

15th call for SAS-NSTC Joint Research Projects

CALL TEXT AND GUIDELINES

1. Background

SAS-NSTC Joint Research Projects is a bilateral programme established between the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS) and the National Science and Technology Council, Taiwan (NSTC) in order to cooperate on research projects of common interest. Its objective is to encourage exchange and cooperation between researchers, engineers and research institutions in Slovakia and Taiwan.

The programme is based on the Addendum to the Agreement on Scientific Cooperation between the Slovak Academy of Sciences and the National Science Council, Republic of China (later succeeded by MOST) signed on 15 and 21 May 2009.

Subject to mutual agreement of SAS and NSTC, a call for bilateral project proposals is launched and evaluated every year in parallel by both research funding organisations. In 2023 the programme continues with the **15th call for SAS-NSTC Joint Research Projects for the years 2024–2026**.

2. Aim of the Call

The aim of the Call is to support bilateral projects in basic or applied research proposed jointly by researchers from SAS and from R&D institutions in Taiwan. It is envisaged that the funded projects will establish collaborations that should facilitate subsequent joint applications in other European and international funding schemes.

A bottom-up approach is applied to this Call, i.e. the Call is open to researchers from all research fields, topics are chosen freely by applicants.

Both research funding organisations would like to particularly encourage proposals for projects in social sciences and humanities.

3. Application

3.1. Eligibility Criteria

Terms and conditions of participation in the Call are determined for both project partners by legal and internal rules and regulations of their respective research funding organisations.

Only research institutes and centres of the Slovak Academy of Sciences are eligible organisations for funding by the SAS. The main applicant must have an employment contract with the SAS institute/centre on behalf of which the application is being submitted. If his/her contract is on a part-time basis, it must be for more than 50% of standard working

time. All members of the applicant's team except doctoral students must, too, have employment contracts with the same or another SAS institute/centre.

Individuals involved in preparation of the Call, the evaluation process or the funding decision process are eligible neither as PIs nor as team members.

Since 2018 Taiwanese PIs are eligible if they have an already running NSTC research project, to which they can add the SAS-NSTC project as an "add-on" grant. Check the [NSTC website](#) for further information on eligibility criteria and application procedures applicable to the Taiwanese partner.

The duration of bilateral projects is **minimum 12** and **maximum 36 months**. The expected start date is **1 January 2024**.

3.2. Funding model and budget

The Call's funding model follows the principle that each research funding organisation will fund its country's part of a bilateral project, i.e. SAS will fund the SAS research team and NSTC will fund the research team from Taiwan.

SAS applicants can apply for funding **up to 40,000 EUR per project per year** in accordance with the SAS Presidium's resolution no. 449 (10.11.2022), **of which 15,000 EUR per project per year is an in-kind personnel contribution of the applicant's institute/centre.**

3.2.1. Incentive for social sciences and humanities research

The SAS Presidium has approved budget for **2 projects** to be funded in this Call. **An additional (third) project will be funded under the following conditions:** the project is of the category social sciences and humanities; it has been evaluated well by both funding organisations (i. e. above the category 'not recommended'); and no social sciences or humanities project has ranked among the top two.

This measure has been introduced to incentivise project submissions from currently underrepresented fields and represents a joint effort of both funding organisations to spread Slovak-Taiwan research collaboration into new areas.

3.3. Eligible costs

Project funding is regulated by the [Financial Rules for awarding SAS grants for international research projects](#) -EN ([Finančné pravidlá na udeľovanie grantov SAV na medzinárodné výskumné projekty](#) - SK), which include detailed information on eligible costs. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to read this document carefully and to contact their national contact point before submission in order to ensure compliance.**

3.4. Proposal submission

Project proposals have to be developed in close collaboration with partners from Taiwan. Application is valid only if required materials are submitted by both partners to their respective research funding organisations.

New! In 2022, SAS introduces a new online submission tool to be used by all applicants to the SAS-NSTC Joint Research Projects Call.

All research staff members can access the tool via their [SAS Intranet account](#). It has been added to the section 'Intranetové práva' under the heading 'Calls of the Department of International Cooperation'. Here the applicants will have to fill in **an online application form** and attach the following **documents in pdf** format:

- SAS-NSTC JRP Project Proposal Form
- Signed and stamped Letter of Commitment to in-kind personnel contribution

Templates of both documents as well as the submission tool technical manuals can be downloaded [here](#).

The Call opens on 3 April 2023 and closes on **26 May 2023**.

Each project proposal submission must be approved in the system by the director of the applicant's institute/centre who has been granted special Director rights. **The proposal is only considered submitted once it has been approved. The proposal must be approved by the application deadline.**

4. Evaluation process

Proposals that pass a formal eligibility check will be evaluated on the SAS and NSTC sides according to their internal procedures. The Slovak procedure is regulated by [The Statute of the SAS Committee for Evaluation of International Projects](#). It consists of 2 phases:

4.1. External expert review

In the first phase, proposals will be reviewed by external evaluators. SAS applicants are requested to nominate at least 2 experts, one from Slovakia and one from abroad, whose expertise is within the area of the project topic and who are not in a conflict of interest with the applicant to enlarge the pool of potential evaluators.

The following **evaluation criteria and subcriteria** will be used, scoring from 0 to 5, with a maximum of 50 points:

- 1) Scientific and technological excellence
 - a) Clarity and relevance of the objectives
 - b) Soundness, coherence and credibility of the concept and methodology
 - c) Level of innovativeness (methodological/conceptual/theoretical contribution to the related scientific and technological area) and potential of the project results for application and exploitation in different areas (short-term and long-term impacts, identification of relevant stakeholders, effectiveness of dissemination measures)
 - d) Competence and expertise of the applicants in the relevant field(s)
- 2) Quality of implementation

- a) Feasibility and effectiveness of the work plan, including project completeness, reasonable time-scope balance, availability of necessary infrastructure, reasonable allocation of tasks and responsibilities and appropriate team composition
 - b) Appropriateness of management structures (PI's previous experience or demonstrated aptitude to manage an international project, internal communication measures, risk management)
 - c) Budget cost-effectiveness and adequacy of financial resource distribution in view of planned activities
- 3) International cooperation
- a) Demonstrated added value of the bilateral cooperation and involvement of both partners of the bilateral cooperation
 - b) Benefit for SAS in terms of exchange of expertise through visits, training of researchers by the foreign partner, involvement of young researchers etc.
 - c) Capacity for lasting collaboration (plans for joint exploitation of results, further research projects, trainings and other types of collaboration or contacts beyond the project lifetime).

4.2. Evaluation by the SAS Committee for Evaluation of International Projects

Applicants who score at least 70% overall and 50% in each of the three criteria in the external evaluation will be invited to present their projects at a meeting of the SAS Committee for Evaluation of International Projects. The committee will discuss the proposed projects and draw up a ranking list.

5. Funding decision

Positive national evaluation of a proposal does not guarantee an award of a grant. The final selection of projects recommended for funding will take place in a joint SAS-NSTC meeting and will consider results of both the Slovak and the Taiwanese evaluation processes. Funding of the selected projects is then subject to final approval of the SAS and NSTC authorities. The PIs of the selected projects will be informed about the recommendation for funding and invited by SAS to submit an 'MVTs form' as a basis for the SAS Presidium's decision.

6. Reporting requirements

The Slovak PI of a funded project must submit an **annual progress report** consisting of a scientific and a financial part by **31 January** each year at the latest. Continuation of funding will be decided on the basis of this monitoring and is subject to the consent of both research funding organisations.

The Slovak PI must also submit a **final report** within 1 month from the end of the project.

Any **publication of the project results** must acknowledge support received from the 15th Call for SAS-NSTC Joint Research Projects.

7. Indicative Call timeline

Pre-announcement	February 2023
Call launch	3 April 2023
Application deadline	26 May 2023
Meeting of the SAS Committee for Evaluation of International Projects	September/ early October 2023
Exchange of the evaluation results between SAS and NSTC(Recommendation for funding)	October 2023
Results announcement	November/ December 2023
Start of the projects	1 January 2024

8. National contact points

SAS	Ms Silvia Kecerová Tel.: +421 2 5751 0 118 E-mail: kecerova@up.upsav.sk
NSTC	Ms Jennifer Hu Tel: +886-2-2737-7560 Email: jenhu@nstc.gov.tw