



ITALY – SINGAPORE
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COOPERATION
CALL FOR JOINT RESEARCH PROPOSALS FOR THE YEARS 2027-2029

CLOSING DATE: 13 November 2026

In Italy: at 12:00 hr C.E.T. – In Singapore: at 23:59 SGT

BACKGROUND

*Within the framework of the Scientific and Technological Cooperation Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Italy and the Government of Singapore, signed in Rome, Italy on 23rd May 2016 and entered into force on 26th June 2020, the Directorate General for Growth and Export Promotion– Office XI of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI), and the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR) under the Singapore Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) are opening **a call for proposals for the Second Executive Programme of Scientific and Technological Cooperation for the years 2027 - 2029.***

Considering the strategic importance of bilateral collaboration between Italy and Singapore, the Italian Ministry of University and Research and the Italian Ministry of Health could finance some projects. In particular, the Italian Ministry of Health could finance projects presented by IRCCS institutions.

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 FUNDING SCHEMES

With regard to the present call, one funding scheme is available:

- ***“Joint Research Projects”***: the expenses for research activities are co-funded by both Parties. This funding scheme is aimed at supporting joint research activities between Italy and Singapore. Inclusion of early career scientists in the research team will be positively evaluated.

1.2 ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Project proposals must:

- be written in English;
- have the same duration of the Executive Programme (E.P.): 3 years, 2027-2029;
- be submitted under one of the priority research areas indicated below;
- be coherent with respect to the call requirements, both in scientific and financial aspects
- involve at least one Singapore-based public research performer and one Italy-based research performer

Each Principal Investigator (P.I.):

- may submit only one proposal, although PIs can be involved in other submitted projects as collaborators (i.e., Co-I, collaborator, etc.)

Italian Party:

- the call is open to public or private (no-profit) research institutions
- the PI must have Italian or any other EU nationality, legal residence in Italy, and must be affiliated with a public or private (no-profit) Italian research institution with a permanent position, or a temporary position

covering at least the first year of activity of the proposed project (the termination date of the contract shall be declared in the CV)

- The total amount requested to funding Ministry must be approximately the same for each of the three years (approximately 33% per year). If a project is selected for financial contribution, the original budget proposal will be valid throughout the duration of the EP. Minor adjustments are permitted upon approval.

Singapore Party:

- Eligibility criteria for Singapore-based PI are as below:
 - PI must be an independent researcher holding a primary appointment of at least 75% in a local publicly funded institution and salaried by the institution, namely the Institutes of Higher Learning (universities and polytechnics), A*STAR Research Institutes, as well as other non-defence-related public sector agencies (e.g., Ministries, Statutory Boards).
 - Any other criteria outlined in the RIE2030 Funding Policies
- Each eligible institute must follow the application quota below:
 - No more than 10 submitted applications each for NUS, NTU and A*STAR
 - No more than 2 submitted applications each for all other institutes, research/healthcare groups

1.3 REASONS FOR EXCLUSION

- Lack of any one of the eligibility requirements listed above;
- Incomplete application (including additional documents where applicable - see point 3 below);
- Proposals submitted in different priority research areas by the collaborating PIs in the two countries;
- Non-identical proposals submitted by 2 collaborating PIs;
- Proposals submitted in only one of the two countries;
- Applications written in languages other than English;
- Any other relevant reason for exclusion in line with RIE2030 Funding Policies for Singapore-based researchers.

2. PRIORITY RESEARCH AREAS

Submissions must fall within the scope of one of the core priority research areas outlined below:

- *Advanced Technologies (Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, Quantum Technology, Space Technologies)*
- *Health/Medical (Aging, Translational Medicine and Neuroscience)*

Proposals submitted in other research areas will not be considered for evaluation.

Not all the above-listed research areas may be funded – this will be contingent on the scientific quality of submitted proposals.

3. SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

Joint proposals must be submitted to both Parties. The proposals must be written in English and have the same duration of the E.P. (3 years: 2027-2029)

Italian Party:

- Proposals shall be submitted exclusively online, by filling in the dedicated forms at: <https://pgr.esteri.it>
- For any inquiry concerning the present call, please contact the following email address: dgce11.bandit2@esteri.it
- For projects involving experiments with animals, the status of ethics approval by the competent Ethics Committee must be provided when submitting the proposal. Please note that formal authorisation by the competent Ministry of Health is mandatory to start the activities (D.Lgs 26_04/03/2014 and Directive 2010/63 EU). Proof of submission to the institutional OPBA (Organismo Preposto al Benessere degli Animali) is acceptable at the proposal submission stage. Projects involving experiments with human beings must be

performed in accordance with the Directive 536/2014/EC. ***The Italian Principal Investigator should include a self-declaration of adhesion to the above cited rules in the Methods section of the proposal.***

- Italian applications must be accompanied by an endorsement letter, signed by the legal representative of the applying Institution, or by a delegate duly authorized by formal provision. The letter, which must be written in Italian using the template available for download at the same URL of the present call, should acknowledge the submission and provide official acceptance of all conditions listed in the call text, including the institutional co-funding listed in the provisional budget section of the proposal. Moreover, if the PI holds a temporary position, the endorsement letter must also certify that, should the contract be terminated before the end of the project, but not before the end of the first year, the Institution will replace the PI with another member of the research team, thus ensuring that research activities are carried out without any interruption. The endorsement letter must be uploaded to the webpage available at the link: <https://pgr.esteri.it> Additional information, such as the strategic significance of the bilateral cooperation, may also be included.

Singapore Party:

- The grant call announcement will be posted on the A*STAR Website at the following link: <https://www.a-star.edu.sg/Research/funding-opportunities>.
- Interested applicants can download the application form and proposal template from the website.
- All applications must be submitted to A*STAR (as the Implementing Agency) electronically via the Integrated Grants Management System (iGrants).
- Proposals must be submitted with the appropriate endorsement by the respective Host Institution (by the Chief Executive Director, Executive Director, the Director of Research or equivalent) to ensure that organizational support is clearly associated with the proposed research plan.

4. EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS AND SELECTION AT NATIONAL AND BILATERAL LEVEL

4.1 Evaluation process

After the call closure, all submitted proposals will undergo a formal eligibility check before being reviewed based on their strategic objectives and potential for scientific and technological cooperation between the parties. Afterwards, the evaluation process of the proposals which have passed the previous two steps will be performed at the national level to identify a shortlist of the top-ranking proposals. Subsequently, at the bilateral level, the two Parties will reach a consensus on the final list of projects for endorsement during the meeting of the Joint Committee, which includes representatives from both countries. The selected projects will be included in the text of the Executive Programme that will be signed by both Parties and posted on their websites indicated below.

Project proposals will be rated according to the following criteria:

- Scientific relevance of the proposed research
- Methodology and documentation
- Competence and skill of the research teams
- Added value of the bilateral cooperation
- Involvement of early career scientists
- Exploitation and dissemination of the results
- Budget adequacy
- Significant advancement of the Technology Readiness Level (TRL), including possible future applications

Preference will be awarded to:

- Proposals involving more than one national public/private research organisation from Italy or Singapore
- Initiatives carrying potential industrial impact and/or involving industrial partners (a letter stating the Expression of Interest of the company can be included in this latter case)

4.2 Outcome of the evaluation

Italian Party The official text of the Executive Programme, including the list of selected projects, will be published on the MAECI website at the following link:

https://www.esteri.it/it/temi/diplomazia_scientifica/programmiesecutivi/accordi_programmi_culturali_tecnologici/

Only the PIs of the selected projects will be directly informed by e-mail of the positive outcome of their submission.

Singapore Party Grant recipients will be notified of the selection outcome via email.

Both parties commit not to release information on the selected/excluded projects (including the outcomes of the formal eligibility check) until the process has ended with the signature of the Executive Programme.

5. FUNDING PROCEDURES

Funding will be granted to the projects listed in the Executive Programme within the limits of the available annual resources of each Party.

Italian Party:

The average cost of a project is approximately 100 K€/year, including co-funding by the applying institution.

The contribution granted by funding Ministry to “Joint Research Projects” is intended as co-funding support for the project, and therefore co-funding by the coordinating Italian Institution of approximately 50% of the total costs of the project is mandatory. Co-funding can include salaries of the involved personnel and overhead costs. Any additional financial contribution from public or private, Italian or Singaporean Institutions, will be positively evaluated.

The contribution granted by funding Ministry will be based on the 3-year original budget proposal.

- A **first** instalment, amounting to 100% of the first year MAECI co-funding (and approximately to 33% of the total funding Ministry co-funding) will be provided in advance, upon presentation of a letter certifying the beginning of project activities. Any unspent funds must either be refunded to the Italian funding Ministry or may be retained by the recipient, in which case they will be deducted from the total contribution.
- The expenses for the **second year** (approximately amounting to 33% of the total funding Ministry co-funding) will be anticipated by the coordinating institution and reimbursed by funding Ministry during the third year, upon submission and positive evaluation of scientific reports and financial reporting documents.
- Similarly, the expenses for the **third year** (approximately amounting to 33% of the total funding Ministry co-funding) will be anticipated by the coordinating institution and reimbursed by funding Ministry after the end of the project, upon submission and positive evaluation of scientific reports and financial reporting documents.

Funding procedures timeline

First year Beginning of the project – 31st December	Second year 1st January – 31st December	Third and last year 1st January – 31st December	The year after the end of the project
100% of the first year MAECI co-funding in advance	Second year expenses anticipated by the coordinating institution Check of expenses incurred during the first year	Third year expenses anticipated by the coordinating institution Refund of expenses incurred between 1st January and 31st December of the second year	Refund of expenses incurred between 1st January and 31st December of the third and last year

Budget example

	MAECI co-funding	Percentage
First year	50.000	33,33 %
Second year	50.000	33,33%
Third year	50.000	33,33%
TOTAL	150.000	100 %

	MAECI co-funding	Percentage
First year	55.000	36,66 %
Second year	45.000	30%
Third year	50.000	33,33%
TOTAL	150.000	100 %

Singapore Party:

Eligible projects from Singapore-based applicants can be supported, each with a budget of up to S\$450,000 (inclusive of 30% overhead cost), for a total project duration of 36 months.

Funding provided within this call is intended to enhance the capacity of Singapore-based applicants to collaborate with their Italian counterparts. Support includes local research costs as well as expenses for travel and/or conducting seminars/symposia.

Grant funds may only be utilized on eligible expenditure incurred on the agreed project as defined in the grant arrangement. Eligible expenditure must be incurred in support of eligible activities, which are defined as being directly related to the project and may include but are not limited to:

- employment of research personnel for the grant project
- proof of concept activities (including field trials)
- other direct research costs
- exchanges and secondments of personnel between Singapore and Italy for project activities
- apparatus and small equipment required for the research project
- research project–related communication initiatives indicated in the methodology for the Research
- conferences, workshops, symposia related to the research.

This list is not exhaustive. Grantor may update the guidance on eligible expenditure and activities from time to time.

For guidance on ineligible expenditure, please refer to Appendix A.

6. REPORTING REQUIREMENT

All funded projects shall be subject to scientific and financial reporting in accordance with the procedures of the respective Parties.

Annual Progress report to A*STAR

Grant recipients will be required to submit an annual progress report to A*STAR via the iGrants platform. In addition, each awarded project will be evaluated and assessed at the mid-term and end-term of the project for progress to ensure that proposed milestones and deliverables can be achieved.

Final report to A*STAR

Singapore-based applicants are required to submit a final report on the results of the joint research within three (3) months following the end of the project term.

Additionally, the Institutions are required to submit a Final Claims / Final Statement of Account within six (6) months from the end of the project term.

Annual Progress report to MAECI

A progress report is requested at the end of each year of project activities.

Final report to MAECI

A final report together with the financial documents must be submitted by Italian PIs within three months following the end of the project term. The final report must include a final assessment of the project, in order to evaluate the scientific results achieved, the effectiveness of the bilateral collaboration, the involvement of early-career researchers, and, where applicable, the contribution to technological advancement and/or innovation pathways.

In addition to the regular reporting requirements, upon request, the Parties may conduct a mid-term performance review, normally during the second year of project implementation, to assess progress against objectives, quality of bilateral cooperation, capacity-building results, and, where relevant, prospects for application, dissemination and technology transfer.

The outcome of these reviews may be taken into account by the Parties for the continuation of funding, the final settlement of administrative procedures, and future bilateral programming activities.

7. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

- Each Party will ensure appropriate protection of intellectual property rights (IPR) generated from cooperation pursuant to the Executive Programme signed by the two Parties, consistent with their respective laws, rules and regulations.
- In case of research results obtained through joint activities, the grant of IPR will be sought by both Parties jointly and once granted these rights will be jointly owned by the Parties. However, the apportionment of such rights may be decided mutually by Parties through a separate written agreement which should also include commercialisation rights.
- The Parties shall not assign any rights and obligations arising out of the IPR generated from inventions/activities carried out under the signed Executive Programme to any third party without the prior written consent of the other Party.

8. THIRD PARTIES

The participation of researchers from third countries to the research activities at any stage of the project is subject to prior written approval of the funding agencies of both parties.

9. CONTACT INFORMATION

For additional information on the present call, applicants can refer to the following contacts:

In Italy

Office XI - Directorate General for *Growth and Export Promotion*
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI)
E-mail: dgce11.band2@esteri.it

In Singapore

Office of Grants Administration
Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR)
E-mail: oga_bilats@a-star.edu.sg

Appendix A – Ineligible Expenditure for Singapore Applicants

This section provides guidance on what is considered ineligible expenditure.

Examples of ineligible expenditure are listed in the table below. This list is not exhaustive and applies only to the expenditure of the grant funds. Other costs may be deemed ineligible if they are determined not to directly support the achievement of the project's planned outcomes or are inconsistent with the objectives of the programme. This list may also be updated from time to time.

It is the PI's responsibility to ensure that there are adequate funds to meet the costs of any ineligible expenditure associated with the project.

Type of Expense	Description
Salaries of Programme Director/ Lead Principal Investigators/ Project Leads and Investigators	Not eligible. Rationale: Salaries for Programme Director/ Lead Principal Investigators/ Project Leads and Investigators are typically funded by their employing institutions or from the institutional budget or capitation grants. Charging these salaries to grants would result in Double-dipping. Exception: Salaries may be allowed only if the payment of such salaries (a) is justified based on the criticality of the Investigator's involvement, which cannot be covered by institutional resources, and (b) is approved by the Grantor in writing.
Salaries of teaching staff and teaching substitutes	Not eligible. Rationale: Teaching duties are part of the institution's normal operations and are funded through institutional budgets or capitation grants.
Undergraduate tuition support	Not eligible. Rationale: Tuition fees are educational expenses, not costs that directly contribute to the RIE Programme / RIE Project's deliverables or outcomes.
Salaries of general administrative staff	Not eligible. Rationale: General administrative staff (e.g. human resource, finance, procurement, research support office etc) provide institutional support services and their salaries are part of the institution's operating expenses, which are typically funded through indirect costs or the institutional budget.

	Exception: Such expenses may be charged as direct costs only for RIE Programme where the administrative staff is not part of the Host Institution's or Partner Institution's central administrative function and is not supported through indirect cost funding. The role must perform a distinct function essential to the execution of the RIE Programme. Such expenses must be explicitly approved by the Grantor in the Letter of Award. To avoid any double-funding, administrative expenses approved as direct costs under this exception shall not be claimed under indirect costs, nor shall they attach any indirect cost recovery.
Costs related to general administration and management	Not eligible. Rationale: These costs cover broad institutional functions such as human resource, procurement, and governance, which are not specific to the RIE Programme / RIE Project. Such costs are part of the institution's operating expenses, typically funded through indirect costs or other internal budgets. Such costs include common office equipment, such as furniture and fittings, office software⁴, photocopiers, scanners and office supplies. Exception: Such expenses are allowed only if the Grantor has provided approval in writing for such indirect costs to be fully funded.
Costs of office or laboratory space	Not eligible. Rationale: This is an indirect cost that should be funded from the provided indirect costs or from other funding sources. Such costs include renovation/outfitting costs, rent, depreciation of buildings and equipment, and related expenditures such as water, electricity, general waste disposal and building/facilities maintenance charges. Exception: Such expenses are allowed only if the Grantor has provided approval in writing for such indirect costs to be fully funded.
Personal productivity tools & communication expenses	Not eligible. Rationale: Such expenses are indirect costs because they do not directly contribute to the RIE Programme's / RIE Project's objectives or deliverables. Exception: Such expenses, e.g. collaboration software, video-conferencing equipment, and similar devices or services, may be funded under direct costs only if the utilisation directly supports the RIE Programme / RIE

	Project and the Grantor has provided approval in writing for such costs to be funded.
Costs of Entertainment	Not eligible. Rationale: Such expenses (e.g. meals, social events) are discretionary and do not advance the objectives of the RIE Programme / RIE Project.
Costs of Refreshments	Not eligible. Rationale: Such expenses (e.g. snacks, meals) are hospitality or welfare expenses, and do not directly contribute to the RIE Programme's / RIE Project's deliverables. Exception: Refreshments may be allowed only if they are directly linked to a RIE Programme / RIE Project-related event (e.g. a hosted conference or workshop), are not coverable by other indirect costs or sources of funding and are approved by the Grantor in writing.
Audit fees (Internal and external audit) and Legal fees	Not eligible. Rationale: This is an indirect cost that should be funded from the provided indirect costs or from other funding sources.
Costs for staff retreats and team-building activities	Not eligible. Rationale: These are discretionary employee welfare and organisational development expenses and should be supported through institutional resources, indirect costs, or other non-grant funding sources.
Professional Membership Fees	Not eligible. Explanation: Such costs are institutional or personal development expenses and are not directly tied to the RIE Programme's or RIE Project's objectives or deliverables. Such costs may be covered by the institution's overheads. Rationale: Such expenses may be allowed only if they are incurred in relation to participation in a research-related conference or workshop and are approved by the Grantor in writing.
Fines and Penalties	Not eligible.

	Rationale: These costs arise from negligence and non-compliance by the institution or individual, not from the RIE Programme / RIE Project activities. Such costs should be borne by the party responsible for the infraction.
Costs of Patent Application	Not eligible. Rationale: Intellectual Property management, including patent filing, maintenance and other related costs are generally supported through indirect costs or institutional core funding provided to the Innovation and Enterprise Office (IEO). As Intellectual Property management is an institutional function, such costs should not be charged directly to the RIE Programme / RIE Project.