

SHENG 4: Polish-Chinese Funding Initiative

Call for proposals 2024-2025

1. Introduction

In order to strengthen international academic cooperation, along with wishing to fund high quality scientific research within their own countries, and conscious that some of the best research can be delivered by working with the best researchers internationally, the National Science Centre (NCN) and the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) are launching **the fourth call for proposals** within the joint funding initiative SHENG. The initiative was started in 2018 in order to provide funding for integrated Polish-Chinese research projects of outstanding scientific quality. SHENG 4 is a continuation of that successful funding initiative. The partner agencies will conduct parallel peer review and selection processes. Funding will be distributed according to the funding rules of each individual agency. Funding within this initiative will be available for collaborative research projects involving researchers from both partner countries. Projects must have well-defined joint working programmes, clearly demonstrating the added value of international collaboration. It is expected that each partner contributes substantially to the common project; this includes taking organisational responsibilities. The division of responsibilities should also be reflected in the amount of funds requested by each partner.

Only proposals involving [basic research](#)¹ (knowledge-oriented research) may be submitted.

2. Disciplines covered

Researchers are invited to submit SHENG 4 proposals in selected fields of the Natural Sciences (Chemical Sciences, Engineering and Materials Sciences), all fields of Life Sciences, as well as Psychology:

- NSFC: proposals are accepted in NSFC departments: **Chemical Sciences, Engineering, Materials Sciences, Life Sciences and Medicine Sciences**;
- NCN: proposals are accepted in subjects covered by the panels: **NZ1, NZ2, NZ3, NZ4, NZ5, NZ6, NZ7, NZ8, NZ9, ST4, ST5, ST8, ST11 and HS6** (HS6_01-HS6_08, HS6_14 – HS6_15).

¹Basic research is defined as experimental or theoretical work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge of the underlying foundations of phenomena and observable facts, without any particular commercial application or use in view.

Applicants who are uncertain of whether their proposal would be eligible should contact the relevant agency for clarification.

3. Eligibility

- All research projects must comprise researchers from the two participating countries and must focus on **substantive research and feature an integrated work programme**. Scientific infrastructure or networking activities can only be funded within projects with a substantive research focus (not as stand-alone projects).
- **Joint proposals, including all budget items must conform to the national rules** relevant for each applicant. Applicants must note that NCN and NSFC retain the right to reject proposals which fail to comply with the procedures set out in the respective guidelines. If a proposal is deemed ineligible by one national agency, the complete project will be rejected by both agencies. **No changes will be accepted after the deadline for submission.**
- If a proposal **has been submitted to any other call** or funding line of NCN, NSFC or any other funding agency, this must be clearly stated in the proposal. Please also check the respective national agency's rules regarding submission of a project to more than one scheme.
- For **Polish applicants**: grants that are considered state aid will be awarded.
- For **Chinese applicants**: If the Chinese applicant has a running international collaboration research project from NSFC (including SHENG 1, SHENG 2 and SHENG 3) or is applying an international collaboration research project from NSFC, it is not allowed to apply for this NSFC-NCN research programme.
- For **Polish applicants**: Research teams that are carrying or have carried out a research project in the previous SHENG calls can apply for funding within SHENG 4.
- A Principal Investigator (PI) may submit only one proposal under the SHENG 4 call.
- Joint proposals must be **written in English** (except for sections/documents specified explicitly in the call documentation)² using the Joint Project Description (JPD) template and the CV template and the publication list. The Chinese applicant has to prepare an additional Chinese version of the proposal to be submitted to NSFC, with the English version of the proposal attached.
- Joint Polish-Chinese research projects should be **36 months** in duration.

² As for language requirements, please also check the respective national agency's rules regarding submission to the OSF and the NSFC electronic submission system concerning the SHENG 4 call.

Research projects on the Polish side must start not earlier than in the mid of January 2026. Projects implemented by the entities applying for the state aid at the Polish side must start between 01/03/2026 and 30/06/2026. On the Chinese side, the projects must start on 1 January 2026. It is recommended that the projects on Polish and Chinese sides are synchronized.

4. Applicants

Each joint research project must consist of one Polish and one Chinese research team. Each team must be led by one Principal Investigator (PI) and hosted by an eligible Host Institution in Poland and in China. The Polish PI must hold at least a PhD degree when submitting a proposal. Eligible Host Institutions in Poland: entities referred to in Article 27 (1) of the NCN Act. For the eligibility criteria to be fulfilled by the Chinese PI and the Chinese host institution, please refer to NSFC rules: <https://www.nsf.gov.cn/publish/portal0/tab1356/>

5. Budget and eligible costs

General requirements

- All costs must be eligible according to the national eligibility requirements.
- At NCN, only costs for the Polish share of projects are eligible according to the regulations of NCN.
- At NSFC, only costs for the Chinese share of the projects are eligible according to the regulations of NSFC. The EUR budgets of the Polish and Chinese teams, together with the justification of all costs requested, shall be included in the Joint Project Description (for this purpose Polish applicants shall fill out sections: IV.1 and IV.3 of the JPD and the Chinese applicants: IV.2 and IV.4).

Country specific requirements

Poland

- There is no maximum limit for the Polish part of the project. However, the project budget must be justified as regards the subject and scope of research, based on reasonable calculations and must specify the expenditures to be covered by the NCN (eligible costs).
- Please note that since the Polish part of the project budget cannot be negotiated at any point after the submission of the proposal, an excessive and unjustified budget may lead to the proposal's rejection.
Polish research teams must provide the budget in PLN together with a detailed justification via the OSF system and in EUR in the JPD (calculated based on the EUR exchange rate as in the NCN Research Council Resolution no. 115/2024 14 of November 2024 (namely: 1 EUR = 4,3365 PLN). The PLN costs in the OSF system and EUR costs in the JPD must be rounded down to total values.
- Expenses and the EUR costs of the project implemented by the Polish applicants provided in the JPD must equal the budget provided in the breakdown of project's costs in the OSF system. Severe discrepancies between the EUR budgets in the JPD and PLN budgets in OSF system will lead to the proposal's rejection.

- It is recommended that the budget for the Polish research team is planned in OSF system (in PLN) and in the Joint Project Description – JPD (in EUR) simultaneously. The merit-based evaluation will be carried out on the basis of the JPD and will cover *inter alia* evaluation of justification of the costs planned for the Polish part of the research project as regards the subject and scope of research, hence **justification of the costs planned for the Polish research team in the JPD must be comprehensive, detailed and consistent with justification of the costs in OSF system**. It is not enough to only provide the justifications in the budget completed in the OSF system. Justification of the costs planned for the Polish research team in a NCN proposal may be copied and pasted from the proposal in the OSF system to section IV.1. of the JPD.
- No information relating to the budget planned for the Chinese team shall be provided in the OSF system.
- For detailed information for Polish applicants please see “Information for Applicants”.

China

- Chinese applicants must provide the budget in RMB together with a detailed justification in the Chinese version of proposal via the NSFC system and in euro in the JPD.
- The budget of the Chinese part of the project must not exceed 1,500,000 RMB.

6. Submission of proposals

The joint proposals (consisting of the Joint Project Descriptions and the CVs together with publication lists) must be submitted **online** to **both agencies’ respective submission systems**, together with all necessary documents conforming to the formal requirements of the respective funding organisation set out in the call documentation. Joint proposals submitted at NCN and NSFC must be identical; a project will be rejected if the joint proposals submitted to the two agencies differ.

For Polish applicants:

- Polish applicants are requested to submit complete joint proposals online to the OSF submission system which can be found at <https://osf.opi.org.pl>. Information required in the proposal and the attachments to the application are set out in Resolution No. 115/2024 of the Council of the NCN of 14 November 2024 and in the call’s announcement.
- Data included in the OSF system should be consistent with information included in the joint proposal (prepared in accordance with the templates provided in the call’s announcement).
- For more information please consult: <https://www.ncn.gov.pl/en/wspolpraca-zagraniczna/wspolpraca-wielostronna/konkurs-sheng4>
- **The deadline for online submission to the OSF system is 17 March 2025, 16:00 (CET).**

For Chinese applicants:

- Chinese applicants are requested to submit complete joint proposals online to the NSFC submission system which can be found at <https://grants.nsf.gov.cn/pmpweb/login>
- Chinese applicants are kindly requested to conform to all the requirements listed in the Chinese call for proposals that is published on the NSFC website.
- Chinese applicants are requested to prepare Chinese version of the proposal and submit it to NSFC submission system. Data included in the Chinese version of the proposal must be consistent with data included in the joint proposal (prepared in accordance with the templates provided in the call documentation).
- The Chinese applicant is also required to submit English versions of the proposal and a copy of the collaboration agreement (Joint Research Agreement) between the Chinese PI and the Polish PI.
- **The deadline for online submission to the NSFC submission system is 17 March 2025, 16:00 (CST).**

Proposals received after the deadline will not be eligible.

7. Evaluation procedure

- 1) All proposals will be reviewed by both organisations separately. Support will be granted to those proposals where both NCN and NSFC recommend funding.
- 2) The applicants' and projects' eligibility will be checked by both NCN and NSFC for the Polish and Chinese sides, respectively. The merit-based evaluation is open only to proposals approved as eligible by both agencies.
- 3) At NCN, each eligible proposal will be evaluated at the first stage by expert panels and at a second stage as well as by at least two external referees. The panels will consist of recognised researchers from relevant disciplines who are familiar with the NCN decision-making procedures.
- 4) At NSFC, each eligible proposal will be evaluated by at least 5 external referees at the first stage and an expert panel at the second stage.
- 5) Funding will be granted to those proposals where both NCN and NSFC recommend funding.
- 6) For the details of the NCN evaluation procedure, please refer to NCN rules. For more information on NSFC's rule on application, please refer to NSFC's call text, which will be published at <https://www.nsf.gov.cn/publish/portal0/tab1356/>

8. Criteria

The merit-based evaluation of the proposals submitted to SHENG 4 call will be carried out in line with the NCN's and NSFC's evaluation criteria. All project proposals will be assessed against three sets of criteria: 1) academic merits of the research project; 2) qualification of the research team members; and 3) feasibility of the project.

1) Academic merits of the research project

- Innovative nature of the project

- Impact of the research project on advances in the academic discipline and international cooperation
- Scientific level of the objectives and work programme
- Integrated approach of the project
- Project management, including risk management
- Added value of bilateral cooperation

2) Qualification of the Research Team members

- Research portfolio of the research team members
- Relevant preliminary work
- Previous international cooperation

3) Feasibility of the project (budget, research facilities and infrastructure)

- Feasibility of the project
- Appropriateness of project's budget

9. Notification of results

Applicants will be informed of the results of the review and, where applicable, of the following administrative steps according to the national regulations, respectively. The selection of the projects will be completed by the end of November 2025.

10. Tentative Timeline

16 December 2024	Launch of the call for proposals at the NCN
16 December 2024	Launch of the call for proposals at the NSFC
17 March 2025	Submission deadline at the NCN
17 March 2025	Submission deadline at the NSFC
By the end of April	Results of the eligibility check
May 2025 – September 2025	Peer-review process
November 2025	Announcement of the results
Not earlier than mid-January 2026	Start of joint research projects on the Polish side
1 January 2026	Start of joint research projects on the Chinese side

11. Call documents

- 1) *Call Text* (this document)
- 2) *Joint Project Description Template*
- 3) *CV and publication list template*

For Polish applicants only: all relevant documents can be found on the NCN website.

For Chinese applicants only: all relevant documents can be found on the NSFC website.

12. Contact

<p>POLAND, NCN:</p> <p>Coordinator for Physical Sciences and Engineering: dr Magdalena Jarosz</p> <p>Coordinator for Life Sciences dr Mateusz Sobczyk</p> <p>Coordinator for Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences dr Katarzyna Jarecka-Stepień</p> <p>General Affairs: dr Magdalena Nowak tel.: 0048 538 105 453</p>	<p>CHINA, NSFC:</p> <p>Jin Xu e-mail: xujin@nsfc.gov.cn Tel.: 86 10 6232 5351</p> <p>Tech Support: Tel: +86-10-62317474</p>
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Information about the principles of processing personal data

The National Science Centre with its headquarters in Krakow (30-312), at ul. Twardowskiego 16, is the controller of your personal data. You can contact the Data Protection Officer at iod@ncn.gov.pl. Your personal data will be processed for the purpose of:

- a) evaluation of the funding proposal for a research project,
- b) supervision, financial and accounting operations, audits during and after the project, evaluation of implementation and settlement of the funding agreement if funding is awarded to the project, and

c) evaluation of the NCN's tasks, reporting, dissemination of information on NCN calls for proposals throughout the scientific community.

You can read the disclosure requirements on our website at: <https://www.ncn.gov.pl/dane-osobowe?language=en>.