Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO, Flanders) and National Research Foundation (NRF, South Africa)

Call for applications for collaborative research projects:

2027 – 2029

Closing Date:

Proposal submission both at FWO and NRF: 26 May 2026 (FWO: 17:00 CEST/ NRF: 17:00 SAST)

DA deadline at NRF (South African institutional deadline for submission): 1 June 2026

FWO and NRF aim to fund

a maximum of 6 collaborative projects under this Joint Call

Contents

1. Aim and scope of the Joint Call

Science is increasingly global. Many research questions and "grand challenges" cannot be resolved without cross-border collaboration between researchers. Both FWO (Flanders) and NRF (South Africa) wish to invest in collaborative research projects, creating a leverage for scientific excellence. This intention is realised through the implementation of Joint Calls for integrated Flemish-South African research projects.

The objective of this Joint Call is to facilitate the development of sustainable institutional links between Flanders and South Africa. The overall aim is not only to build on existing, outstanding and established research partnerships, but also to foster new linkages and engagements with small cohorts of emerging researchers. Please note that the basis of selection from both sides will be scientific excellence. However, from the South African side, excellent collaborative projects with a clear intention to address diversity, will be favorably considered (see **Annex 1** for further details about specific requirements for South African applicants).

Grants will be awarded to collaborative research teams with clearly defined goals, ambitious research activities and innovative approaches. Applicants are encouraged to ensure that their research has, besides scientific impact, societal relevance. The research should be carried out both in Flanders and in South Africa.

2. Thematic areas of cooperation

This Joint Call will support collaborative research projects submitted within **any scientific domain and covering fundamental scientific research**.

3. Duration of the projects

The projects will be supported for a **period of three years**, starting in 2027 till the end of 2029.

4. Eligibility criteria

Each proposal under this Joint Call must have one main applicant based in Flanders and one main applicant based in South Africa; they are the **Principal Investigators (PI)** on the Flemish and South African side respectively. They bear the main responsibility for the project including its technical and administrative coordination as well as timely delivery of scientific and financial reports. The following eligibility criteria also apply to all proposals:

- **A proposal must be submitted to both the FWO and the NRF. A proposal that has not been submitted to both sides will be marked ineligible.**
    - Proposals must be written in English.
    - The project on both sides must have the same duration of 3 years (2027 – 2029).

    - Proposals must be submitted by the indicated deadline: **26 May 2026 (FWO: 17:00 CEST/ NRF: 17:00 SAST)**.
    - Involved South African institutions must respect the **DA deadline at NRF (South African institutional deadline for submission): 1 June 2026.**
- **Each PI is allowed to submit only one proposal and cannot serve as a research partner in another proposal led by another PI within this NRF-FWO call.**
- Former PIs are welcome to participate in this Joint Call, however, the collaborative project should not only be a continuation of the past project. Such proposals should not only indicate how the newly submitted project builds upon the previously granted project but also take the research further by e.g. addressing new research gaps and thereby motivating a continuation.
- The PIs (including co-PIs and research partners), project title and abstract, rationale and research objectives, project description (including methodology, work plan and work packages), and budget (separately specified and clearly justified for the respective project teams) submitted by the Flemish and the South African PI should be identical. At FWO the South African budget (in EUR) must be added in the online application tool by adding the foreign host institution(s) and subsequently allocating budget to it.

FWO, Flanders:

- Eligible host institutions: Your research will be carried out under the supervision of an applicable Flemish principle (main) host institution defined in article 7§2 of the regulations research projects fundamental research. Where appropriate, the principal (main) host institutions from article 7§2 can carry out their research in collaboration with an eligible Flemish or Federal scientific institution, but not in collaboration with a non-Flemish research institution other than those in South Africa, eligible for funding at NRF.
- Eligible (co-)supervisor(s): Your research project will be carried out under the direction of a supervisor per host institution, possibly in collaboration with one or more co-supervisors in line with Article 10 (except §4 till §6 - there is no division into junior and senior projects in this call) and Article 11 (except §3) of the regulations research projects fundamental research.
- **In the framework of this call with NRF, you can only act once as a principle investigator (supervisor) or co-investigator (co-supervisor).**
- Applications submitted in the frame of this NRF-FWO project call are not taken into account in for the maximum of one project per application round for which you may act as (co-)supervisor, nor are they taken into account for the maximum of two projects applied for and ongoing on the start date of the newly allocated project.

NRF, South Africa:

- This Joint Call is open to working researchers residing in South Africa and affiliated with a recognised higher education or research institution such as a university, university of technology, science council, museum or other research institutions as declared by the Department of Science Technology and Innovation (DSI).
- The South African applicants and co-applicants must be in possession of a PhD to be eligible.
- Private higher education institutions are not eligible to apply under this Joint Call.
- Researchers from SMEs, private companies/industries, and NGOs cannot serve as PIs but are allowed to form part of the collaborative projects and will be expected to meet their own costs of

participation in the collaborative projects. The NRF grants cannot be used to support these researchers.

- South African PIs based at historically advantaged institutions are required to include, as part of the joint project, a research partner from any of the historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) in order to be eligible.
- Applicants based at an HDI, science council (including any of the NRF research facilities), and South Africa's two new universities (i.e. Sol Plaatje and Mpumalanga) can act as PIs and submit proposals without the involvement of and/or partnering with researchers based at historically advantaged and disadvantaged institutions if they so wish.
- Please check **Annex 1** for further details about specific requirements for South African applicants.
- Each party is responsible to cover its own travel and accommodation costs in the framework of this joint project.

5. Funding regulations

Researchers should ensure that all expenses are calculated and covered in line with the rules and regulations in force in each country.

FWO, Flanders:

- The Flemish part of the project budget can only be used for one or more of the following cost categories: scientific staff and consumables; and equipment. The type of costs that can be requested under "Consumables" can be found in the project regulations, Art 27, §1. Each party is responsible to cover its own travel and accommodation costs in the framework of this joint project. As such, only travel and accommodation costs of Flemish researchers going to South Africa can be budgeted on the FWO side.
- The following budget regulations apply in the frame of this Joint Call:
  - ✓ The total project budget for staff and consumables may not exceed 85.000 EUR/year.
  - ✓ The budget for staff and consumables of the Flemish main host institution must be minimally 45.000 EUR/year.
  - ✓ Per project a maximum amount of 150.000 EUR for equipment can be applied for. This can take the form of matching funding.
  - ✓ No overhead costs must be charged on the Flemish budgets.
- Travel insurance is the responsibility of the person traveling and should be arranged and claimed in accordance with the policies and procedures of the Flemish host institution of the person traveling. If the Flemish host institution of the person traveling does not cover such an insurance, related costs can be budgeted as a consumable.

NRF, South Africa:

- The total amount requested from the NRF should not exceed R1 500 000 million per project. Funding will be made available for a maximum of 3 years, to be paid in annual installments (R500 000 per year) and exclusively for activities commencing in 2027.
- These funds can be utilised for research related activities, small equipment, mobility/travel costs of the South African research team, mini sabbaticals by South African doctoral students, science engagement activities, etc.

- Please see **Annex 1** for details on the provisions of this grant.
- Travel-related expenses such as travel insurance and visa application fees should be arranged and claimed in accordance with the policies and procedures of the grant holder's institution. It is the responsibility of the grant holder to ensure that all arrangements comply with their institution's financial policy.

6. Application procedure

It is up to the applicants to find their own research partners. Joint proposals must both be submitted in Flanders (at FWO) and South Africa (at NRF). Proposals which have not been submitted in both countries will not be considered for review and will not be considered for funding. The call process is highly competitive therefore applying for funding does not guarantee funding.

FWO, Flanders:

In Flanders it can only be submitted according to the regulations of the FWO, using the appropriate application forms, which are available through the website of FWO (FWO E-portal). Please pay special attention to:

- **All (co-)supervisors, both from Flanders and South Africa, must have an online FWO E-loket profile** including academic degrees, positions, and an updated list of publications before the submission deadline:
    - The registration of your E-loket profile (login/password) takes 24 hours. It is therefore strongly advised to start well in advance.
    - For South African researchers: to simplify the entering of their publication list into E-loket, South African researchers can group their publications together according to publication type and copy-paste the items as a batch into the system, using the date of entry as the publication date. It is not necessary to enter each individual publication as a separate entry. Please note that only publications of the past 10 years need to be listed.
- **For each Flemish and South African team member the Flemish PI must upload a short CV (in English)** according to the FWO CV template provided in the online application form.

NRF, South Africa:

Applications must be submitted through an online application process to the NRF through the link: https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za. Please make use of the '*General Application Guide 2026*' for assistance on the steps to follow when applying for international research grants. The link to the guide will be published on this web page: https://www.nrf.ac.za/funding/nrf_calls. PIs **must** attach the required **compulsory documents** in PDF format in the following order:

- CV of the Flemish Principal Investigator and lead Flemish applicant of any additional Flemish host institution, if present (FWO CV template can be used).
- Support letter from the Flemish PI's institution confirming participation.
- Total budget requested at FWO.
- Budget division of the South African team, in particular budget sharing between the historically advantaged and HDIs.

Failure to submit compulsory documents will result in the disqualification of the application and will make the entire project consortium ineligible.

7. Review process

Following the closing date indicated in Section 12, all submitted proposals will undergo formal eligibility check before moving to the two-step evaluation process as follows:

- Remote international peer review: the first step will be performed at national/regional level in which applications are submitted to international remote peer review according to the regulations and procedures in place at NRF and FWO respectively. More information on FWO's international remote peer review process can be found on this website.

- For the second step, a joint selection panel comprising of experts designated by the FWO and the NRF will evaluate all eligible proposals and allocate the funding. The composition of the joint scientific committee is only determined after the submission deadline to align the expertise of the panel members with the topics of the submitted applications. The composition of the joint scientific committee will be openly available after the finalisation of the evaluation process.

The FWO and NRF will thereafter ratify the ranking made by the joint evaluation panel. The involved Flemish and South African researchers will be notified about the evaluation results after the ratification by both funding agencies.

The South African part will be funded by NRF according to its own rules and procedures; the Flemish part by FWO according to its rules and procedures. In due time, the researchers will also receive the necessary feedback about the decision taken.

The following review criteria will be used:

- Researchers (25%)
  - Competence of the individual researchers
- Project (50%)
  - Scientific added value, rationale, and originality
  - Quality of the research approach (methodology), feasibility and focus
  - Work plan
- Collaboration (25%)
  - Added value of the proposed collaboration
  - Balance in terms of work contribution amongst the diverse research groups
- Diversity:
  - New international collaborations (not yet funded under this programme), projects involving emerging researchers, projects paying attention to the involvement of female and disabled researchers, and/or projects from historically disadvantaged individuals or historically disadvantaged institutions will be prioritized in case of ex aequo. In addition, in case of ex aequo a balance in projects over different domains will be strived for.

See **Annex 2** for the score grid that will be used during the evaluation procedure.

8. Timeline

The timeline is as follows:

- 3 March 2026 — Opening of call
- **26 May 2026 (FWO: 17:00 CEST/ NRF: 17:00 SAST)** — **Deadline for proposals**
- **1 June 2026 (South African institutional deadline for submission)** — **DA deadline at NRF**
- June 2026 — Eligibility check
- June - September 2026 — Remote international peer review
- November 2026 — Joint scientific committee appointed by FWO/NRF
- End of December 2026 — Ratification panel decision/communication results
- January 2027 — Project start of selected projects

Although the FWO and the NRF undertake to execute the review and selection process as quickly as possible so as to notify applicants of the results as soon as possible, the nature of the bilateral process requires the alignment of the commencement of each phase of the process with the partnering country, whose schedules may differ significantly.

9. Intellectual property

The researchers of each country, particularly the Principal Investigators, must take adequate steps to ensure protection and sharing of the intellectual property that could result from the joint projects. In the light of this a partnership agreement must be concluded between all the Flemish and South African host institutions involved within nine months of the start of the project. This partnership agreement must contain at least a detailed description of the partnership as well as agreements on ownership and user-rights to the project results and liability. Please note that no specific format for this agreement will be provided by FWO or NRF. The involved host institutions are free to elaborate such a document as long as it contains the necessary basic information.

10. Ethical considerations

FWO, Flanders:

The FWO aims to do everything in its power to ensure that research funded with its resources is carried out in accordance with the highest ethical standards. Some of these values are imposed by European and national law, others are generally accepted as being part of good (international) scientific practice. More information on FWO's research ethics policy and procedures (during the application, review and project execution phase) can be found on this website.

NRF, South Africa:

In conjunction with the institution, it is the responsibility of the grant-holder to ensure that all research activities carried out in or outside South Africa comply with the laws and regulations of South Africa

and/or the foreign country in which the research activities are conducted. These include all human and animal subjects, copyright and intellectual property protection, and other regulations or laws, as appropriate. A research ethics committee must review and approve the ethical and academic rigor of all research prior to the commencement of the research and acceptance of the grant. The awarded amount will not be released for payment if a copy of the required ethical clearance certificate, as indicated in the application, is not attached to the Conditions of Grant. Please also refer to the "Statement on Ethical Research and Scholarly Publishing Practices" on the NRF website https://www.nrf.ac.za/statement-on-ethical-research-and-scholarly-publishing-practices/.

11. Implementation of the funded projects

Flemish and South African researchers involved in a projects funded under this Joint Call, will implement the approved project as laid out in the initial application, following each funding council's regulations (respectively FWO and NRF), including the regulations on financial and scientific reporting. More information for beneficiaries of FWO funding can be found on this website.

Please Note: Researchers of funded projects are requested to mention the support by the funders of this call when publishing the results of the funded project.

12. Submission deadline

Applications must be both submitted at FWO (Flanders) and NRF (South Africa) by **26 May 2026 (FWO: 17:00 CEST/ NRF: 17:00 SAST)**. Applications received after this date will not be considered. In addition, involved South African institutions must respect the DA deadline at NRF (South African institutional deadline for submission): 1 June 2026.

Please note that neither the FWO nor the NRF, will be responsible for applications that were not received. PIs are also advised to ensure submission of their proposals by their counterparts in the partner country.

13. Contact details for queries and further information

FWO, Flanders:

For any inquiry concerning the present call, please contact the following individuals:

Mr Gregory Absillis
Science Policy Advisor International Affairs
Tel.: +32 2 550 15 29
Gregory.Absillis@fwo.be

Ms Isabelle Verbaeys
Head of International Affairs
Tel.: +32 2 550 15 31
Isabelle.Verbaeys@fwo.be

NRF, South Africa:

System or technical queries on the NRF Connect system can be forwarded to the NRF Support Desk on email: supportdesk@nrf.ac.za and Tel: +27 12 481 4155. Further content related queries can be directed to the following NRF official:

Mahlase Teuns Phahlamohlaka
Programme Officer: International Grants and Partnerships
Tel: +27 12 481 4385
Email: T.Phahlamohlaka@risa.nrf.ac.za

Annex 1 – Specific Requirements for South African Applicants

Eligible criteria for South African researchers applying under this Funding Scheme:

- South African PIs based at historically advantaged institutions are required to include, as part of the joint project, a research partner from any of the historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) in order to be eligible. This should be demonstrated with a clear role and budget to the HDI partner as part of the proposal.

- Proposals submitted by an applicant based at a historically advantaged institution without a research partner from an HDI will be ineligible and will not be submitted for review. The research partner from an HDI in this case can serve as a co-applicant in the proposal. Please note that co-applicants are also required to be in possession of a PhD.

- Applicants based at an HDI, science council (including any of the NRF research facilities), and South Africa's two new universities (i.e. Sol Plaatje and Mpumalanga) can act as PIs and submit proposals without the involvement of and/or partnering with researchers based at historically advantaged and disadvantaged institutions if they so wish.

- Only the following eight universities will be recognised as HDI in line with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) December 2021 Ministerial Statement on university funding: University of Limpopo (UL), University of Fort Hare (UFH), University of Venda (Univen), Walter Sisulu University (WSU), University of the Western Cape (UWC), University of Zululand (UniZulu), Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), and Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU).

- The NRF grant can be used to cover the following costs:

    - Research-related costs:
      Activities to be supported may include expenses relating to field work such as conducting interviews, surveys, laboratory experiments, research-related trips, small equipment (consumables), etc.

    - Postdoctoral research support:
      PIs are expected to supervise and mentor postdoctoral fellows who should be allowed to conduct research, either on a pre-specified aspect of the joint project or on their own designed topic within the joint project and should be supported to publish the work. The responsibilities of the postdoctoral fellows may also include assisting the PIs with the management and administration of the joint project.

    - Mini research sabbaticals by young researchers:
      The grant can also be used to support short-term (or mini) sabbaticals by doctoral students. These mini sabbaticals should enable young researchers to (1) learn valuable

new skills or techniques; (2) access facilities or resources not readily available at home; (3) build relationships with potential new collaborators; and (4) advance complementary collaborative research. The duration of each sabbatical is expected to be 3-6 months with flexibility to split it into several shorter stays. Longer sabbaticals may be undertaken where this would add value, and these should be justified within the application. The sabbaticals must enhance, not replace, the standard training and study support that doctoral students receive. The sabbaticals must be managed to fit within the original funded period of the studentship. Additional funding will not be made available through this programme or by the funders to support studentship extensions for those undertaking mini sabbaticals. Applicants should include information about how these sabbaticals will be managed within their proposal.

- Science engagement (knowledge sharing costs):
  The NRF supports science engagement through its coordination and implementation of the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation's Science Engagement Strategy. The strategy embraces a broad understanding of science, encompassing systematic knowledge spanning natural and physical sciences, engineering sciences, medical sciences, agricultural sciences, mathematics, social sciences and humanities, technology, all aspects of the innovation chain and indigenous knowledge. South African researchers' contribution towards, and outputs as a result of, science engagement should be reported annually through Progress Reports submitted to the NRF in February each year.

- The NRF grant makes provision for the appointment of only one postdoctoral fellow per project for the duration of 2-years equivalent to the NRF Freestanding Postdoctoral Fellowship.

- The NRF grant can only be used to cover the costs associated with the mini sabbaticals by doctoral students. It is the responsibility of the PIs (and doctoral students) to secure funding for educational expenses of participating students. Doctoral students who do not have financial support are hereby advised to apply for scholarship through the NRF call for Student Support which opens the beginning of April each year.

- The total amount requested from the NRF should not exceed R1 500 000 million per project. Funding will be made available for a maximum of 3-years, to be paid in annual installments (R500 000 per year) and exclusively for research activities commencing in 2027. The funds per project have to be utilised as follows:
  - R1 070 000 per project for research related activities, mobility/travel costs of the South African research team, mini sabbaticals by South African doctoral students, science engagement activities, etc.
  - R430 000 for 1 postdoctoral position at R215 000 per annum for 2-years.

Capacity building

- Projects must demonstrate potential for promoting human capacity development, equity and redress through the involvement of young, early-stage, and/or mid-career researchers, historically disadvantaged individuals (female and disabled), and the involvement of historically disadvantaged higher education institutions.

Projects follow-up and reporting

- A final scientific and financial report has to be submitted in English by both the South African no more than 3 months after the end of the project. The report has to mention outputs of the projects compared with the objectives and aims of the proposal. On an annual basis, the NRF publishes a national call for submission of 'Progress Reports' due for each financial year. The South African PIs are urged to look out for such notifications/calls.

Protection of personal information

- The National Research Foundation ensures compliance with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), Act 4 of 2013, committing to ensure the privacy of those submitting applications and proposals to the NRF on the NRF Online Submission System (https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za/). The National Research Foundation will protect the personal information provided by applicants or the third party against misuse, loss, unauthorised access, modification, or disclosure. The Privacy Policy of the NRF outlines the practices relating to the protection of personal information and can be accessed on the NRF website at https://www.nrf.ac.za/privacy-policy.

Annex 2 – Score Grid

1. *Competence of the individual researchers*							
D	**C**	**B-**	**B**	**B+**	**A-**	**A**	**A+**
0	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Unacceptable	**Not competitive**	**Fair/Reasonable**		**Good/Very good**		**Excellent/Outstanding**	
This criterion assesses to what extent the individual researchers, included in the bilateral research project, have the necessary competences (i.e. knowledge and skills) and infrastructure to implement the proposed project. Assess to what extent the individual researchers, taking into account their scientific seniority, have made important scientific contributions to the state-of-the art in their respective domain, as evidenced by a range of scientifically relevant activities and achievements, such as the **quality and impact** (rather than the quantity) of the **publication record, as well as other meaningful scientific output and achievements**. The latter may include education activities, supervision of pre- and postdoctoral researchers, institutional responsibilities (governance, administration, …), membership of scientific organisations, societies, networks, R&D services provided to third parties, sabbaticals, relevant training, scientific awards and other relevant information. Consider a variety of scientific or other (societal, economic, …) **impac**t beyond publications and obtained research funding. International recognition of the included individual researchers in their scientific domain is necessary to receive outstanding scores for this criterion.							
Some of the included individual researchers lack the inherent competences required to perform the proposed research. Teamwork will not compensate for this weak link. This is reflected in the track record and main research achievements of some of the included individual researchers which is, considering their scientific seniority and a variety of activities/achievements, unacceptable and as such insufficient to adequately contribute to the proposed research.	Some of the included individual researchers do not fully possess the necessary competences, expertise, skills and/or experience to carry out their part of the research in a proper way. Only through close collaboration among all included researchers, will they manage to carry out the actual research. This is reflected in the track record and main research achievements of some of the included individual researchers which, taking into account their scientific seniority and a variety of activities/achievements, is poor and as such possibly insufficient to adequately contribute to the proposed research.	The competence, expertise, skills and/or experience of some of the individual researchers in the consortium leads to concerns on a successful execution of the proposed research However, as a whole, the research consortium possesses the necessary competences to carry out the proposed research. This is reflected in the track record and main research achievements of the included individual researchers which, taking into account their scientific seniority and a variety of activities/achievements, is sufficient to carry out the proposed research.	All the included individual researchers are competent and independent researchers with (very) good skills and knowledge to execute the proposed research. Taking into account the scientific seniority and a variety of activities/achievements, the track record and main research achievements of all included individual researchers is (very) good. Together they will bring the proposed research to a good end. Some of the included individual researchers are less internationally recognized for the contributions made within their scientific domain, but this is being compensated by the more international contributions of other included individual researchers.	All the included individual researchers are competent and independent researchers with excellent skills and extended knowledge to execute the proposed project. Taking into account the scientific seniority and a variety of activities/achievements, the track record and main research achievements of all key members of the consortium is impressive. The excellent competence and available expertise, skills and/or experience gives confidence in a successful execution of the proposed research. Key partners of the consortium are internationally recognised amongst the best of their scientific domain (or 'rising stars' in their domain, taking into account the scientific seniority).	

2. *Scientific quality of the bilateral research project*.

D	C	B-	B	B+	A-	A	A+
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Unacceptable	Not competitive	Fair/Reasonable		Good/Very good		Excellent/Outstanding	

2.a. Scientific added value, rationale and originality. The targeted research goals of a bilateral research proposal must contribute to the current international state-of-the-art. To what extent is the proposal original and will it generate knowledge that goes beyond the state-of-the-art (e.g. novel concepts or novel approaches)? Does the bilateral research project contain a strong rationale and robust/original hypothesis, does it propose innovative methodological approaches and is it sufficiently detailed?

The targeted research results are not original at all, do not build upon the international state-of-art and will not offer an added value to the state-of-the-art in its domain. AND/OR Have even been studied before (duplicate of previous studies). AND/OR The rationale and hypothesis are lacking.	The targeted research results are not very original and their innovative character is limited. The planned research activities will not result in much added value for the domain, but are rather a catching up with respect to the international state-of-art. AND/OR The rationale and hypothesis are rather weak.	The project is moderately original and/or the targeted research results are primarily incremental in terms of contribution to the current state-of-the-art. The rationale and hypothesis are present, however, not strongly motivated.	The targeted research goals are timely, innovative and original. The research results will contribute clearly to the current international state-of-the-art in the scientific domain. The rationale is strong and hypothesis clear.	The project is timely, unique and extremely original. It distinguishes itself in an outstanding manner from ongoing research efforts at the international level. It is a pioneering project based on ground-breaking and challenging ideas, concepts and research strategies.

2.b. Quality of the research approach (methodology), feasibility and focus. A bilateral research proposal must be scientifically challenging and nonetheless feasible. To what extent is the outlined scientific approach challenging, feasible and focussed, bearing in mind the project the requested budget and a project duration of maximum three years?

The research methodology is not appropriate/not suited to reach the scientific goals, is overall vaguely described/lacking or irrevocably outdated compared to the state-of-the-art. AND/OR The project is not feasible and/or not focussed at all, because e.g. it involves too many planned activities (too broad). AND/OR The project is not ambitious at all and does not require the requested budget or could be finished in much less than the foreseen time.	The research approach shows serious weaknesses and/or shortcomings. AND/OR The research approach lacks key elements and should be improved substantially to meet the state-of-art. AND/OR The feasibility and/or focus of the scientific project objectives are doubtful. AND/OR Overall the project is not ambitious enough given the requested budget and/or foreseen timeframe.	The research approach is appropriate, but lacks some elements and/or contains some shortcomings. The methodology is state-of-the-art. AND/OR The project is feasible, but could've been more focussed. It is, however, likely that the scientific goals will be delivered partly. AND/OR Despite some ambitious aspects, the project could have been somewhat more challenging given the requested budget and/or foreseen timeframe.	The proposed methodology is (very) well elaborated, relevant and suitable to reach the targeted scientific objectives. There are no significant gaps and/or shortcomings and methodologically sufficiently innovative. AND The balance between scientific challenges and feasibility of the scientific project objectives is (very) good. The work plan proposes an efficient use of the budget and the foreseen time frame. Risk mitigation strategy is present and appropriate measures were taken to make the research transparent and reproducible.	The proposed methodology is the most relevant, efficient and effective to reach the scientific goals and is considered as international state-of-the-art methodology in its domain. The methodology is highly innovative, well elaborated and perfectly clear. AND Excellent focus, optimal balance between high-level scientific challenges and intrinsic feasibility of the scientific project objectives. The work plan fits perfectly the foreseen time frame and requested budget. In addition, the proposal clearly identifies potential risks and proposes carefully designed alternative research strategies and 'fall back' options. Appropriate measures were taken to make the research transparent and reproducible.

2.c. Work plan. A bilateral research project must have a clearly defined work plan outlining the different work packages with their goals, research activities, timing and deliverables. A clear description of the roles of each included researcher is crucial to understand how a bilateral research project will be executed and managed. The presence of well-defined coordination tasks and a good communication strategy in the work plan can lead to outstanding scores in this criterion.

The project proposal does not include any sufficiently elaborated work plan that allows the assessment of this criterion. It is not clear at all by whom, when and how each proposed research activity will be performed.	The work plan and task allocation is not sufficiently developed. Important information is missing and significant structural adjustments are necessary.	The work plan is satisfactory and touches upon the different roles and responsibilities of each research group to the different work packages. However, in particular aspects the work plan and/or task allocation amongst the consortium partners remains vague or confusing and could be significantly improved.	The work plan, including the different work packages, is (very) clear and concretely defined, including the roles and responsibilities of each research group to the different work packages.	The work plan is sound and meticulously defined including the different roles and responsibilities of each research group to the different work packages. The goals and research activities of each work package are described in detail. In addition, the work plan includes well-defined project management tasks and a good communication strategy which contributes optimal to the smooth execution of each work package.

3. *Quality of the proposed collaboration of the bilateral research project.*

D	C	B-	B	B+	A-	A	A+
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Unacceptable	Not competitive	Fair/Reasonable		Good/Very Good		Excellent/Outstanding	

3.a. Added value of the proposed collaboration

This criterion assesses whether the collaboration has an added value for the bilateral research proposal. To what extent is the collaboration, containing the right combination of partners and expertises, unique and crucial to execute the proposed research. Is the rationale for bringing together these researchers/research groups clear and strong or is this partnership rather randomly composed and artificial? The complementarity/synergy of the included researchers and equipment must be clearly motivated in the research proposal.

The collaboration is artificial: There is no added value in the proposed bilateral collaboration. The proposed research can be performed alone or with local partners equally well. AND/OR The synergy in expertises and the rationale for collaboration is completely lacking. AND/OR The bilateral research team is not adequately composed and as a result will not reach the targeted research objectives.	The added value of the proposed bilateral collaboration is limited and its rationale is (rather) lacking. It is not clear how the included expertises are relevant and needed for the project. AND/OR Not every necessary expertise is either present or some expertise is doubled. It is unlikely that the consortium as a whole will be able to remedy the lack of expertise.	The added value of the collaboration is acceptable, but not fully convincing. The complementarity is present ,however, not strong. The synergy between the research groups end expertises could've been stronger and/or needs a better argumentation. AND/OR The composition is not optimal as expertise is lacking, however, deficiencies may be compensated by the other consortium members. The role of each researcher in the execution of the project is not clear.	The added value of the bilateral collaboration is clearly present and contributes (very) well to the execution of the project. There is a (very) good rationale for setting up this collaboration. The synergy between the research groups/expertises is (very) strong. AND/OR All the necessary expertise and equipment to execute the proposed research is present. The composition of and task allocation amongst the bilateral research team is clearly described and (very) well motivated.	The synergy between the consortium partners is pronounced and the complementarity is key for the successful execution of the proposed research activities. The reasons for including these specific research groups/expertises are perfectly clear and valid. The proposed collaboration is crucial to achieve the proposed research goals. The bilateral research team is a perfectly balanced team of excellent internationally recognized researchers (taking into account the scientific seniority), in which each one of them has a vital role to play in the execution of the proposed research activities. All the required expertise and equipment is present in the most optimal way.

3.b. Balance in terms of work contribution amongst the diverse research groups

Each bilateral research consortium must be balanced in terms of work contribution between the Flemish and foreign research groups. To what extent does every included research group optimally contribute to the proposed research activities? How do the contributions relate to the requested budget?

There is no balance in work distribution amongst the included research groups. There is imbalance between the requested budget and workload for some of the groups.	No possibility for scoring	There is a reasonable balance in terms of work distribution amongst the included research groups, taking into account the requested budget and the expertise within the different groups.	No possibility for scoring	Each research group contributes in the most optimal way to the proposed research activities. There are no imbalances in terms of work contribution, taking into account the requested budget of each included research group.