

## EU-China Flagship Initiative on Biotechnologies for Environment and Human Health

### Topic CE-BIOTEC-04-2018 New Biotechnologies for Environmental Remediation

#### Frequently Asked Questions for the Horizon 2020 proposals

Question: What is this EU-China Flagship Initiative?

Answer:

This flagship initiative is a common understanding between the EC, implementing Horizon 2020 (H2020) calls under its rules, and the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC), implementing calls under its rules, to cooperate in specific areas of common research and innovation interest. The EC and NSFC have earmarked funding budgets to finance projects under the initiative. The following three topics in the H2020 work programme are part of the initiative: CE-BIOTEC-04-2018: New biotechnologies for environmental remediation, CE-BIOTEC-05-2019: Microorganism communities for plastics biodegradation and a topic in 2020 on Custom-made biological scaffolds for specific tissue regeneration and repair.

The total H2020 funding envisaged is 10 million euros in 2018, 10 million euros in 2019 and 15 million euros in 2020. The total NSFC funding envisaged is 30 million RMB (equivalent to about 4.2 million euros) in 2018, 30 million RMB in 2019 and 45 million RMB in 2020. Based on the available budget, it is envisaged that two projects can be funded in 2018, two in 2019 and three in 2020.

Question: Are these FAQ also valid for the calls in 2019 and 2020?

Answer:

These FAQ are relevant for the 2018 call. For the 2019 and 2020 calls, the conditions of the call may be reviewed in the light of the experience of the 2018 call. Updated FAQ will be published for the 2019 and 2020 call when those calls will open.

Question: How will the collaboration between H2020 and NSFC work?

Answer:

It is envisaged that projects under the flagship initiative have partners from Europe and from China. Each project is expected to operate as one common project with a single work plan. Within these projects, H2020 beneficiaries will obtain their funding through standard H2020 procedures and NSFC beneficiaries will obtain their funding through standard NSFC procedures. For the purpose of obtaining funding, it is necessary that the project proposals need to be submitted both to H2020 and NSFC separately. Successful projects will be funded by a H2020 grant and 3 smaller NSFC grants, all with the same start date and duration. The recommended duration is about 4 years in order to facilitate a harmonised approach for the flagship initiative. In order to facilitate collaboration of EU and Chinese partners, NSFC hosted a workshop with around 40 representatives of the research communities in the EU and in China in Beijing on 26 October 2017 launching the collaboration (more information is provided on the H2020 participant portal).

In order to reach a balanced research and innovation cooperation, it is envisaged that the H2020 funding per project will be in the order of up to 5 million euros and the NSFC funding in the order of 15 million RMB (about 2.1 million euros). In terms of total resources made available the H2020 and NSFC funded parts are similar because the NSFC funding does not cover the salaries in public research institutes. Successful proposals will receive H2020 funding for the partners eligible for funding under H2020 rules. These can be partners from EU member-states, H2020 associated countries and 3<sup>rd</sup> countries eligible for H2020 funding as specified in the General Annex A to the work programme.

Question: What should be included in the H2020 proposal?

Answer:

The H2020 proposals should be prepared and submitted through the H2020 Participant Portal using the standard H2020 forms and templates. The H2020 proposal template and H2020 model grant agreement allow for the inclusion of "international partners". These are partners cooperating with H2020 beneficiaries at an equal level, but who are not eligible for H2020 funding and are not beneficiaries in the H2020 Grant Agreement. They have no direct obligations under the grant agreement but they must be partner of one of more beneficiaries who must ensure that they comply with certain key (non-financial) obligations. The NSFC funded partners are international partners that need to be described in section 3.3 of the proposal "consortium as a whole" and in a dedicated section 4.2 "international partners". These sections should also briefly address the NSFC requested funding and in which of the 3 NSFC grant applications each international partner is participating. The activities of the international partners need to be described in the proposal at the same level of detail as the activities of the H2020 beneficiaries. More specifically these activities need to be described in the work plan and the work package descriptions. The lists of milestones and deliverables need also to include those related to the international partners. The H2020 proposal should have a H2020 beneficiary as project coordinator. The organisational structure to be described in section 3.2 should also include the international partners. In order to facilitate smooth collaboration between European and Chinese partners, it is recommended that one of the Chinese partners acts as interlocutor representing the Chinese partners.

Question: How are the proposals evaluated?

Answer:

The evaluation of H2020 proposals will be performed following H2020 standard rules as published in the H2020 Work Programme 2018-2020. Standard evaluation criteria will fully apply. The planned activities under NSFC funding, as presented in the H2020 proposal, are equally subject to evaluation because they are an integral part of the eventual H2020 grant agreement.

The NSFC proposals will be subject to evaluation under NSFC rules and conditions, with a special focus on the synergy and complementarity of the H2020 and NSFC proposed activities.

Question: What happens after the evaluation?

Answer:

Successful proposals will be funded under H2020 standard rules. The H2020 Grant Agreement will be based on the proposal presented to the H2020 evaluation. The international partners will be mentioned in the H2020 Grant Agreement (see article 14a of the Model Grant Agreement) and registered in the H2020 organisations database, but without the need for a full H2020 beneficiary validation. The H2020 Grant Agreement foresees that international partners carry out activities under the responsibility of the H2020 beneficiaries and therefore international partners must comply with the applicable obligations under the H2020 Grant Agreement. The international partners will be funded by NSFC under their conditions.

Beneficiaries of the H2020 grants do not sign the NSFC grant agreements and the beneficiaries of the NSFC grants (international partners) do not sign the H2020 grant agreement. However, both H2020 and NSFC require the presence of an agreement signed by all partners to be in place before the signature of the related grants in order to ensure that applicable H2020 and NSFC obligations are extended to all partners. For H2020 a Consortium Agreement is required and for NSFC an International Cooperation Agreement is required. These agreements must be compliant to the H2020 and NSFC Grant Agreements.

It is recommended that all projects start on 1 January 2019 following the closure of the 2018 calls under which the projects have been selected.

The H2020 grants will be implemented and monitored in accordance with H2020 rules and standard NSFC practises will be applied regarding the NSFC grants.

Projects are also invited to take part in networking activities under the flagship initiative.

Question: What are the H2020 obligations extended to international partners?

Answer:

International partners are not H2020 beneficiaries and do not receive EU funding, but the H2020 beneficiaries must ensure that their international partners comply with certain key (non-financial) obligations:

- The Commission has the right to make an evaluation of the impact of the action (see Article 23);
- Record-keeping obligations (on the scientific and technical implementation; see Article 18.1.1);
- Technical reporting (in the required language; see Article 20.3(a), 20.4(a) and 20.7);
- Avoiding conflicts of interest (see Article 35);
- Maintaining confidentiality (see Article 36);
- Promoting the action and give visibility to the EU funding (see Article 38).
- The Commission, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) have the right to verify the proper implementation of the action tasks (see Article 22).

It is the H2020 beneficiaries' responsibility to ensure that these obligations are accepted by the international partners.

Please be aware that in case of non-fulfilment of the international partners' activities included in the H2020 Grant Agreement, even if these activities are not financed under this Grant Agreement, the Commission may amend or terminate the H2020 Grant Agreement.