infrastructure development (national, European, international):** linking of Belgian Federal infrastructures or components with a given centralised or decentralised (Data or other) national, European or international infrastructure at any point of its lifecycle - to establish, develop, or provide services to different	**Expertise/Excellence centre**: help the FSI with the development/start-up/pilot phase of an expertise/excellence centre.	**Knowledge transfer:** funding of specific activities focused on sharing or disseminating of knowledge, experiences, processes and/or best practices from the organisation source of knowledge to a recipient organisation over a specific period of time.

form of exchange with another researcher from the host institution.	stakeholders (science community as first users) and/or to foster high quality research cooperation on the 'common goods' or other.		
Training activity: support the (advanced) training of the institution's research staff in the field of scientific research, proposal writing and career development, including in Open Science and Open Research Data.	**Prototype/testbed initiative:** allowing to test specific methods (*cfr ERC: Proof of Concept*) or models in (other) socio-economic or ecogeographic contexts (Europe/international) in order to refine it or to enhance the robustness of the method/model for applicability in different conditions /for divers specific uses.	**Clustering initiative:** bringing together results from different research initiatives or research infrastructures to broaden the scope and strengthen the impact of the gathered knowledge.	**Stakeholder involvement**: the identification, analysis, planning and implementation of actions designed to involve a wide range of actors, such as national policy makers, research funding organisations, relevant research communities from academia and industry as well as user communities and, whenever relevant (i.a. in citizen science projects), citizens as a key pre-requisite for achieving impact and ensuring societal relevance of research output.
	Systematic observations: funding of specific activities for further developing the systematic observation of variables (progress and/or quality) performed by FSI in support of ongoing or future research.		**Research assessments:** funding of activities - collecting and interpreting data - to assess the significance, reach and attribution of scientific/societal impacts from research.
	Citizen science project: financial support to any aspect related to this type of activities performed by voluntary public.		**Valorisation of administrative or scientific databases**: financing of scientific activities linked to the valorisation of administrative or scientific databases. The aim is to support FSI in opening their data infrastructure and to comply with the FAIR principle (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable).
	Valorisation of administrative or scientific databases: financing of scientific activities enabling the scientific exploitation of administrative or scientific databases (cfr access to surveys and numerous administrative registers).		

PART III: PRACTICAL ASPECTS

5. Documentation

The following documents are available to applicants:

- Information file (this document)
- Budget rules
- FAQ
- Gender checklist
- Evaluation criteria
- Eligibility of evaluators
- Institution request form

The following proposal submission templates are available for information. Submission of the EoI & Full Proposal is done through the platform.

- Expression of Interest template
- Confirmation by DG of the institution
- Full Proposal template
- Budget table with budget rules and project budget template
- Gantt chart template

These documents are available on the webpage of the call.

6. How to submit a proposal (updated on 28/04/2025)

6.1. Submitting a proposal (Phase 1 & 2)

The programme P4Science follows a 2-step submission process: (1) Expression of Interest and (2) Full proposal.

Expression of Interest and confirmation document (Phase 1)

Prior to submitting a Full proposal, applicants must first submit an Expression of Interest (EoI) via the online Submission Platform.

Because each FSI has an allocated budget for each call and each proposal must fit within the research strategy of the FSI, researchers must obtain the consent from their Director General before submitting an EoI within the P4Science programme.

At this stage, each FSI must provide the confirmation document to BELSPO motivating how each EoI fits within the **research strategy** of the FSI, together with a **priority ranking** of the EoI.

At the same deadline as the EoI the Director General of the FSI must submit the confirmation document with a list of accepted EoI motivating for each how the proposal fits within the research strategy of the FSI, including a preferred order of funding. Only the EoI accepted by the Director General of the FSI will have access to the submission platform to create and submit a full proposal.

The eligibility of the EoI will be evaluated by BELSPO. If the EoI does not comply with the submission rules, is not complete or has not been submitted in time, it will be impossible to submit a Full proposal. EoIs do not constitute a step in the evaluation process; they will be used by BELSPO to seek foreign experts for the evaluation of the research proposals and by FSIs to make a pre-selection for the introduction of Full proposals.

At this stage applicants are required to provide general indicative information regarding the proposal: title and acronym of the project, call priorities, budget range of the proposal, duration, a brief description of the intended project, keywords and the name and contact details of the partners. Accompanying the Expression of Interest (EoI), applicants will provide the name and contact details of 4 – 6 scientific experts capable of assessing their proposal, and a max. of 2 non-grata scientific experts that will be automatically excluded from the evaluation. EoI are not evaluated, they are used by BELSPO to compose the evaluation teams of the research proposals.

The description of the project at this point is understood as an early stage of reflexion. The title and the summary of the Full Proposal may vary from that of the EoI to some extent. However, it cannot diverge to the point that the expertise mobilised for the evaluation of the proposal will become irrelevant. The acronym, call priorities, indicative budget, partners and keywords must remain the same.

If the funded partners were to change due to unforeseen circumstances after the EoI has been submitted and during the Full Proposal submission period, please contact the secretariat (P4Science@belspo.be) as soon as possible.

Deadline for Expressions of Interest:
23 April 2025 @14:00

Full proposal (Phase 2)

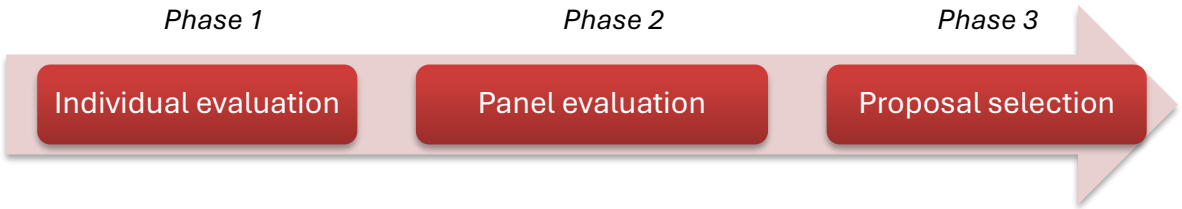
If the Full Proposal does not comply with the submission rules, is not complete or has not been submitted in time, it will not be considered for evaluation. Applicants must submit the Full Proposal via the online Submission Platform.

The full proposal is the ensemble of information and documents describing the intended research activity, its implementation and impact. At this stage, the title of the proposal and partner information will have to be confirmed, and - in function of the selected tool(s) - applicants will introduce a detailed description of the intended project, including duration, workplan and calendar, budget, data management plan and ethics form.

Deadline for Full proposals:
03 June 2025 @14:00

7. Evaluation and selection of proposals

The selection of proposals is based on an international peer-review evaluation of the Full proposals that guarantees scientific excellence. The procedure, organised by BELSPO, develops as follows.



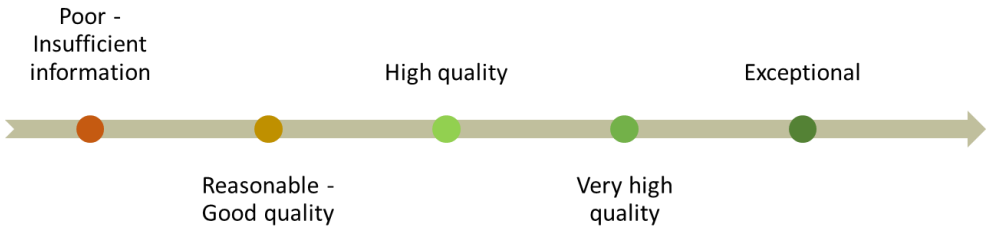
7.1. Remote evaluation (Phase 1)

For each Full proposal, an individual remote evaluation will be performed by a set of 3 foreign (non-Belgian) independent experts having an adequate combined expertise to evaluate the research proposal. BELSPO is responsible for composing this remote 'written evaluation team' with experts from BELSPO's own database and experts suggested by the applicants.

The written evaluation takes place remotely, via the **online Evaluation Platform**. During this assessment, the experts will only have access to the proposals they will evaluate. They will not know who the other 2 reviewers are for that proposal, nor will they have access to each other's evaluations.

Each reviewer will assess the proposal and provide comments considering a variety of (sub)criteria, in the categories of Scientific quality, Quality and efficiency of the implementation and Impact, depending on the research tool (cfr 4. The research toolbox).

The individual **evaluation criteria** are detailed in a separate document available on the website. Evaluators will assess these aspects of the proposal using the following scale**.**



Evaluation criteria are available on the website of the call.

! The individual evaluations are **neither communicated to the members of the Programme Committee nor to the applicants**.

7.2. Panel evaluation (Phase 2)

BELSPO will compose a **Panel of experts**.

The Panel will be composed of experts having the broadest possible expertise on the subjects addressed in the Call. These will have not participated to the remote evaluation in the Call[4]. The number of experts in the Panel will depend on the topics and expertise that need to be covered.

Step 1: Pre-drafting of Consensus Report

The individual evaluations for each proposal will be compiled and transmitted to the Panel members.

Each panel member will be tasked to prepare one or several draft consensus reports.

Step 2: Q&A

The panel expert drafting the consensus report of a given project can produce questions in view of clarifying aspects of the proposal. In this case these questions will be transmitted to the applicants in view of providing written answers before the panel meeting.

Step 3: Panel meeting

In preparation of the panel meeting, BELSPO will rank the proposals:

1. Translate the appreciations given to each sub-criterion in the draft consensus into numeric scores (from 1 for "poor-insufficient" to 5 for "exceptional")
2. Add the scores of the sub-criteria to obtain a total for each criterion

[4] In case of need and as a last resource BELSPO may call upon Panel members to perform remote evaluations, in the same way that if some Panel member finds him/herself unable to attend, BELSPO may invite a remote expert to the Panel.

3. Add these scores over the categories: Science quality/implementation/impact (if applicable)
4. Perform a total sum of the scores

This ranking serves as input to the panel discussion. The outcome of this discussion is a finalised ranking (**Panel Funding Scenario**).

Prior to the meeting, each panel member will have access to:

- the Full proposals
- the Compiled individual evaluations (anonym)
- the answers to the questions posed by panel reporter for each proposal
- the pre-drafted Consensus Reports

During the meeting, the panel member who has pre-drafted the Consensus Report will present the proposal, followed by a discussion. Panel members reach an agreement regarding the position of the proposal in the **Panel Funding Scenario(s)** and the content of the **Consensus Report**, based on the documents provided.

- Panel Funding Scenario

  The **Panel Funding Scenario**, based on the pre-drafted document which ranks the proposals according to their score**,** will classify all proposals according to the individual evaluation criteria, and considering the panel evaluation criteria:

  - Budget availability
  - Complementarities and/or overlaps between proposals

  The **Panel Funding Scenario** will be accompanied by a **Panel Report** explaining the ranking.

  The **Panel Funding Scenario** will classify the proposals into:
  - Highly recommended for funding
  - Recommended for funding
  - Not recommended for funding

  The Panel may list the proposals by order of preference for funding or put them in alphabetic order within each category.

- Project Consensus Report

The **Proposal Consensus Report** will consist of appreciations and comments for the different (sub)criteria. It will be based on the information extracted from the Compiled evaluations, pre-drafted by one of the panel members, and the discussions held in the panel meeting.

At this stage, the **Proposal Consensus Report** is definitive. It will not be modified in the subsequent steps of the proposal selection, and it will be used as feedback for the applicants once the final selection of proposals has been made.

For the sake of transparency and to provide the opportunity to improve their proposal(s) in the future, **applicants will receive an anonymised version of their Consensus Report(s)**

7.3. Project selection (Phase 3)

The **Programme Committee** will receive the following documents:

- Summary of the proposals
- Panel Funding Scenario
- Panel Report explaining the Panel Funding Scenario
- Consensus Report of each proposal
- Preferred funding order for each FSI

Based on these documents, the Programme Committee will perform a strategic selection of the proposals, delivering a **Programme Committee Funding Scenario**.

The Funding Scenario will be formulated considering the following rules:

- In NO case will proposals deemed 'not recommended for funding' be considered
- In NO case will proposals deemed 'highly recommended for funding' be put aside

The decision on the final selection of projects to be funded is made by the **Federal Secretary of State** in charge of **Science Policy** based on the **Programme Committee Funding Scenario**.

8. CONTACTS

Further information can be obtained by contacting the **secretariat**: P4Science@belspo.be

9. 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:
http://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/Federale Ombudsman, rue de Louvain/Leuvenseweg 48 bus 6, 1000 Brussels (email: contact@mediateurfederal.be/contact@federaalombudsman.be).