

SPAIN (AEI) – KOREA (NRF)

GUIDE FOR THE CALL FOR JOINT PROJECT PROPOSALS

For the Year 2026

Deadline for Submission: 19 May

INDEX

1.	PREAMBLE.....	2
2.	MAIN AREAS OF COOPERATION	2
3.	MODE OF COOPERATION	3
4.	DURATION OF PROJECTS	3
5.	LEVEL OF FUNDING AND NUMBER OF SELECTED PROJECTS FOR FUNDING	3
6.	ELIGIBLE COSTS	4
7.	ELIGIBILITY	4
8.	SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS	6
9.	INSTRUCTIONS FOR WRITING PROJECT PROPOSALS.....	7
10.	PROPOSALS REVIEW	8
11.	GRANTS, PAYMENTS AND MONITORING	9
12.	MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS	9
12.	CONTACT INFORMATION	10

1. PREAMBLE

As a continuation the Memorandum of Understanding on Scientific and Technological Cooperation signed between the Agencia Estatal de Investigación (AEI), Kingdom of Spain, and the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF), Republic of Korea, both organisations have decided to launch a pilot call for research projects to strengthen bilateral cooperation in research and innovation.

The aim of the call is to intensify cooperation between Korean and Spanish participants in science and innovation through bilateral research projects. The funding is intended to lay the foundations for a lasting R&D partnership.

The joint research shall focus on the main area of cooperation detailed in Section 2 and concentrate on fundamental and/or applied research.

Qualifying applicants may receive research grants from AEI and NRF respectively, according to the applicable national funding procedures and regulations.

Note for Spanish applicants. This guide does not replace the official call for applications published by the AEI to provide funding for Spanish participants. The official text is the Convocatoria de Proyectos de Investigación Internacionales (Call for International Research Projects, INT), which can be found at: [link](#)

2. MAIN AREAS OF COOPERATION

Spanish and Korean research teams are invited to submit joint proposals in one of the following areas:

1.1 Artificial Intelligence for Biosciences (AI for Biosciences)

This area aims to promote cutting-edge interdisciplinary research at the interface between Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the biosciences. Proposals should integrate advanced computational methods with experimental or theoretical biological research in order to advance fundamental understanding of biological systems and/or enable innovative biotechnological applications.

Proposals are expected to demonstrate genuine integration between AI methodologies and biological research questions. Purely methodological AI projects without a clear bioscience application, or projects focused primarily on clinical research or direct medical interventions, fall outside the main scope of this area.

1.2 Nuclear Fusion

This area aims to foster bilateral collaboration in scientific and technological research contributing to the development of fusion as a safe, sustainable and long-term energy source.

Projects should address fundamental and/or applied research challenges relevant to magnetic confinement fusion, inertial confinement fusion, or enabling technologies for future fusion power plants.

Proposals should demonstrate scientific excellence and complementarity between the Spanish and Korean teams and ideally align with ongoing national or international fusion research initiatives.

3. MODE OF COOPERATION

This pilot joint call is intended to fund genuinely integrated collaborative research projects, rather than a mere aggregation of parallel activities carried out independently by each partner. Applicants must demonstrate the added value of bringing together research teams based in Spain and the Republic of Korea, explaining how the complementarity of expertise, infrastructures and approaches will significantly advance the proposed research beyond what could be achieved by each team individually.

Each partner is expected to make a substantial and clearly identifiable scientific contribution to the joint project. While the distribution of tasks does not need to be strictly symmetrical, the project must be coherently integrated, with work packages reasonably balanced between the partners and timelines closely coordinated to ensure effective collaboration and joint delivery of results.

Each joint research team may submit only one proposal within this program.

4. DURATION OF PROJECTS

Projects will have a duration of up to 3 years (36 months).

Research Starting date;

- Spain: 01. 10. 2026
- Korea: 01. 10. 2026

5. LEVEL OF FUNDING AND NUMBER OF SELECTED PROJECTS FOR FUNDING

In accordance with the principle of national funding, this Joint Call shall provide support for up to 5 projects

AEI (Spain).

Expected funding per Spanish participant.

--	DC (€)	IC (25% - €)	TOTAL (€)
One AEI applicant	140.000	35.000	175.000

Additional € 30.000 (direct costs) per Spanish group can be granted if the work plan includes substantial experimental tasks.

NRF (Korea).

NRF funds Korean research teams and funding will adhere to national laws as follow.

Maximum funding per project	Annual funding size (KRW)	Project Period	TOTAL (KRW)
One NRF applicant	100.000.000	3 years	300.000.000

6. ELIGIBLE COSTS

In Spain (AEI):

- The AEI will avoid double funding (overlapping with other EU or National funding) and will not grant projects or parts of projects already funded.
- Only Personnel costs for new temporary employment dedicated to the project are eligible. This must be clearly stated in the contract. The costs of permanent staff linked to the beneficiary entity or members of the research team will not be considered eligible costs.
- Direct costs (DC) such as current costs, disposable materials, travelling expenses, coordination costs and other costs that can be justified as necessary to carry out the proposed activities.
- Overheads / Indirect Costs (IC, 25% of all direct costs, including the subcontracting costs).

In the Republic of Korea:

Direct Costs:

- Personnel Costs
- Student Researcher Costs
- Research Facility and Equipment Costs
- Research Material Costs
- Research Activity Costs
- Research Incentives
- Subcontracted R&D project Costs

Indirect Costs

The R&D expenses should be spent properly in accordance with the intended use and usage standards according to the respective national laws and regulations. Indirect costs are calculated based on the announced ratio for each research institute, using direct costs as the basis.

7. ELIGIBILITY

The projects must be conducted by **collaborating Korean and Spanish scientific research teams**

The research in the projects proposals must be conducted in one of the main areas of cooperation under this Joint Call as detailed in Section 1.

Each joint research team must be led by a Principal Investigator (PI) from each country.

AEI (Spain). National eligibility criteria

- The eligible beneficiaries are non-profit research organizations (such as universities, public research institutions, technological centres and other private non-profit institutions performing RDI activities in Spain) which must comply with the requirements established by this transnational call and with the rules on eligibility defined in the corresponding Spanish national funding call “Proyectos de investigación internacionales” (INT).

- Spanish Principal Investigators (PIs) must:
 - To hold a doctoral degree. Alternatively, in the case of researchers affiliated with a Technological Centre or a Centre for Technological Innovation Support, Principal Investigators (PIs) may also be researchers who hold a university degree (Licentiate, Engineer, Architect or Graduate) and who can demonstrate at least 5 years of experience in R&D&I activities, or who have, alternatively, led Type B R&D&I projects funded under the Calls for Knowledge Generation Projects or equivalent programmes within the framework of the Spanish State Plans for Scientific, Technical and Innovation Research.
The same rules shall apply as those established in the Knowledge Generation call – PID2025.
 - Spanish PIs must have a contractual relation with the beneficiary covering the expected total length of the project.
 - AEI will fund projects with only a Spanish PI.

Incompatibilities. These must be taken into account when participating in different partnerships or other international initiatives. PIs will be declared ineligible if

- They submit, as PIs or as coordinators, more than one preproposal to this call,
- They have been funded in the one of the following previous calls:

Year call.	Identif.BDNS	Title	Institution
PID 2024	801943	Proyectos tipo I - «Proyectos de Generación de Conocimiento»	Agencia Estatal de Investigación
PCI 2025_1	816783	Proyectos de Colaboración Internacional PCI2025-1	Agencia Estatal de Investigación
PCI 2025_2	857347	Proyectos de Colaboración Internacional PCI2025-2	Agencia Estatal de Investigación
PCI 2026_1	XXXX	Proyectos de Colaboración Internacional PCI2026-1	Agencia Estatal de Investigación

- PIs must remain unchanged between the proposal to this transnational call and the corresponding PCI call should the proposal be recommended for funding.

It is very important to check the eligibility before sending the preproposal to avoid unwanted situations and damages to third parties

- The research team and the work team shall be subject to the similar eligibility conditions and participation requirements as those established in the PID2025 call for proposals. The call text may be consulted at <https://www.aei.gob.es/convocatorias/buscador-convocatorias/proyectos-generacion-conocimiento-actuaciones-formacion-0>

NRF (Korea). National eligibility criteria

- As per Article 2, Paragraph 3 of the National Research and Development Innovation Act, the institutions and organizations specified therein must be considered. However, researchers from enterprises are restricted from participating as the principal investigator and can only participate as participating researchers.
- As of the application deadline, only one person can apply and participate in this project for one project. Those who are restricted from participating under the provisions of the “Enforcement Decree of the National Research and Development Innovation Act” before the application deadline cannot apply.

※ For precise details, please refer to the Korean announcement.

8. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Project proposals must be prepared and conducted jointly by the Spanish and Korean project partners and submitted to AEI and to NRF within the project submission deadline.

Each project proposal must include the joint research part (as specified in Section 8), which must be identical for both project partners.

Announcement of the Joint Call: 17.04.2026

AEI and NRF will publish and open the submission system on 17.04.2026

Deadline for applications:

- in Spain Tuesday 19.05.2026 until 17:00 (CET Time)
- in the Republic of Korea Tuesday 19.05.2026 until 18:00 (KOR Time)

Proposals will not be accepted under any circumstances after the said date.

Further Submission Instructions for Korean Teams:

Korean applicants must submit their proposal through the Integrated R&D Information System (IRIS) and must comply with the relevant regulations. After submission, the proposal must be electronically approved by their institution before it can be finalized. It may not be possible to consider proposals received after the above time. The all the application process must be completed by 19.05.2026 at 18:00

Further Submission Instructions for Spanish Teams:

Spanish partners will make their joint online application via ... Pending

For both countries:

A valid project application includes a completed and application form, together with the scientific proposal and all required documents from each side of a joint research team as specified above.

The application must be submitted respectively to AEI in Spain and to NRF in the Republic of Korea. Proposals must be jointly prepared and submitted to AEI in Spain and to NRF in Korea following their application and procedure.

If the applications are not duly received both in Spain and in the Republic of Korea by the date indicated above and in accordance with the submission instructions, the proposal will be deemed ineligible in both countries.

9. INSTRUCTIONS FOR WRITING PROJECT PROPOSALS

The “Scientific and Technical Proposal” shall indicate the scientific and technical aspects of the project, as well as any additional information requested. The Scientific Proposal shall have a maximum length of **up to 25 pages**, including figures. This document should be submitted before the NRF and the AEI.

In addition to the Scientific and Technical Proposal, the Korean PI should submit the document demanded by the NRF and the Spanish PI should submit the document indicate in the Spanish call.

Document to submit before the AEI:

1. Application form. Applicants should use the application system available at websites of the AEI: <https://www.aei.gob.es/convocatorias/buscador-convocatorias?status=1>
2. The “Scientific and Technical Proposal” available also at the AEI web site.
3. CVs of the PIs according to the Spanish call

Document to submit before the NRF:

1. Application form. using the application form and tools available at websites of the NRF:
2. The “Scientific and Technical Proposal” available also at the NRF web site: <https://www.nrf.re.kr/>
3. Annexes are not included in **up to 25 pages**, but the following contents should be written:
 - Annex 1. Estimated expenditure/costs
 - Annex 2. Brief CVs of the most relevant Korean and Spanish project partners.
 - Annex 3. References. To be filed according to the DRF rules. A copy of this document should be also filed before the AEI.

In the Republic of Korea only (Additional data for IRIS system):

- Project Proposal (in Korean)
- Confirmation of eligibility (in Korean)
- Agreement to provide and use personal information and project information (in Korean)
- Pledge of compliance with research ethics (in Korean)
- Status of other projects

In Spain only. Applicant should follow the regulation of the call INT ([link](#))

10. PROPOSALS REVIEW

The project proposals will undergo two rounds of evaluation:

1. **National evaluation** carried out according to the national regulations by the national experts
2. **International selection based on overall results of the Korean and Spanish national evaluations**, performed by the **Spanish-Korean Joint Committee**; the final selection of the joint projects recommended for funding

The proposals will be evaluated based on the following general criteria:

AEI evaluation criteria.

Evaluation Criteria
1. Quality and feasibility of the proposal
1.1. <i>Quality of the proposal</i>
1.2. <i>Feasibility of the proposal</i>
2. Quality and track record of the project participants
3. Expected scientific, economic and social impact of the results
4. Adequacy of the requested budget

NRF evaluation criteria

Evaluation Criteria	Details
1. Researcher/Institution Capability	1.1. <i>Expertise of domestic and international research teams, research and development capabilities</i>
	1.2. <i>Appropriateness of the research team structure</i>
2. Research Plan	2.1. <i>Excellence and creativity of research goals and content</i>
	2.2. <i>Rationality and completeness of project implementation system and strategy</i>
3. International Collaboration	3.1. <i>Necessity of international research collaboration and the specificity of the plan</i>

	3.3. Potential for the development of complementary research collaboration networks between the two parties
4.Expected Impact	4.1. Appropriateness of expected outcomes and potential applications
	4.2. Feasibility of commercialization and technological, economic ripple effects

11. GRANTS, PAYMENTS AND MONITORING

1. Contracts:

Upon approval of a project proposal, AEI and NRF will grant their beneficiaries according to their national procedures and rules.

2. Payments:

Payments will be issued by AEI and NRF in accordance with the grant provisions and the regulations of each respective country. For the AEI, see “Resolución Definitiva” of the call.

3. Monitoring:

- a) In addition to the economic monitoring, Spanish beneficiary must submit an interim and a final scientific report on the official project management IT platform.
- b) Korea beneficiary institutions are required to submit an annual report and a final report (no more than 60 days after the end of the project) at the end of each year through IRIS in compliance with the relevant regulations.

12. MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

For both sides:

Korean and Spanish research teams and their institutions are strongly encouraged to establish an agreement on Intellectual Property rights for the project outcomes before starting collaborative activities.

For Korean Applicants:

All procedures and activities of the approved projects, including the eligibility of applicants, are governed by the “National Research and Development Innovation Act” and the “Enforcement Decree of the National Research and Development Innovation Act”. Applicants are required to familiarize themselves with these documents before an application under this Call.

All procedures are governed by the respective national regulations.

13. CONTACT INFORMATION

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