

GERMAN-FRENCH
JOINT CALL FOR PROPOSALS ON
“Artificial Intelligence”

within the framework of the collaboration between the French Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MESRI) and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)

Open jointly by the MESRI (via ANR) and BMBF (via DLR-PT)

Opening date:

20 June 2022

Closing date:

22 September 2022 13:00 CET

Link to the call on the ANR website:

<https://anr.fr/BilateralDEFRIA-2022>

Link to the call on the DLR-PT website:

<https://www.softwaresysteme.pt-dlr.de/de/deutsch-franzoesische-kooperation.php>

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Applicants are advised to read carefully the entire document as well as the corresponding national documents (German call for proposals and National annex and regulation for French applicants) before submitting research project proposals.

CONTEXT AND GENERAL DISPOSITIONS

With reference to the Aachen Treaty between Germany and France, this funding measure is intended to contribute to cooperation in the field of research and digital change, in particular in the field of Artificial Intelligence. Both Germany and France are facing the challenge that results from AI basic research are not or only to a limited extent transferred to fields of application.

Therefore, cooperation is a key element for raising visibility for AI players with regard to the national AI strategies established in both countries.

In the Joint Declaration of Intent between the Ministry for Higher Education and Research of the French Republic and the Federal Ministry for Education and Research in Germany on the Franco-German Research and Innovation Network on AI, both sides have reaffirmed their will to create a common AI ecosystem in order to create new collaborative projects. Together, they will combine their efforts on the basis of their national strategies to create the relevant landscape for new research and industry cooperation projects.

The joint network will lead to a better understanding of what is needed in the field of AI. Both governments will jointly introduce their findings to European and international work on AI, on the basis of available information regarding the projects funded (public reports and other dissemination data drafted and published by the partners themselves).

Hence, this bilateral Call for Proposals on AI aims to fund projects promoting high-quality research collaborations between France and Germany.

CHALLENGE, SCOPE, STRUCTURE AND BUDGET OF THE CALL

Challenge

The present call aims at supporting collaborative research on current challenges in AI and should address – without being limited to – one or more of the following topics:

- Distributed AI, e.g., federated learning, ...
- Green AI that requires less resources, e.g., algorithms requiring less energy, less memory, less communication bandwidth, ...
- AI for sustainability, e.g., scalable AI methods for improved adaptation to the consequences of climate change or mitigation of GHG emissions, ...
- Hybrid AI, e.g., combining methods for intelligent data preparation and autoML with human knowledge, ...
- AI towards other sciences, e.g., AI & numerical simulations, AI & physics, AI & chemistry, ...
- Trustable AI, e.g., certifiable, explainable, or interpretable models and processing pipelines and privacy protection by e.g. federated learning methods, ...
- Embedded and edge AI, e.g., AI for microcontrollers or AI for automation, ...

Scope

Proposals should relate - without being limited - to one or more of the following application domains:

- Mobility & Transport
- Logistics & Services
- Energy (in particular renewable energy)
- Environment and Resource Protection
- Smart Industry & Production Technologies
- Society

Applications with focus on military use are excluded from this funding measure.

Budget

Each ministry contributes with 7 million Euros to this call. The requested budget for the type 1 projects should be up to 2.4 million Euros and for the type 2 projects up to 800.000 Euros.¹

Structure

This call aims to fund two different types of projects, each described below:

Type 1 Research Collaborations

This project type addresses methodology oriented and innovative research between French and German research organisations through large scale research projects in AI. Collaborations between research organisations with internationally recognised research in the field of AI are to be strengthened in a targeted and, above all, sustainable manner through this funding. The objective is to obtain strategic solutions at the level of research organisations while strengthening a Franco-German backbone.

A maximum of 3 projects will be funded in this funding line. Projects will have a duration of up to 4 years.

Type 2 Research and Development Projects

This project type addresses the development of pre-competitive and applied results for products, processes and / or technical services. With this funding measure, both countries will support Research and Development projects aimed at the innovative application of AI methods in practice. The funding of collaborative projects is intended to strengthen the transfer between science and industry to the advantage of the involved partners in both countries.

Projects will have a duration of up to 4 years.

¹ The budget allocation is subject to available budgetary resources.

SUBMISSION

The French and German partners² will prepare a joint scientific project proposal respecting the corresponding template documents provided by ANR and DLR-PT for each project type (type 1 and type 2). Each proposal can exclusively be submitted once and only to one of the two funding lines.

Project consortia that are composed of more than one organisation per country have to designate a **national scientific coordinator for each country** who will be the contact point for the respective national funding agency.

The same joint project proposal must:

- Be submitted by German coordinators to <https://foerderportal.bund.de/easy-online>³
- Be submitted by French coordinators to:
 - Type 1: https://aap.agencerecherche.fr/_layouts/15/SIM/Pages/SIM-NouveauProjet.aspx?idAAP=1814
 - Type 2: https://aap.agencerecherche.fr/_layouts/15/SIM/Pages/SIM-NouveauProjet.aspx?idAAP=1815
-
- Be composed of:
 - A Project description (15 pages maximum, specific outline templates are provided),
 - An annex presenting the short (max. 1 page per person) CVs of:
 - both national scientific coordinators

The project proposal has to describe each partner's role and how the partners complement one another in achieving the project objectives. The project description must provide the information needed for its assessment according to the pre-defined evaluation criteria listed in this call for proposals and follow the proposal structure provided in the project template documents. Applicants may add additional content (respecting the page limit), if considered relevant for the assessment of their proposal.

A **Consortium Agreement** (CA) has to be signed by all consortium members (i.e. legal entities) within the first year of the project for the 2 types. It will be the responsibility of the project coordinators to draw up a CA in order to fix a common project start date, manage the delivery of the project activities, finances, intellectual property rights (IPR) and to avoid disputes which might be detrimental to the completion of the project and

² Legal entities (research organisations, commercial enterprises, etc.) are considered as partners in the framework of this call for proposals

³ Selecting the path: BMBF > Künstliche Intelligenz > Künstliche Intelligenz - Deutsch-Französische Kooperation - 2022

compliance – if applicable (Research Organisations and Undertakings participating in the same project) – with the Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation 2014/C 198/01.

ELIGIBILITY

The project proposals must meet all the following criteria, which **are cumulative**. Project proposals that do not meet all the eligibility criteria, whether common to both agencies or specific to each, will not be evaluated and therefore cannot be selected for funding. **Project proposals may be declared ineligible at any stage of the process.** When analyzing eligibility, the information entered online shall take precedence over the information in the project description, if these two sources of information are not consistent, including if they are incorrectly indicated or missing.

No changes to data will be possible and no documents will be accepted after the closure date and time of the call for proposals. Data is entered subject to the direct liability of the coordinators (French and German), who must plan ahead for submission and allocate the necessary time.

Common eligibility criteria

If a research organisation participates in several joint project proposals, each proposal must foresee different project coordinators.

Type 1 Research Collaborations

The consortium must be composed of at least one partner applying for ANR funding and at least one partner applying for German funding. Eligible are research institutes as the following:

- **On the French side:**
 - Public research organisations (as described in 1.3 ee of the Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation 2014/C 198/01).
- **On the German side:**
 - Universities,
 - Research institutes,
 - Consortia of the beforementioned.

Single teams, scientists or overarching research associations are not eligible.

Type 2 Research and Development Projects

The consortium must include **at least two** partners on each side applying for ANR and German funding (2+2 projects). These partners have to be one commercial enterprise and one higher education or research organisation on each side. Thus, each project proposal has to have four partners, two from each side and from each category (Research organisation and Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) or industrial partner, European definitions apply).

In order to facilitate the cooperation between partners of both countries, the participation of independent industrial partners in both countries is encouraged.

Specific eligibility criteria

The ANR verifies the eligibility of project proposals by taking into account both the criteria described above and in the document called "les modalités de participation pour les partenaires sollicitant une aide de l'ANR" and available on the web page dedicated to the present call.

The specific German funding criteria can be found in the German Call for Proposal published officially in the Federal Gazette (Bundesanzeiger) and linked on DLR-PT's website⁴.

EVALUATION

Each project proposal will be evaluated based on the information completed and submitted online, through the submission websites before the call for proposals closure deadline. No other information will be sought or requested from the applicants if any information is missing. For each funding line (projects type 1 and 2) a dedicated evaluation committee will evaluate the eligible project proposals. The evaluation committee will be composed of German, French and European recognized, independent, responsible AI experts nominated jointly by both countries. The evaluation criteria are as follows:

⁴ <https://www.softwaresysteme.pt-dlr.de/de/deutsch-franzoesische-kooperation.php>

Type 1 Research Collaborations

| Criteria | Description of the criteria |
|---|--|
| Partnership programme -- AI research strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic relevance of the project with regard to the consortium's long-term research goals and for the AI development in general • Sustainability of the partnership • Additional resources mobilized, complementary to the project funding (personnel, platforms, software, data, experimental facilities, research infrastructure, ...) • Complementary activities conducted to implement the bilateral partnership programme/AI research strategy (e.g. development of curricula for education at all levels) |
| Quality and efficiency of the implementation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of the partners and of the teams mobilised, especially scientific excellence & international acknowledgement in AI and in the proposed domain of cooperation • Prior scientific exchange or collaboration of the partners • Balanced cooperation in terms of resources and benefits • Appropriateness of the governance • Feasibility of the project in terms of resources |
| Excellence of innovation and R&D | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality/interest of the bilateral cooperation project • Degree of innovation of the proposed research • Quality of the work program, clarity and relevance of the objectives |
| Impact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance with respect to the national strategies and priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ AI methodological priorities ○ Application priorities (e.g. health, environment, sciences, mobility, Industry 4.0 ...) • Added value of the cooperation, anticipated impact for the partners and for the French-German cooperation • Effectiveness of the protection/exploitation of results and dissemination strategies • External science communication measures (targeting the general public) • Appropriateness of the management of ethical & data protection aspects, if any |

Type 2 Research and Development Project Proposals

| Criteria | Description of the criteria |
|---|--|
| R&D innovation, technical excellence and societal relevance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of innovation of the scientific and technical concept • Scientific and technical quality of the solution • Assessment of the social, economic and environmental opportunities and risks associated with scientific and technological innovations |
| Feasibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of the science and technology approach as well as work plan • Implementation concept with presentation of the R&D approach • Possibilities of economic and timely implementation within the timeframe and budget, implementation risks |
| Consortium | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project management and consortium structure • Qualification of the partners • Added value from bilateral cooperation |
| Exploitation and dissemination | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance of the proposed solution for scientific and industrial applications • Scientific and economic potential • Contribution of the project partners to the future • Quality and feasibility of the dissemination and exploitation plan |

SELECTION

The decision whether or not to select a project is made by the Steering Committee (composed of representatives of the MESRI & the BMBF) based on the list of project proposals suggested for funding, formulated by each evaluation committee.

FUNDING PROVISIONS

Each agency will cover expenditures for their respective country's research consortiums according to its own rules.

ANR's funding regulations are available at: <https://anr.fr/fr/rf/>

BMBF's funding regulations are available at: https://foerderportal.bund.de/easy/easy_index.php?auswahl=formularschrank_foerderportal&formularschrank=bmbf

German applicants that are selected for funding are required to submit additional application documents in German language (at least a German project description and application form) in line with the beforementioned funding regulations.

REPORTING AND MONITORING

Each coordinator will have to report to his/her respective funding agency according to specific national rules.

However, both national agencies encourage coordinators to work together in order to align the content of their formal mid-term and final reports.

In addition, a kick off and a final review meeting of all funded projects will be organized. The participation of each consortium is mandatory and a budget should be foreseen accordingly in the budget of the project.

TIMELINE

- Opening of the submission websites: 20 June 2022
- Closing: 22 September 2022 – 13:00 CET
- Joint decision and publication of results: December 2022
- Tentative project launch: 1 June 2023