GUIDELINES FOR COMPLETING THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL. INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS
Type I
2026 Call — "Knowledge Generation Projects" and actions for the training of predoctoral researchers associated with these projects.

IMPORTANT: The scientific and technical proposal must **not exceed 25 pages**. Before completing this document, applicants should read carefully the **instructions** available on the AEI call webpage. ***This document must be completed in English***

General considerations:

1. **It is important that you check that you have submitted the correct document**; please note that, if a correction, rectification or clarification is requested, **it will not subsequently be possible to update the information** or to improve or expand the content of the document originally submitted.

2. The research proposal **must not exceed 25 pages**. **The application system will not accept a longer document.**

3. The template for the research proposal has been prepared so that it may be completed in the format recommended in the call (Article 18.2.a): Times New Roman, Calibri or Arial font, with a minimum font size of 11 points; side margins of 2.5 cm; top and bottom margins of 1.5 cm; and single line spacing as a minimum.

4. The document must be completed in English.

5. It is recommended that the document be completed using a computer with a Windows operating system and MS Word (MS Office) as the word processor.

6. Once the Word document has been completed, the file must be converted to PDF format (not exceeding 4 MB) and uploaded to the application system under Add documents / Research proposal. It is important that you check that you have submitted the correct document and that its length has not been modified.

7. Annex VII to the call contains the description of the content of the research proposal.

8. This is a joint research project proposal that will be evaluated by the Spanish State Research Agency (AEI). In the event that the proposal is selected for funding, AEI will fund the Spanish research team(s), while the corresponding foreign funding agency will provide funding for the foreign partner(s).

9. Applicants are strongly advised to verify, together with their foreign partner(s), that the proposal complies with all eligibility requirements established by the foreign funding agency. Such requirements may relate to the research topic, Technology Readiness Level (TRL), budget, project duration, or any other applicable conditions.

The research proposal must contain the information required for the evaluation, taking into account the evaluation criteria set out in Annex I to the call.

This scientific proposal submitted to AEI will also be submitted by the foreign partner(s) to their respective funding agency. No modifications or corrections will be accepted after submission.

Consequently, the proposals submitted to both funding agencies must be identical. The research proposal must contain the information required for the evaluation, taking into account the evaluation criteria set out in Annex I to the call.

1. RESEARCH PROPOSAL DATA

The full name of the person or persons listed as principal investigator(s) (PI) for both the Spanish team and the international team must be included and must match the information entered in the application system.

On the Spanish side, the project must comprise a single research team led by one or two PIs. On the international side, it must comprise a single research team led by one PI.
The project title and acronym must also be provided in both Spanish and English. The length of the acronym must be less than 15 characters. Both versions should be accurate, mutually consistent and representative of the proposal's content, objectives and scientific and technical scope.

2. JUSTIFICATION AND NOVELTY OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

2.1. Alignment of the proposal with the scope and objectives of the call

Applicants must provide a clear and specific justification of how the proposal aligns with the scope and objectives of the call.

Please note that:

- Type I projects must fall exclusively within the **non-thematic research modality**. This modality covers projects with no predefined thematic orientation whose primary aim is to generate and advance scientific knowledge, irrespective of the time horizon or field of application.
- Type I proposals must comply with the eligibility requirements and TRL criteria established by the foreign funding agency. For example, the National Science Centre (NCN) funds only basic research, defined as "*empirical or theoretical work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge about the foundations of phenomena and observable facts, without any direct commercial application.*"

Where the application identifies the project as falling within an area of research on women's health, the proposal must justify both that classification and the expected contribution to the selected area listed in Annex IX to the call.

2.2. Motivation of the research proposal

The **motivation for the proposal** must be explained clearly and placed in the context of the available scientific and technical knowledge and recent developments in the subject or line of research. The account must identify the problem, limitation, need or scientific question giving rise to the project; explain why it is relevant to address it now; and indicate the main gaps, controversies or shortcomings in the state of the art. On the basis of this analysis, the proposal's distinctive contribution must be specified, indicating what new knowledge is expected to be generated, how it differs from previous research and what potential advances it offers in the relevant thematic area.

2.3. Starting hypothesis and novelty

The proposal must clearly state its **initial hypothesis** and explain its novelty in relation to the state of the art. The hypothesis must be specific, testable and consistent with the proposed objectives and methodology.

If the project is a continuation of a previously funded project, the objectives and results already achieved must be clearly stated so that the genuine progress proposed in the new project can be assessed.

2.4. Motivation and added value of international collaboration

The proposal must explain the added value of the international collaboration, including the exchange of knowledge and expertise, access to resources, and capacity-building relevant to the proposed research.

2.5. Justification and expected contribution of the project of research on women's health

Proposals seeking funding for the training of predoctoral researchers associated with the project, and indicating in the application that the proposed research relates to women's health, must expressly substantiate this connection. To that end, the proposal must explain the direct relationship between this classification, the problem under investigation and the project's objectives.

The proposal's specific contribution to research on women's health must also be clearly identified and adequately substantiated.

For these purposes, the following areas are regarded as falling within the scope of research on women's health:

- Diseases specific to women or with a particularly high prevalence among women, including endometriosis, autoimmune diseases, polycystic ovary syndrome, pelvic floor dysfunction and chronic pain.
- Physiological processes specific to women, including menopause and complications arising from childbirth.
- Diseases that are not exclusive to women but exhibit sex- or gender-related differences or biases, including cardiovascular disease, depression and diabetes.

Cancer and pregnancy fall outside this scope, as research in these areas is more advanced and a more substantial body of scientific evidence has already been accumulated.

3. OBJECTIVES, METHODOLOGY AND WORK PLAN

3.1. General and specific objectives

The general and specific objectives must be set out in a clear, structured, precise and realistic manner, taking into account the planned duration of the project and the composition of the research team and/or working team. The general objective must define the project's overarching scientific purpose, while the specific objectives must identify the intermediate results required to achieve it. Specific objectives must not be confused with project activities: objectives define the results to be achieved, whereas activities describe the tasks undertaken to deliver those results.

The proposal must expressly identify the specific objectives assigned to the national team and those assigned to the international team. It must also explain how the objectives and tasks of the two teams interact, so that their interdependence can be assessed.

For projects with two principal investigators, the specific objectives to be coordinated by each PI and the arrangements for shared responsibility must be expressly indicated.

3.2. Description of the methodology

Describe in sufficient detail the **methodology** to be used to achieve each objective, and justify its suitability in relation to the problem addressed and the current state of the art. The proposal must also explain any novelty or improvement offered over existing approaches.

3.3. Work plan and schedule

A clear and precise **schedule** must set out the planned phases and milestones in relation to the proposal's objectives and indicate the responsibilities and involvement of each member of the national and international research and working teams. It must identify the relevant subject-matter expertise within both teams and the key members responsible for each planned task. For each phase, state the estimated duration, dependencies on other tasks and any other relevant information. The schedule must be consistent with the project's overall duration and show a realistic distribution of the workload.

Members of the working team may not be identified as responsible for project objectives or tasks. Where funding is requested for a predoctoral contract, the person recruited under that contract must not be assigned tasks in the project schedule.

3.4. Identification of critical points and contingency plan

Identify the **critical stages** of the project whose outcome could compromise the feasibility of the work plan or require changes to it.

Include a critical assessment of the difficulties that could prevent any of the specific objectives from being achieved and a **contingency plan** proportionate to each risk. The plan must describe alternative methodologies, task reallocations, replacement resources or timetable adjustments, as well as when and under what criteria they would be activated. The proposed alternatives should preserve the project's scientific purpose as far as possible and demonstrate that the team is prepared to respond to negative results or unforeseen incidents.

3.5. Previous results relevant to the research proposal and supporting its feasibility

Briefly describe the previous work and contributions of the national and international research teams that are directly relevant to the proposal's topic, objectives or methodology. Rather than providing a list of achievements, explain how the teams' complementary expertise, established collaborations and previous results demonstrate their capacity to implement the work plan and support the feasibility of the proposal.

3.6. Material resources, infrastructure and equipment available to implement the proposed methodology

Describe the material resources, infrastructure and equipment that will be available to implement the project. Provide this information for both the national and international teams, enabling an assessment of whether the available resources are sufficient and appropriate.

Clearly distinguish between resources already available and those requested from the project budget.

3.7. Proposed interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary strategy (where applicable)

Provide a reasoned justification of the need and added value of adopting an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary approach to address the scientific problem. Identify the disciplines involved, explain the knowledge, perspectives, methodologies, techniques or resources contributed by each, and specify why their combination is necessary or particularly suitable compared with a single-discipline approach.

Also explain how the different disciplines will be effectively integrated during project implementation. Simply listing the participating disciplines or areas is not sufficient: the description must demonstrate their genuine interaction, the complementarity of their contributions and how this integration will help achieve the scientific objectives, improve the methodology, address the complexity of the problem or generate results that could not be achieved through independent contributions.

4. EXPECTED IMPACT OF THE RESULTS

The application system must include a description, not exceeding 3,500 characters, of the expected impact of the project results. If the project is funded under this call, this content may be published for dissemination purposes.

4.1. Expected impact on the generation of scientific and technological knowledge

Include a reasoned description of the expected **scientific and technical impact**, identifying the changes that the results could bring about in knowledge, methods, capacities or practices in the thematic area.

4.2. Social and economic impact of the expected results

Taking into account the nature of the proposal describe the expected social and economic impact of the proposal's results and applications, including the tangible and intangible value they may generate for society, the economy, culture or public policy. Where relevant, also explain their potential contribution to job creation beyond the staff recruited to implement the project.

Include a description of the impact of the results from a gender perspective or in relation to disability and other areas of social inclusion, as well as any other aspect that helps assess the benefit of the proposed activities to society.

This section may address, for example, the extent to which the expected results will: contribute to public well-being; strengthen business competitiveness, technological development and productivity; support knowledge transfer; enhance societal security, including food security, resilience to extreme environmental events and cybersecurity; protect or improve the environment and advance the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals; deepen knowledge of the surrounding environment and help address the societal challenges identified by the EU and the objectives of the Spanish Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation; contribute to employment and skills development; and improve education and training.

4.3. Plan for scientific communication and internationalisation of the results

Include a realistic **scientific communication plan** for the project results, emphasising actions of particular relevance that differ from customary activities.

Include a plan for the internationalisation of the results. This may cover, among other actions, future collaborations with international academic or industrial R&D&I groups, participation in international projects and contracts, and other activities arising from the project results.

State the anticipated open-access publication output.

Research outputs, including publications, software code and methodological resources, must be made openly accessible.

4.4. Plan for the dissemination of results to the groups most relevant to the topic of the research proposal and to society in general

Include a dissemination plan aimed at the groups most relevant to the topic and at society in general.

Actions may include educational activities, meetings with professional or social groups, digital content, accessible materials, participation in events and collaboration with scientific culture units.

4.5. Brief description of the research data management plan

Provide an outline of the research data management plan, indicating what data will be collected or generated (types and formats), how access will be managed (who may access the data, how and when), and the repository in which they are expected to be deposited. For data subject to personal data protection rules or ethical requirements, explain how these will be managed. For funded projects, a complete formal data management plan will be requested during project implementation and with the final report.

Please note that:

- Each funded action must include a data management plan specifying, at a minimum, the technical characteristics of the data, the repository in which they will be deposited, the conditions governing access, the applicable licence, and the arrangements for reuse and citation. The plan must be deposited in an institutional or thematic open-access repository as soon as it is completed.

- This requirement does not preclude the adoption, before scientific publication, of appropriate measures to protect rights arising from research, development and innovation activities, in accordance with national and European legislation on intellectual and industrial property, plant variety rights and trade secrets.

- In accordance with Article 31.2 of the regulatory bases, failure to comply with the obligation to make research results openly accessible may result in partial recovery of up to 10% of the funding awarded for the project.

4.6. Description of the effects of the inclusion of gender in the research content

Where relevant to the subject matter, methodology, results or applications, the proposal must address the sex and/or gender dimension in the appropriate sections of the scientific and technical proposal.

Describe how sex and/or gender analysis is integrated into the different phases of the research cycle whenever relevant to the topic, study population, data, methodology, results or applications. The explanation may cover the formulation of hypotheses and questions; the design of samples, variables and analytical categories; data collection and disaggregation; interpretation of results; ethical considerations; and knowledge transfer or application.

Where the sex and/or gender dimension is not relevant, this must be briefly justified in a reasoned and proposal-specific manner.

Describe any expected impact of the project results in relation to sex and/or gender. The proposal must also explain whether, and in what ways, sex and/or gender may directly or indirectly influence the results or their applications.

4.7. Plan for the transfer and valorisation of results (where applicable)

If knowledge and/or results with **transfer** potential are expected, identify the potentially transferable knowledge/results and detail the planned transfer activities, as well as the entities that may be interested in them, particularly for projects under the oriented research modality.
Documentation relating to entities interested in the project results should not be submitted with the application. It must instead be retained by the applicant institution, as provided in the call, and supplied only if requested.

5. INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH TEAM

For each member of the international team in the scientific proposal, provide a brief CV profile covering the following:

- Professional position
- Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID)
- Main scientific contributions, explaining their relevance and contribution to knowledge generation; the generation of ideas, hypotheses and results and how these were communicated; funding obtained; scientific and technical capacities acquired; scientific responsibilities held; international collaborations; and leadership.
- Contributions to society, such as technological development and innovation activities, outreach activities, collaboration with industry and the private sector, organisations, public institutions and other end users of research.

Applicants are hereby reminded that the CVA of the Principal Investigator of the international team must be submitted as an attachment to the application.

6. JUSTIFICATION OF THE REQUESTED BUDGET

Provide a qualitative justification for the budget requested for the R&D&I project, covering both the national and international teams. Link each main budget item to the relevant objectives, tasks, milestones or expected results, and explain why it is necessary for project implementation.

If funding is requested to recruit staff, justify the need, the qualifications and/or training required, and include a description of the tasks to be performed.

If any equipment essential to carrying out the proposed tasks is requested, justify its necessity and, where applicable, the technical and/or methodological novelty it would provide.

Using the table provided in the proposal template, include detailed information on the budget requested by the international group and justify the need for each item.

Please note that:

- Inadequate justification of the budget requested by the international group may lead to the project being excluded by the international funding agency.
- The eligible cost categories funded by the foreign funding agency may differ from those funded by the AEI. Please consult your foreign partner to confirm what information must be provided and whether any additional procedures are required by the foreign funding organization. For example, Polish teams must submit additional information through the NCN application system, and the budget and team structure included in the joint proposal must be consistent with the information submitted to NCN.

7. TRAINING CAPACITY

This section should only be completed if funding is requested for actions to train predoctoral researchers associated with the projects. Such funding may only be requested by the national group. It will be awarded to only a limited number of approved projects.

7.1. Training programme planned within the proposed project

Include a brief summary of the training programme planned for predoctoral researchers in the context of the requested project, specifying the doctoral programme and university where it will be undertaken, specialist courses and planned short stays, participation in networks and conferences, scientific publications, and other relevant activities.
Merely providing information on the doctoral programme of the institution where the training activity will take place will not be sufficient to obtain a positive assessment of this section.

7.2. Doctoral theses completed or in progress within the research team over the last 10 years

Provide a list of doctoral theses completed or in progress within the research team over the last 10 years. For each thesis, state the doctoral candidate's name, title, supervisor(s), start date, date the degree was awarded or expected defence date and, where applicable, publications or other associated outputs involving the predoctoral researcher. The information should make it possible to assess the continuity of the training activity, the relationship of the theses to the team's research lines, and the effective capacity to supervise and complete doctoral work.

7.3. Scientific or professional development of doctoral graduates

Include a brief description of the scientific or professional development of doctoral graduates trained by the PIs or members of the research team during the last ten years. This may cover their subsequent professional position, continuation in a research career, employment in

companies or public administrations, national or international mobility, responsibilities assumed and relevant contributions.

8. SPECIFIC CONDITIONS GOVERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CERTAIN RESEARCH PROPOSALS (Complete this section only if any of the conditions set out in Annex IV apply.)

Complete this section only where the electronic application includes a “Yes” response to any of the conditions or implications listed in Annex IV—such as ethics, biosafety, animal experimentation, clinical trials, the use of human cells or tissues, embryonic stem cells, genetically modified organisms, the direct participation of individuals through surveys or focus groups, archaeological activities, or the use of Spanish or foreign genetic resources—and only to provide information relevant to the proposed activities that is not already included in the application system.

For each implication marked “Yes”, the application system must include: a justification of no more than 1,000 characters; details of any authorisations already held for implementation; and a justification of no more than 500 characters concerning those authorisations. Any further information considered necessary may be provided in this section of the scientific and technical proposal.

The recommended information includes:

a) A description of the specific aspects relating to the proposed research.
b) An explanation of the considerations, procedures or protocols to be applied in the project in compliance with the applicable legislation in each case.
c) An indication of the mandatory facilities available at the institution where the project will be carried out and, where applicable, the arrangements for using or accessing facilities that are not available there.
d) A list of the mandatory authorisations already held or currently being processed for the activities planned in the project.

The authorisations and other documentation relating to these matters must not be submitted with the application. They must be retained by the applicant organisation, as specified in the call, and provided only if requested during project implementation or as part of an interim or final scientific and technical monitoring report.