

**Agreement on scientific cooperation between CNR in Italy and Ministry of Higher
Education and Scientific Research (MHESR) in Tunisia
Call for proposal of joint research Projects - activity time: 2027-2028**

In the framework of the Agreement on Scientific Cooperation between the National Research Council of Italy (CNR) and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of Tunisia (MHESR) signed in Rome on June 11, 2019, and its Cooperative Program signed in Rome on August 29, 2019, the Parties aims to promote the cooperation between Tunisian and Italian researchers and between research centers from the two countries through preparation and implementation of joint research and development projects on common priority themes for two years 2027 and 2028.

Both Contracting Parties to the Agreement will fund the projects selected within this Call. The financing due to each of the winning projects' leaders, will be provided by the home Institution, in compliance with current national laws, regulations and procedures.

1. AREAS OF COOPERATION

As established by the Agreement/Cooperative Program, proposals for joint scientific cooperation should fit with the following subject areas:

- Cultural Heritage
- Water
- Agrifood
- Energy
- Smart cities and Artificial Intelligence
- Air pollution

2. PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

Entitled to submit applications, in the role of Italian Project Manager (hereinafter referred to as "Responsible") are:

- a) CNR Institutes directors, research managers, CNR researchers and technologists (I-III level); permanent and/or fixed-term contract with a minimum expiry date of 31/12/2027.
- b) Personnel holding an official decree of association with CNR, with an expiry date falling no

later than 12/31/2027. If the Association measure expires before that date, a letter from the Institute Director certify if the Association measure expires before that date, a letter from the Institute Director certifying the commitment to extend the aforementioned Association must be attached to the measure itself.

Should the Responsible of a financed Project not be a permanent CNR researcher, an extension of his/her association with CNR covering the entire duration of the Project, will be requested. In absence of this requirement, a new Manager will have to be appointed, under penalty of the Project's interruption.

On the Tunisian side, the call is open to Tunisian public research entities: institutes or centers and universities laboratory/units of research.

Principal Investigator (PI) must have a Tunisian nationality and a permanent position in the public research entity (research laboratory/research unit).

3. APPLICATIONS SUBMISSION

On the Italian side, the applications submission by the Responsible, must be carried out exclusively using the online procedure "Bilateral Agreements", <https://attivitainternazionali.cnr.it>

For CNR personnel, access is allowed entering the credentials used for SIPER. In the event the Responsible is a researcher associated to CNR, in order to obtain the credentials, it is necessary to proceed to a registration by the web officer of the CNR Institute in which the Responsible is temporarily associated, via <https://utenti.cnr.it> following the procedure path for "New User".

The application, written in Italian or English, must contain all the requested information, relevant to the assessment, such as methodology of the project and its innovativeness, the details of the program and the possible contribution of Italian Research Group. The application, furthermore, must contain the following documents:

- in case of a researcher associated to CNR, the association decree;
- the Italian Responsible résumé, and that of the Tunisian Manager, preferably in English, obligatorily duly signed;
- the Italian Responsible will have to declare, using the appropriate flag in the online application procedure, that he has read the information regarding the processing of personal data; consent to the processing of personal data must, however, be duly signed by the Tunisian Manager. These data will be processed by CNR pursuant to art. 6 letter c) e) of EU General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679;

PLEASE NOTE: the CVs of the Italian Project Manager and the Foreign Project Manager must be duly signed; otherwise, the Project will be excluded. The Italian Project Manager must declare that they have read the privacy policy by ticking the appropriate box in the online application form; the Foreign Project Manager must declare that they have read the privacy policy by signing it, otherwise

the Project will be excluded.

It is recommended not to insert graphics, images, tables and special characters that alter text formatting.

3.1 Limitations to the submission of applications

- a) Members of the Committee of Experts responsible for the scientific evaluation of projects may not apply to participate, either as Tunisian Manager or as Collaborator;
- b) It is not possible for the same Responsible to submit more than one project proposal within a single Call for proposals;
- c) On the Italian side, the same Responsible cannot propose more than two projects in the framework of Calls open during 2026.
- d) Researchers who have been PI for a CNR-MHESR project relating to call 2024 (two-year period 2025-2026) are not eligible to apply.

3.2 Application Closing

a. On the Italian Side

The application must be "closed" by the Responsible on **April 15, 2026 by 12.00 (noon)**.

Following the administrative verification carried out by this Unit, the application must be 'validated' by the Director of the CNR Institute to which the Italian Project Manager belongs. Please note that the IT system will send a daily reminder, for a total of 15 consecutive days, to the Institute Director for the validation of the application. After this period, the application will be automatically excluded from the validation procedure and subsequent scientific evaluation.

b. On the Tunisian Side

The deadline for submitting applications is April 15, 2026 by 12.00 (noon).

- The Tunisian responsible must :
 1. Fill in the project submission form, accessible on the following link: <https://forms.gle/Pfb7uK46YEPuab499>
 2. Send the application file in PDF format, respecting **the submission form** attached to the call, to the following address: tunisia.italy.program@gmail.com accompanied by an endorsement letter, signed by the legal representative of the applying Institution (the head of the establishment and the supervisory authority (University President, IRESA President, Director General of the Research Center, etc.) and the director of the research structure). No paper version to submit to the MHESR (DGRS)

3.3 Reasons for applications ruling out

The application will be left out of the selection if:

- the project proposal is not submitted to both Parties, according to the procedures and in respect of the set deadlines;
- it has been forwarded to CNR in a way not complying with what prescribed by this Call;
- the files attached to the application (curricula, data processing authorization, possible association decrees and final reports) are not compliant or altered;
- the Italian responsible résumé and that of the Tunisian responsible are not duly signed;
- the Italian Responsible does not declare, using the appropriate flag in the online application procedure, that he has read the information regarding the processing of personal data;
- consent to the processing of personal data is not duly signed by the Tunisian Manager;
- the association decree does not comply with the requirements.

4. SCIENTIFIC EVALUATION

The Parties will proceed, independently, to the received applications' scientific assessment, which, for CNR, will be performed by an Expert Committee, whose appointment is published on CNR institutional website, <https://www.cnr.it/it/progetti-comuni-ricerca>.

For the Tunisian part, it will be performed by an Expert Committee designed by the MHESR.

The Committee will select the projects worth of financing by following the below-mentioned criteria:

1. Project Quality (maximum 5 points):

Scientific relevance (concept, innovative character with respect to the state of the art, quality of the goals); methodology, activities work plan; impact of project results, dissemination, use.

2. Quality of the Research Group (maximum 5 points):

Qualifications and expertise; complementarity in terms of content, methodology and equipment; justification for a collaboration necessity

3. Appropriateness and justification of the work plan (maximum 5 points).

4. Added value and a predictably wider impact, thanks to bilateral cooperation (maximum 5 points).

The applications scientific assessment's outcome will be notified to the Italian and Tunisian Responsible.

5. MEASURES ON TRANSPARENCY AND ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS

1. The CNR Commission does not draw up minutes, as the entire scientific evaluation procedure is carried out online on the new digital desk, and is therefore traceable. The joint selection of projects could take into account the number of applications submitted per Department. The list of jointly selected projects (Final report) will be drawn up following an exchange of emails between the CNR and the foreign body and will be published on the CNR's institutional website.

2. The right of access to the documents of this procedure, pursuant to Law No. 241 of 7 August 1990 and subsequent additions and amendments, is exercised in accordance with the procedures set out in Article 10 of Organisational Measure No. 22 of 18 May 2007, as supplemented and amended

by Measure No. 62 of 8 November 2007 (available on the CNR website <https://www.urp.cnr.it>) and with the limitations set out in Article 12 thereof.

3. The acknowledgement of receipt of requests for access to documents, to be sent to the person responsible for the selection process, will be published in the personal area of the platform <https://attivitainternazionali.cnr.it>. This publication fulfils all communication obligations under the relevant legislation. The CNR is therefore not required to notify participants individually.

5. SELECTION AND PROJECTS FINANCING

The Parties will select the joint research projects to fund, taking into account the Italian and Tunisian scientific assessments, financial availability and the provisions of the Agreement/Cooperative Program (the list of funded projects will be made public on the official website of CNR).

The Agreement between CNR and MHESR provides for the financing of a maximum of 5 (five) projects, with a maximum annual contribution, per part, of Euro 6,000 for each project.

MHESR will regulate relations with Tunisian partners according to national forms and procedures,

Funding:

The release of the funds awarded to the selected Projects will be performed, on the Italian side, via a direct money-transfer from this Office to the CNR Institute where the Responsible is employed, and on the Tunisian side, from MHESR to the institution of the Tunisian responsible. The responsible will manage the assigned funds, reporting annually on the activities carried out and the expenses incurred. Terms and rules related to the above-mentioned financing, to its management and to the reports, will be specified in an official letter containing detailed information on said terms.

The following expenses will have to be accounted for:

a. Mission expenses

Research stays are permitted:

- i. Only if carried out at institutes belonging to the foreign organization;
- ii. Only if lasting no less than 3 days (actual stay at the foreign institution);
- iii. Only if carried out by CNR staff (researchers, technologists, fellows and research fellows)

or staff associated with the CNR indicated in the approved proposal.

b. Research expenses

The following research expenses are eligible:

- I. purchase of software specific to the nature of the Project activities (excluding office automation software) and external hard drives;
- II. purchase of laboratory products and equipment;
- III. purchase of books;
- IV. production of joint scientific publications between the two research groups;
- V. knowledge protection (limited to the share of the patent belonging to the CNR).

6. CONTACT

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