

**ANNOUNCEMENT on GERMAN – POLISH  
CALL FOR BILATERAL R&D COOPERATION  
IN THE FIELD OF DIGITIZATION OF THE ECONOMY  
2021 - 2023**

The German Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) and the Polish Ministry of Education and Science (MEiN) aim to pursue their innovation dialogue and agreed on a joint R&D Programme. Germany and Poland strongly support research and innovation as key driving forces for international competitiveness and prospering societies. Both countries consider efficient transfer mechanisms from excellent research to globally competitive products and services to be crucial for creating added value and employment in each country.

Germany and Poland combine excellence in research and specific strengths in transferring research results into innovation. In both countries successful and globally competitive small and medium sized companies form an important part of their economy.

Both Ministries share mutual interest to further strengthen their bilateral cooperation in research, development and innovation. They intend to enhance initiatives in the field of applied research and technology-transfer in order to further exploit synergies and complementarities between both countries in the "Research – start-up – SME" ecosystem. As underlying research area of the intended joint initiative, "Digitization of Economy" has been identified.

### **1. Funding purpose - form of Cooperation**

The goals of the collaboration are: a) to improve the competitiveness and extroversion of their respective research entities, b) to strengthen the links between research and industry and encourage the private sector to invest in R&D activities, c) to strengthen research capacities and specialisation, and d) to strengthen technology transfer from research into industry especially into Start-up companies and small and medium sized enterprises (SME).

The R&D Programme has the following specific objectives:

- To focus efforts and available resources on thematic research fields in the area of digitization of the economy, which are of major interest to both countries and important to society and the economy.
- To ensure research and development along the entire value chain.
- To promote the development of specialised scientific personnel, of R&D excellence and the development of products/services to be competitive worldwide.
- To develop new knowledge –including new technologies– or joint research resources in order to improve competitiveness and address significant social and environmental needs.
- To financially support joint projects seeking to achieve specific results which in turn are used to develop or improve products, processes, services or policies, with the active involvement of the Polish and German production sector.
- To strengthen the German-Polish research collaboration and to extend the established funding scheme to the aspect of applied research.

Major questions to be taken into consideration for preparing the project proposal:

- How can competences be further developed with the help of digitization, but also be expanded by means of digitization?
- What new forms of cooperation and cooperation in research and innovation enable digitization?
- What framework conditions should be provided to make the best use of the potential of digitization for the research and innovation location in Germany and Poland?
- How can competencies be further developed through digitization?
- How can available skills be used to develop digital technologies and applications?
- What additional competences are needed and under what conditions can they be trained and used?
- What new forms of innovation, innovation processes and co-operations enable digitization? How relevant are they for the competitiveness of Germany and Poland?
- How do the actors of the innovation system respond to this?
- Which actors and what factors are driving the development of innovations today and in the future? Is the spatial proximity and concentration of actors less important?
- What framework conditions should be put in place to make the most of the potential of digitization for Germany and Poland as a research and innovation location?
- Does the Internet lead to more competition or more monopolies?
- How can data security and interoperability be secured as an essential prerequisite for digital innovation?

Therefore, joint activities should focus on the following form of cooperation:

Implementation of joint R&D projects for the research organizations and enterprises of both countries, in science, technology development and transfer, aiming at improving the competitiveness and innovation potential of research entities and leading to innovative products/procedures of high added value or to push new technologies into traditional industries. Digitization of the economy as a key question to be used in the development of markets.

## **2. Potential applicants - Composition of consortia**

The Call is addressed both to private and public sectors of both countries. Bilateral cooperation shall comprise teams consisting of, at least, one research group from higher education institutions, research institutes/centres and one private enterprise (SME or Start-up) from each of the two countries. A simple clustering of only national projects is not eligible. Only applicants from Germany and Poland are eligible for funding. Partners (private enterprises and/or research institutes/universities) from other countries may also participate, but no funding is foreseen for their participation in the framework of this call for proposals.

The funding institutions anticipate that the transnational research collaborations covered by the scope of this cooperative research funding will deliver significant synergy effects within the framework of the research projects to be funded.

## **3. Priority Research Fields**

The present call should focus on the following specific area in the field of digitization of the economy which are of interest for both countries (indicative):

### **Digital GreenTech for Smart villages**

Rural regions must face the challenges of climate change and the efficient use of natural resources in the same way as more densely populated regions and cities. In smart villages, digital transformation is used to

find practical solutions to local problems and future tasks: Digital technologies and innovations can enhance citizens' quality of life while supporting better and more environmentally friendly use of resources. In particular, the development of digital environmental technologies, for example in water and wastewater supply, circular economy or sustainable land management, is an important driver here. Concepts for smart cities with their higher population density and urban infrastructures need to be adapted to village conditions where possible. In some cases, local conditions and the requirements of local stakeholders also call for new innovative solutions or an intelligent combination of existing approaches.

#### **Research topics:**

- Smart use of data  
Development of e-services with environmental benefit; New, interdisciplinary information, monitoring and data management systems for the development of rural areas with the aim of more sustainable soil, land and resource management
- Smart water supply  
Smart solutions for water supply and wastewater technologies in villages
- Sustainable urban planning  
Supporting urban planning with AI systems for recording, pattern recognition and tracking of structural changes and land-use changes in villages as well as for urban-rural relations
- Smart sensors  
Acquisition and processing of process data using innovative sensor technologies that measure environmental conditions relevant for farming and/or forestry (e.g. soil moisture, climatic conditions)

#### **4. Object of funding – Common requirements**

The main focus of the funding cooperation is on research and development (R&D) projects that:

- demonstrate an interdisciplinary and/or transdisciplinary approach;
- make a contribution to the improvement of research collaboration between the partner countries;
- focus on the entire value chain;
- correspond to the funding purpose described.

The projects submitted for funding under this call should have an obvious advantage and added value resulting from the mutual cooperation of the partners. Proposals must be clear in scope, demonstrate the contribution of the participants from both countries and stress out the benefit provided by the joint collaboration. Further more they must be balanced between participants and targeted to increase knowledge base, excellence, technology transfer and promote access to R&D infrastructures.

Precondition for eligibility is balance in financial contribution from both countries, Poland and Germany. The level of contribution to the overall project costs should not be less than 25% for each country.

Upper funding limit for the Polish and German research teams in the project is 300,000 Euro for each team.

The duration of the projects should not exceed three years.

**Only joint proposals accordingly submitted will be taken into consideration.**

## 5. Evaluation Procedure – Selection criteria

Both countries will carry out expert's evaluation of the jointly submitted R&D proposals according to the following common selection criteria:

- The quality of science, contribution in the competitiveness and innovation potential of the research project. Novelty, originality and coherence to the key themes, additionally a clear focus on solutions to problems.
- Expected sustainability effects (qualitative and, where possible, quantitative) with regard to the partnership.
- Technical, economic and scientific implementation potential of the anticipated research results. Opportunity/risk assessment covering long term implementation and usefulness. Actuality and priority of the task, contribution to a problem-solving and demand-orientated strategy, aimed target group.
- Expertise of project partners.
- Collaboration between scientific partners and enterprises. Justification of collaboration reasons among the partners and description of the expected benefits, as well as reference to the added value which will be created through this collaboration. Projects that do not prove the scope of this cooperation cannot be considered.
- Significance of the utilisation/business plan with respect to the application of the expected outcomes.
- Possible ways for the exploitation, protection (of IPR) and dissemination of the project results.

Successful proposals will be finally approved by the joint committee comprising of selected members from the funding institutions of both countries.

## 6. Financing - Type of funding and legal basis

Funding support will be given to each partner by its own funding institution (BMBF in Germany and NCBR in Poland) in accordance with the national laws, rules, regulations and procedures in effect. Proposals submitted by the Polish partners are funded depending on the category of research, the size of the enterprise and the type of collaborating organizations, in compliance with the EC regulations. Both countries have agreed to earmark a total budget for the call up to **3 Mio. Euro** (1.5 Mio. Euro from each country). The participation at the overall project costs should be about the same for each country. Both sides will make their decision after due assessment of the circumstances within the scope of the budget funds available. There is no legal entitlement to funding.

Additionally, German applicants are referred to the general project terms found at [https://www.bmbf.de/files/Klausel\\_deutsch.pdf](https://www.bmbf.de/files/Klausel_deutsch.pdf). The partners have to submit an annual report of the project progress according to the original approved proposal in English and an updated program for the coming year to their German agency.

## 7. Application procedure

Proposals should be submitted to both funding institutions within the said deadline in electronic form.

**The deadline for the submission of proposals is 30.04.2021.**

Potential applicants are advised to contact the national contact points before writing their proposals to carefully check the specific national application and funding conditions. The respective contact points are:

**In Germany:**

**For questions concerning the topics:**

- **Project Management Agency Karlsruhe**

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**For administrative questions:**

- **DLR Project Management Agency**

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53227 Bonn

**Christian Schache**, Dr. Michael Lange, Agnieszka Wuppermann

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**In Poland:**

- **The National Center for Research and Development (NCBR)**

47a Nowogrodzka Str.

00-695 Warsaw

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The proposals shall comprise a common project description (CPD) in English and further national formal and financial information.

For formal and financial national regulations please see the national calls and guidelines:

- for German applicants: <https://www.bmbf.de/foerderungen>
- for Polish applicants: <https://www.gov.pl/web/ncbr/platforma-konkursowa>

The common project description (CPD) should be prepared in Arial 11, single-spaced, maximum 10 pages and shall consist of following topics:

1. Name of the institution submitting the application, nomination of the coordinators (for Polish and

- German research team separately) and all names of participating organisations.
2. Objectives and task definition, based on the state of the art in terms of technology and knowledge. General description of the problem which shall be solved, description of the beneficiary and user of the project results.
  3. Description of the proposed solution.
  4. Formulation of the objectives to be achieved in each participating country.
  5. Description of the German and Polish partners from higher education institutions, research establishments and commercial companies who are involved in the project (key competencies, capabilities, infrastructure, etc).
  6. Overview of previous contacts in and collaborations with the partner country.
  7. Prospects for the success of the proposed measures and implementation concepts describing how the project outcomes can be utilised after the funding period (utilisation plan).
  8. Work plan and timeline, as well as details of work distribution and cooperation with third parties.
  9. Estimation and overview of time and cost scope (funding required and own resources).

Invited applicants will be asked to submit additional information (i.a. administrative proposals, business information, etc.), respectively to the requirements of each funding institution.

## **8. Communication of project evaluation decisions**

The outcome of the evaluation of the proposals will be communicated to applicants in accordance with the respective communication procedures of the funding institutions.

## **9. Decision process and the start of projects**

The approval of proposals is intended in October, 2021.

The formal funding decisions will be taken jointly by the funding institutions after the proposals have been evaluated by the external experts. When final decisions have been conveyed to project participants, successful applicants must enter into individual contractual agreements with their national funding institutions. **Each country will fund its own project partners.**

A consortium agreement must be concluded between the project partners and has to regulate, inter alia, duties and responsibilities, use of project results and intellectual property rights (IPR) issues. The consortium agreement and the above mentioned individual contractual agreements are prerequisites for the first payments made to the project partners from the national funding institutions. The involved funding institutions will monitor and supervise the funded projects (reporting).