

FAQ S4Policy-Driven Call 2026

You can find the *Information file S4P – driven* [here](#).

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1. Submission procedure - general

1.1. Can I contact the federal departments when writing my proposal?

No, we want a fair distribution of information among applicants. However, if you have further specific questions regarding the research priorities (see [Information file S4P 2026](#), Part II (p. 11 – 36)). You are welcome to send us your questions at S4Policy@belspo.be. We will update this document with relevant information. It will be indicated on the website when the document is last updated.

1.2. Can a research unit participate in more than one project?

Yes. There is no limitation to the number of proposals a given applicant may participate in as partner and/or coordinator. You can thus submit more than one proposal to the S4Policy Driven call, for example you can submit proposals for multiple research topics.

1.3. Will my proposal score additional points if I include a Federal Department in the consortium?

Consortium = Coordinator; funded partner(s) and/or non-funded partner(s)

No, no additional points will be given to proposals that include a federal department/service in their consortium. No points will be deducted if there is no Federal department/ service included in the consortium. Note that the *co-funding* federal departments should not be included as Non-Funded partners in your research proposal. As described in the information File, co-funding departments & observing departments are expected to be involved in the project (through e.g. the follow-up committee).

If a consortium is proposed, the consortium *an sich* is evaluated. If no consortium (i.e. no Funded partners and no Non-funded Partners are included in the Ful Proposal) is proposed, the evaluators are asked to reflect upon the absence of a consortium.

No points will be deducted solely because a proposal has no Funded Partner or Non-Funded Partner. However, It is possible that the evaluators for example point out a lack of specific expertise and therefore a lower score is given.

1.4. Are the weights of the evaluation criteria the same for all research priorities?

Yes. The weight distribution for evaluation criteria is the same for all research priorities. The weights are defined in the information file:

CRITERIA WEIGHT ¹⁴	
Scientific quality	50%
Quality and efficiency of the implementation	20%
Dissemination	30%

2. Submission procedure - Budget table & Funding eligibility

2.1. What type of personnel can be funded for the project?

Staff devoted to the implementation of the project: recruited personnel and/or (non-)statutory personnel made (partially) available to the project and to be implemented on the project budget. Attention! Since 2026, Statutory staff working within the framework of an institution - full time or part time - can apply to receive staff budget for themselves.

BELSPO prefers staff to be hired under labour contract.

However, tax-free doctoral or post-doctoral scholarships can be accepted under the following restrictive conditions: the total number of person months funded by the BELSPO project under a tax-free scholarships scheme is limited to max. 50% of the total number of person months funded under labour contract. In any case, there shall not be more than 2 tax-free scholarships per project.

2.2. Can I deviate from the timing proposed in the Information file (e.g. to fund a PhD)?

Yes, however any significant deviation should be justified in the Full Proposal. In general, projects should not run longer than four years, and depending on the deliverables/requested scientific support of the FPS, intermediate results and findings are expected to be integrated into the FPS's ecosystem throughout the duration of the project, and not only after its completion.

It is expected that if you deviate from the timing proposed and increase the duration, that intermediary research results, are available or presented to the follow-up committee & the co-funding (federal) department(s). The timing is based on the timeline in which certain policies, reports or decisions need to be delivered to another governmental body, cabinet, etc. It is advised to state the reasoning for deviating in your Expression of Interest/Full Proposal.

3. Research Projects

3.1. Extensions – extra budget

Extensions are being strictly assessed due to the budgetary context of the federal government. This implies the following:

1. Extension of the budget is NOT possible. The total amount granted stated in the signed base contract + the co-funding budget (as stated in a bilateral contract) is the maximum budget that will be available for the project.

2. Extension in duration (up to six months) – within the year of the end-date of the initial contract
Extensions **up to six months that fall within the year in which the original end date is foreseen**, are most likely granted.

For example: a project originally has the end date 15 March 2028, they can request an extension of the duration of the projects up to 6 months, which would render their new end-date of the contract 15 September 2028.

3. Extension in duration (up to six months) – outside the year of the end date of the initial contract
Extensions that exceed the financial year, and are brought into the new year will most likely not be granted. However, it is still possible to request an extension.

4. Extension in duration (beyond six months) – within the year of the end-date of the initial contract

Extensions that pass the six-month limit, but stay within the original end year, may be granted. However, this requires approval of the Inspector of Finance and an amendment to the contract.

5. Extension in duration (beyond six months) – outside the year of the end date of the initial contract

Extensions that pass the six-month limit, and do not stay within the original end year, are highly unlikely to be approved. In exceptional situations where this would be accepted to ask for an extension, this requires approval of the Inspector of Finance and an amendment to the contract.

3.2. Should I target my dissemination activities only at the relevant Federal institution?

Although a specific federal administration is the main target for dissemination, it is up to the research team to define how they would extend the target audiences of your dissemination activities. Please keep in mind that you may also include the follow-up committee as an important target group.

Additionally, keep in mind that the outputs of Belspo projects are made available to the broader public (e.g. the final reports of the projects are published on our website).

If you wish to have more information about the dissemination section in the proposal, have a look at the extra informative documents available on our website (e.g. the submission-evaluation criteria).

4. Research Priorities

Questions & Answers related to the research priorities that have been asked during the information session can be found below. If the research priority you are looking for is not included, it means that there were no questions asked.

Research Priority 1: Inclusion for persons with disabilities within Federal Governmental Organisations

Many research questions & expected outputs are listed in the section requested scientific support. Is it allowed or expected to prioritise certain research questions/outputs?

If it is not feasible to do everything, you can prioritise certain research questions in your proposal/ narrow the scope, as long as it is still meeting some of the requested research questions, with exception of the first research question, which is expected to be included;

For the FPS Policy & Support, the first need listed “*An analysis of the 3% norm: where does this standard come from? Is it realistic within the current overall workforce? Which factors do other governments and the private sector take into account in their related norms and policies? How does this compare to the federal context, if we take into account the specificity of the federal government's workforce?*” is the most important one, and is expected to be included in proposals.

Access to relevant data from federal services and other federal institutions/agencies

While FPS Bosa cannot guarantee that each contacted federal public service / or other federal institutes/agencies will provide (easy) access to relevant data needed for this research, it is likely

that each Federal Public Service will be able to provide access to the relevant data. It is with less certainty that we can guarantee that other institutes will provide the data (in a timely manner).

If a project is selected for funding for research priority one, encounters issues with data access from federal services, those issues may be alerted to Belspo through the appointed programme manager. While we cannot guarantee access, we will facilitate obtaining data.

Scope of governmental agencies: federal, regional & foreign?

The FPS Policy & support has over the years adopted new or adapted existing measures inspired by regional measures/policies already in place. The FPS has less oversight of existing policies and good practices from abroad, due to a difference in context and the lack of analytical capacity in-house to effectively understand and extrapolate initiatives from abroad into the federal context.

Gaining more insight in the current (good) practices, measures & policies, from both regional and abroad are welcomed by the FPS. There is no clear priority, and it is up to the proposed project to include what will fit their research proposal best.

Previous research?

There are no previous research projects that match the scope of this call, nor is/was there a comprehensive research project on which this new project should build further upon. There is a dedicated research unit in-house that has done previous studies related to this topic, for which they collaborated with partners from academia.

It is an open competition, and applicants should not feel limited to propose certain methods or research designs. It is of course expected that previous (published) research, policies & measures are taken into account; previous research materials on which the FPS bosa has based their policies, or has gathered, can be found on their website in [Dutch](#) or [French](#).

Research Priority 4: Analysis of the societal consequences of biodiversity loss (degradation) in Belgian soil

Expected output

The most important expected output is an indicator-based decision tool, that is after completion of the project (close to) ready to be used by federal policy makers from CeRAC (and the FPS Health, Environment and Food Chain Safety). This implies that the tool is robust & sustainable in maintenance, and that the knowledge on the indicators, and the use of the tool is effectively and pro-actively transferred to the policy makers (= co-funders of this research priority).

Research Priority 5: The competitiveness of Belgian SMEs in the transition to a decarbonised and circular economy

The scope of the research priority

The scope of SME's (e.g. particular sectors) can be decided quite freely, as long as it is in line with what is requested, as exhaustive as possible. But it is up to the research team to decide what is feasible for them.

Timing

The indicative duration is rather short, because the DG Climate of FPS Health, Environment and Food Chain Safety needs research results soon to integrate them in policy proposals. If the

project duration would be longer than the indicative timing, the FPS is requesting intermediary results to be shared around month 18.

Research Priority 6: Economic Cost of Climate Change & benefits of alternative adaptation strategies for public investment at sectoral level: Development of an Operational Assessment Framework at sectoral level and for the Belgian Defence sector.

Types of impact / Scope

This project is a demand from CeRAC and the Ministry of Defence, and has two objectives:

(1) While the focus for the Defence sector is more on an operational micro-level: how can they adapt their infrastructure & what will it cost to adapt our Defence sector (focus on infrastructure) to climate change. And how will the adaptation of the Defence sector to climate change affect public cost and operation. It is understood by the co-funders that it is difficult to provide a complete picture at micro level for the defence sector, therefore it is acceptable that some aspects might remain rather abstract (rather than operational) in research proposals.

Within the scope of this research priority, CERAC & Defence are not considering a mitigation perspective. While, mitigation is very important, within this scope they want a focus on a more localized approach to adaptation, and in particular to the physical impact of climate change on defence (infrastructure).

(2) the focus of CeRAC is more on the macro level: public finance/budget & the cost for the state.

Cerac & Defence are also interested in all kinds of benefits, economic benefits, but also semi-quantitative or even qualitative estimate of co-benefits, which are often present in case of adaptation to climate change.

Research output / reproducing the analysis

They are interested in a methodology/ framework *that can be applied to other sectors as well*. There are no prescriptions as to what kind of methodology this could be, and is open to the researchers to fill in!

Is this part of a bigger research project?

No, but the research priority is part of the effort of the federal government to be compliant with a larger set of European directives related to macro fiscal costs of climate change. See info file.

Research Priority 8: Sustainable Raw Materials in Belgium: ESG risks assessment and priority actions for the circular economy

Collaboration with regional level

Representatives from regional levels can be included in a steering committee or in the stakeholder committee of the project. However, the main focus should be on what is asked in the Information file. The Federal Institute for Sustainable Development may facilitate collaboration with regional levels, but this should not be included in the proposal.

Research Priority 9: Data Infrastructure for Monitoring Labour Market and Social Protection Transitions

Is there a history with academic collaboration on this matter?

Previous research on this topic has been done (more information is available [here](#)). However, this call for proposals is an open competition, and we welcome all interested research teams to apply.

Co-prev (Vereniging van Externe Diensten voor Preventie en Bescherming op het werk, Association Des Services Externes Pour La Prevention Et La Protection) is interested in complementing the research (e.g. as non-funded partner). Applicants interested in collaborating with them, can contact hanne.sanders@co-prev.be.

Research Priority 10: Towards a new assessment scale for self-reliance among people with disabilities

Do I have to start from scratch?

This research priority builds on a self-assessment tool that the FPS Social Security is currently using, but requires refinement.

Research Priority 12: Towards a scientific research agenda for the Federal administration

Do I have to include federal agencies as well?

You should focus on the Federal Public Services and Public Planning Services: FPS Chancellery of the Prime Minister; FPS Policy and Support, Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation; FPS Home Affairs; FPS Finance; FPS Mobility and Transport; FPS Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue; FPS Social Security; FPS Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment; FPS Justice; FPS Economy, SMEs, Self-Employed and Energy; Ministry of Defence; PPS Social Integration, Fight against Poverty and Social Economy and PPS Science Policy.

Do you prefer certain consortia (combining certain academic fields?)

Research teams are free to choose and build the consortia themselves. For example, if you want to include researchers from the communication sciences discipline, in addition to political scientists, in your consortium that decision is completely up to you. We encourage multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary projects.

Is there a history of collaboration with academic partners?

There is no history with particular researchers on this matter. However, this research priority is a direct results following on the policy brief published by the OECD: Building capacity for evidence-informed policymaking in Belgium, Assessment and recommendations roadmap. The document is available [online](#).

5. Platform

5.1. I registered with my organisation, but I cannot open a form

We have to manually approve your link with your institution in the system. This might take some time. Please keep in mind our working hours, we will approve your link asap during working hours!

5.2. Error: Transaction aborted: Task must be enabled or started before it can finish

This error usually appears when you go to the form via the Application ID & Documents tab.

If you are looking at the Dashboard, you can click on 'Continue Expression of Interest', under 'Upcoming tasks':

Upcoming Tasks

This is a list of applications for which you have a current Task to do (Task). You can drag tasks to the right to change their status.

For your information: If you click on the task you will go to the form or to the summary screen of your application depending on the task. For example: If you click on "Continue S4Policy Application" you will go to the form and at the end of the form you have the opportunity to submit your Response.

State: 1 of 1 entries

Showing 1 to 1 of 1 entries

Appl ID	Applicant	Scheme	Project title	Deadline Date	Type
					Continue Expression of Interest

Nothing selected +

Nothing selected +

Nothing selected +

5.3. Error: Form not submitted due to user input errors

This error usually appears if you exceeded character limits in the form.