

Please communicate this information to appropriate research groups in your institution to raise awareness and preparedness to a call that BELSPO is soon to launch.

Dear all,

We hereby inform you that a call for proposals to the Belgian scientific community will be launched by BELSPO in the frame of the *Science 4 Policy* research programme (have a look at the webpage of the programme [here](#)).

The call will **open on 11 June 2026 and close on 11 September 2026** (*for technical reason, the platform will open for submission on 15 June 2026*). An information session will be organised via Teams on 23 June 2026 from 10 AM to 12 PM for interested research groups. Registration is compulsory to receive the Teams invite (via s4policy@belspo.be).

The *Science 4 Policy* programme (S4Policy in short) is an 8-year programme that aims at providing a scientific support to the decision-making process in the federal government and its administrations.

The forthcoming call for scientific proposals relates to the “*policy-driven*” priorities of the S4Policy programme. These are priorities submitted by federal administrations, and approved by the inter-cabinet working group, for which a scientific support from the academic community is requested. The intention is to fund the best scientific team based on a two-stage peer review for each policy-driven project, followed by a selection stage based solely on the ability of these projects to support federal competences.

These policy-driven projects are based on a co-funding scheme where BELSPO funds max. 90% and the federal department(s) a min. of 10% of the budget. The financial commitment of the departments ensures that the project seeks maximum impact and aims to foster a strong relation between scientists and federal administrations.

Proposals and selected & funded projects will be designed within the scope of the below mentioned research priorities, that comply with the strategic goals of the federal government:

(Note that the drafting of the priorities is currently in its final stage and will be ready for 11 June 2026)

Inclusion of persons with disabilities within Federal Governmental Organisations

The Federal Public Service Policy and Support (FPS BOSA) currently misses adequate scientific support to inform new or adjusted policies, with the objective to increase the number of employees with disabilities within federal governmental institutions, and to guide and support them throughout, to ensure inclusive and sustainable employment.

(Read the full description on 11 June on the S4Policy website of BELSPO)

Budget & timing: The maximum budget is **450 000 EUR**, of which 390 000 EUR funded by BELSPO and 60 000 EUR co-financed by FPS Policy and Support (BOSA). Ideally, the project would span a period of **36 months**. However, applicants are allowed to deviate from this timing in their proposal.

Potential, competences, skills and capacity to learn, as an alternative to diploma & experience as criteria in hiring processes and career & salary development

The main objective is to gain better insight in the current value of a diploma/ degree in recruitment processes and career development within the federal services, and whether or not other aspects such as capacity to learn, skills & competences and potential could serve as alternative evaluation criteria.

(Read the full description on 11 June on the S4Policy website of BELSPO)

Budget & timing: The maximum budget is **300 000 EUR** of which 270 000 EUR funded by BELSPO and 30 000 EUR co-financed by FPS Policy and Support (BOSA). Ideally, the project would span a period of **24 months**. However, applicants are allowed to deviate from this timing in their proposal.

Government Resilience with regards to Operational Upkeep & Nature based Design (GROUND)

The FPS Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment wishes to build upon the knowledge gained in existing cooperative projects on greening of infrastructure and terrains within the federal administration (such as Biodiversiscape), and the newly gained knowledge in the future selected project, to build a toolkit. The toolkit will help establish a link between budgets and maintenance levels in green space management, taking into account environmental constraints such as timelines and the nature of the works, water management, and the equipment used. A link is also established with regulatory requirements.

(Read the full description on 11 June on the S4Policy website of BELSPO)

Budget & timing: The maximum budget is **400 000 EUR**, of which 360 000 EUR funded by BELSPO and 40 000 EUR by FPS Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment. Ideally, the project would

span a period of **36 months**. However, applicants are allowed to deviate from this timing in their proposal.

Analysis of the societal consequences of biodiversity loss (degradation) in Belgian soil

To address the policy need, the Climate Risk Assessment Center (CERAC) is in need of independent and multidisciplinary expertise in soil ecology, biology, biogeochemistry, genetics, hydrology, modelling and ecological economics, as well as the integration or development of soil biodiversity monitoring networks. These requirements cannot be met through internal resources alone. Therefore, CERAC is asking support from a high-quality research consortium, to harmonise and strengthen soil biodiversity monitoring in line with evolving European requirements on soil health, and to develop decision support tools grounded in robust scientific evidence.

(Read the full description on 11 June on the S4Policy website of BELSPO)

Timing & Budget: The maximum budget is **375 000 EUR**, of which 335 000 EUR funded by BELSPO and 40 000 EUR by CERAC. The project should span a period of **12 to 36 months**.

The competitiveness of Belgian SMEs in the transition to a decarbonised and circular economy

The European Union is on its way to climate neutrality by 2050. This work highlights the intrinsic links between decarbonisation and the use of materials. There is a need to further explore a range of challenges and impacts related to the twin transition to a decarbonised and circular economy in Belgium, in particular the issue of companies' competitiveness. However, it must be noted that, in Belgium, we are sorely lacking a vision of the reality of small and medium-sized enterprises in this field.

(Read the full description on 11 June on the S4Policy website of BELSPO)

Timing & Budget: The maximum budget is **300 000 EUR**, of which 270 000 EUR funded by BELSPO and 30 000 EUR by FPS Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment. Ideally, the project would span a period of **18 months**. However, applicants are allowed to deviate from this timing in their proposal.

Economic impact of climate-related hazards & alternative adaptation strategies for Public investment: Development of an Operational Assessment Framework for the Belgian Defence sector & Federal governmental level

In Belgium, climate-related hazards are expected to become more frequent and more severe over the course of the 21st century. Heat waves, river and coastal flooding, windstorms, droughts and wildfires increasingly occur in the same areas, generating compounded risks that simultaneously affect health systems, water and energy supply, transport and logistics networks, coastal and maritime activities, and other essential services. Addressing these compounded risks requires well-considered and decisive policy that is based on a scientific

analysis of current and future economic damage associated with climate change, combined with a cost-benefit analysis of alternative adaptation investment strategies. To support the development of such evidence-based policy, an operationally robust and methodically comprehensive framework is needed.

(Read the full description on 11 June on the S4Policy website of BELSPO)

Timing & Budget: The maximum budget is **600 000 EUR**, of which 520 000 EUR funded by BELSPO and 80 000 EUR jointly by CeRAC and the Ministry of Defence. The project should span a period of **24 months**; ideally engaging two full-time equivalent (FTE) people for the entire duration of the project. However, applicants are allowed to deviate from this timing in their proposal.

The decarbonisation of Belgian industry - long-term potential for negative greenhouse gas emissions through BECCS

The European Union must achieve net zero emissions by 2050. In this context, all emitting sectors will need to undergo drastic reductions, as illustrated by the work coordinated by the Federal Public Service Health on Belgium's transition (see for example www.climatechange.be/2050). The transport, buildings, and energy production sectors will need to reach zero emissions, and agriculture and land use will have to reduce emissions as well. At the same time, there is a need for deployment of negative emissions, through enhanced natural sinks, direct air capture and storage (DACs), or the use of sustainable bioenergy combined with carbon capture and storage (BECCS). However, there is a lack of clarity regarding the role and potential of BECCS in Belgium. Through this research priority, the selected project will be asked to provide an estimate (range) of the long-term potential of different BECCS applications in Belgium, and to assess and discuss the conditions required to achieve this potential.

(Read the full description on 11 June on the S4Policy website of BELSPO)

Timing & Budget: The maximum budget is **100 000 EUR**, of which 90 000 EUR funded by BELSPO and 10 000 EUR by FPS Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment. Ideally, the project would span a period of **12 months**. However, applicants are allowed to deviate from this timing in their proposal.

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

There is a large need for scientific-based and policy-oriented knowledge on the use of raw materials, supply chains, bottlenecks, impact and future risks associated with raw material production and consumption. The currently available risk assessment models are still strongly limited: the focus is limited on certain risks (geopolitical, economic importance), or they are too high-level, making it difficult to prioritise (concrete) policy actions, especially in terms of the sustainable use of raw materials. To root the Units and future studies in evidence-based insights, the Unit Raw Materials of the Federal Institute for Sustainable Development requires a solid methodological framework to assess ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance)-risks across different raw materials chains; a risk-assessment tool that is tailored to Belgian material flows and can then serve as a basis for offering detailed and actionable policy priorities.

(Read the full description on 11 June on the S4Policy website of BELSPO)

Timing & Budget: The maximum budget is **450 000 EUR**, of which 270 000 EUR is funded by BELSPO, and 180 000 EUR is co-financed by the Federal Institute for Sustainable Development (FISD). Ideally, the project would span over a period of **36 months**. However, applicants are free to deviate from this timing in their proposal.

Data Infrastructure for the Monitoring of the Labour Market and Social Protection Transition

The current coalition agreement provides for far-reaching reforms of social security and social assistance in Belgium. It is therefore to be expected that new dynamics will emerge both from social protection to employment and between the various social security and social assistance systems. It is important to properly identify these new flows and thus monitor the impact on both social spending and the effectiveness of social protection. It is also important to gain insight into the effectiveness of the measures taken in function of the desired increase in labour market participation. This requires an adapted longitudinal data infrastructure. This project should provide direct policy information for the implementation, adjustment and evaluation of federal measures during the current legislature. In addition, the infrastructure supports the carrying out of impact measurements.

(Read the full description on 11 June on the S4Policy website of BELSPO)

Timing & Budget: The maximum budget is **420 000 EUR**, of which 336 000 EUR is funded by BELSPO, and 84 000 EUR is co-financed by the FPS Social Security and the PPS Social Integration. Ideally, the project would span a period of **24 months**. However, applicants are allowed to deviate from this timing in their proposal.

Towards a new assessment scale for self-reliance among people with disabilities

The current medical-social scale as introduced by the 1987 Law on allowances to people with disabilities has never been scientifically validated, is insufficiently aligned with contemporary insights about disability, shows variability/inconsistency between evaluators and does not sufficiently take into account the situation in which persons with disabilities find themselves. As such the medical-social scale is not in line with the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) officially endorsed by all 191 WHO Member States on 22 May 2001. The FPS Social Security is looking for a project that can develop a scientifically validated assessment score that reflects the actual need for support, and can be introduced in a budget-neutral manner.

(Read the full description on 11 June on the S4Policy website of BELSPO)

Timing & Budget: The maximum budget is **250 000 EUR**, of which 200 000 EUR will be funded by BELSPO and 50 000 EUR will be co-funded by FPS Social Security. Ideally, the project would span

over a period of **12 months**. However, applicants are free to deviate from this timing in their proposal.

Labour migration channels for third-country nationals in Belgium

Belgium faces an important policy challenge: it increasingly relies on two parallel channels to meet labour demand from third-country nationals, but their interaction is still poorly understood. These channels are: 1) direct labour migration through the single permit system, and 2) posting of third-country nationals to Belgium under the free movement of services. The core policy need is to understand how these channels interact in practice, whether they substitute for or complement each other, and what this means for labour markets, taxation, social security, and integration.

(Read the full description on 11 June on the S4Policy website of BELSPO)

Timing & Budget: The maximum budget is **200 000 EUR**, of which 20 000 EUR is co-funded by MYRIA, 165 000 EUR by BELSPO and 15 000 EUR by WEWIS. Ideally, the project would span a period of **24 Months**. However, applicants are allowed to deviate from this timing in their proposal.

Towards a scientific advisory function at the federal level

The OECD report on the federal Evidence-informed Policy Making (EIPM) ecosystem in the frame of the TSI exercise (*“Building capacity for evidence informed policymaking in governance and public administration in post-pandemic Europe”*) revealed some strength but also some weaknesses. There is an **insufficient capacity to absorb existing scientific evidence** rapidly and efficiently to inform policies under discussion within the government. Secondly, there is a lack of capacity to **formulate strategic knowledge** needs (such as the Areas of Research Interest in the UK government, for example) that are required in the short and the long run. Lastly, there is a need to coordinate the knowledge needs between federal departments and thereby generate joint strategic research agendas. This research should provide recommendations to the College of Presidents (Collège des Présidents, College van Voorzitters) of the federal administrations to address a well-thought and realistic plan for the next government.

(Read the full description on 11 June on the S4Policy website of BELSPO)

Timing & Budget: The maximum budget is **300 000 EUR**, funded by BELSPO. Ideally, the project would span a period of **24 months**. However, applicants are allowed to deviate from this timing in their proposal.