



CALL FOR JOINT ACTIONS AND PROGRAMMES IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON COOPERATION IN THE FIELDS OF HIGHER
EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
BETWEEN
TUNISIA –ITALY

JOINT CALL 2025

OPENING DATE: May 7th, 2025

CLOSING DATE: September 1st, 2025

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1. BACKGROUND

The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of the Republic of Tunisia (MHESR) and the Ministry of University and Research (MUR) of the Italian Republic, hereinafter referred to as the "Participants", recognise the **fundamental role of higher education and scientific research** in the dialogue between Italy and Tunisia.

Considering the long-standing and positive collaboration developed over the course of the last decades, the abovementioned Ministries intend to **further strengthen cooperation** in these areas between Italy and Tunisia.

The Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the fields of higher education and scientific research, signed on 17 April 2024 in Tunis, aims to promote new joint actions and programs to support the mobility of students, teachers, and researchers, the realization of joint research projects, as well as the joint use of scientific and technological infrastructures.

It will foster structured cooperation along the lines of the development of major multilateral programmes in the selected activities areas.

Within the framework of the MoU on higher education and scientific research between the Government of Italy and the Government of Tunisia, the Directorate General for Internationalization and Communication of the Italian Ministry of Universities and Research and the General Direction of Scientific Research in the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of the Republic of Tunisia are opening a call for proposals in the fields of higher education and scientific research for the year 2025 (Joint Call 2025).

For further information, please contact representatives of the national funding organizations (see contact details in Section 5.3).

2. AREAS OF ACTIVITY

The Joint Call aims to support **excellent, collaborative, bilateral, transdisciplinary, fundamental, or applied research initiatives** focused on the priority activity areas described below. These initiatives will be based on the principles of mutual benefit and aim to strengthen knowledge and share applications.

The purpose of the Joint Call is the establishment of more effective relationships in higher education and scientific research between Italy and Tunisia, especially through the coordination and collaboration of multilateral research programmes. Within the call, the Participants aim to facilitate the exchange of good practices, strategic planning, and the design of joint initiatives. The **strategic objectives (SO)** of the call are:

- SO1: Joint scientific breakthroughs based on the complementary expertise of the project partners from Italy and Tunisia in one of the priority activity areas.
- SO2: The potential positive impact of the proposed scientific breakthroughs and innovations in actively addressing technological and societal challenges.
- SO3: Strengthened joint collaboration in relevant multilateral programmes (e.g., PRIMA, Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, etc.) in the priority areas of the Italian and Tunisian national policies.
- SO4: Increased mobility of students, faculty members, and researchers, and exchange of research resources between the project partners from Italy and Tunisia during and beyond the project timeframe.
- SO5: Establishment of collaborative training courses, between Italian and Tunisian higher education institutions, aimed at the implementation, among others, of double degree programs.

Therefore, the proposals provide prospects for long-term cooperation between respective national and multilateral education and research programmes, institutions, infrastructures and innovative businesses. In particular, areas of cooperation of common interest, such as **Agri-Tech, including Health and Food security; ICT applications; Sustainable Blue Economy; Energy Security; Advanced Manufacturing; and Cultural Heritage** will be taken into account.

The cooperation between the partners may include the following **activity areas**:

- **Basic and industrial research projects**

The objective of this activity area is to encourage cooperation and joint projects between higher education and research institutions and enterprises in the fields of research, innovation and technology transfer, also with the aim to exchange information and views on scientific and technological policy issues.

Additionally, this activity area supports academic research and teaching on the language, literature, culture and history of the two Countries.

- **Innovation ecosystems**

The aim of this activity area is to:

- exchange mutual learning paths, share best practices for the establishment, enhancement and promotion of innovation ecosystems, and strengthen common capacity building between national players;
- promote entrepreneurship, innovative start-ups and spin-offs enhancing research results through qualified services and dedicated programmes to train innovation managers and brokers.

The project proposals could include **two-way mobility of students, faculty members, and researchers' education and training activities**.

3. THE CALL FOR JOINT ACTIONS

3.1. Eligibility Requirements

Project proposals:

- must be written in English;
- must have the following duration: 36 months;
- must address at least one of the activity areas mentioned above;
- must address one of the thematic areas of cooperation:
 - **Agri-Tech, including Health and Food security;**
 - **ICT applications;**
 - **Sustainable Blue Economy;**
 - **Energy Security;**
 - **Advanced Manufacturing;**
 - **Cultural Heritage.**

Italian Party (MUR):

Eligible legal entities:

- The call is open to Italian public or private research and higher education institutions, and private companies.

- For each proposal, the applicant entity may participate alone or jointly with one or more co-applicant entities.

Tunisian Party (MHESR):

Eligible legal entities:

- This call is open to Tunisian public institutions of higher education and scientific research and public research centers.
- The proposals should involve one or more research entities.
- The PI must hold the rank of Full Professor or Associate Professor (Maître de Conférences) and be affiliated with a public research laboratory that is part of the partner institution involved in the project.
- The involvement of industrial or socio-economic sector partners is essential to promote collaborative research and optimize the valorization of scientific outcomes. These partners may participate at their own expense.

3.2. How to apply

Joint proposals must be submitted to both Participants (double application) according to the following rules:

Italian Party (MUR):

- Proposals shall be submitted exclusively online by filling out the dedicated forms through the following platform: <https://banditransnazionali.mur.gov.it/>.
- The application submitted through the above platform has to be signed by the legal representative of the applicant entity.

Tunisian Party (MHESR):

- Proposals shall be submitted exclusively online by filling out the dedicated forms through the following link: **Application Form**
- The application must be signed by the legal representative of the applicant entity.
- The Tunisian Principal Investigator (PI) should submit the proposal electronically as a single PDF file to: **partenariat.scientifique@gmail.com**.

Applicants must fill out all mandatory fields on the form for their proposal to enter the selection process and to be considered for funding.

Projects involving experiments with human beings and animals must be performed in accordance with the relevant national and international regulations on ethics.

Proposals will not be taken further into the evaluation in case the following occurs, and this cannot be corrected in a timely manner:

- do not meet the project requirements described in the sections below,
- and/or do not comply with the eligibility criteria of the Funding Organizations which they seek funding from,
- and/or are incomplete.

3.3. Call timeline and budget

This call consists of a one-stage submission and two-step evaluation process, described in Section 4. Applications received after the submission deadline will not be allowed into the evaluation and selection process.

- Publication of the Call: **07 May 2025**;
- Deadline for Proposal Submission: **01 September 2025**;
- Communication of full-proposal assessment: **December 2025**.

Available budget:

Italian Party (MUR): € 500.000,00

Tunisian Party (MHESR): € 500.000,00

3.4. Proposal requirements

3.4.1. General requirements

Tunisian and Italian partners must fill out all mandatory fields on the submission form for their proposal to enter the evaluation process and to be considered for funding. To be eligible, a proposal must include all mandatory information requested in the Proposal Form.

In filling out the online proposal form, it is expected that applicants consider the following:

- proposals should clearly describe how the proposed project will deliver on at least one activity areas, of the chosen activities listed in section 2;
- proposals should include well-justified budgets, partitioning of funds, and allocation of responsibilities and time. Proposals may include, where appropriate, well-thought-out data management, project stakeholder engagement, and communication management plans. Plans for providing broad public accessibility of data, results, and findings should be described;
- proposals should also detail the impact and dissemination strategy, external communications activities, planned social media activities as well as any other externally facing communication activities foreseen as a result of this work;

It will be positively considered:

- proposals involving more than one Tunisians and Italian public or private research or higher education institutions;
- Joint collaboration in relevant multilateral programmes (e.g., PRIMA, Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, etc.);
- coherence and synergy within already existing initiatives;
- initiatives with potential industrial impact and/or involving a private company which may contribute to the project as Societal/Industry Partner.

3.4.2. Budget and eligible costs

Research partnerships are expected to include one overall project budget in the Proposal Form, expressed in euros (€ / EUR). The budget proposal of each Partner must meet the eligibility requirements of the national Funding Organization which it seeks funding from, including a potential budget limit per Partner. A detailed budget justification is required in the Proposal Form. Applicants are also required to explain the source of any additional funding.

4. EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

4.1. Evaluation Process

Evaluation of proposals will be performed in accordance with national legislation.

The Participants appoint a **joint Call Management Committee** which includes representatives from both countries on equal footing, in charge of evaluating the proposed projects, in accordance with national legislation. The joint Call Management Committee will also be in charge of monitoring the project execution.

After the Call closure, all submitted proposals will undergo a formal eligibility check before moving to the two-step evaluation process:

- The first step will be performed at the national level to identify a shortlist of proposals.
- The second step will be performed by the joint Call Management Committee which will reach a consensus on the final list of projects eligible for funding.

The selected projects will be announced by the Ministries by publishing them on the websites of each Party at the end of the process.

4.2. Evaluation criteria

Project proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Compliance of project proposals outcomes with activity areas (See Section 2)

Project proposals will be evaluated based on their alignment with planned cooperation activities, which encompass a broad range of research fields and initiatives. These include:

- Research Projects: Targeted areas of study include Agri-Tech, including Health and Food security; ICT applications; Sustainable Blue Economy; Energy Security; Advanced Manufacturing; and Cultural Heritage.
- Academic Research and Education: Focused on fostering high-quality academic pursuits and educational programs.
- Mobility Programmes: Designed for students and researchers to promote collaboration and knowledge exchange.
- Education and Training Initiatives: Emphasizing advanced training programs, participation in conferences, and the promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation.

These efforts are aimed at enhancing innovation capacity and collaboration among national institutions.

- Quality of project proposals for achieving project outcomes

The scientific relevance and innovativeness of the project objectives are evaluated based on several key criteria:

- Specificity, Measurability, and Verifiability of Results: Clear, quantifiable, and verifiable outcomes are essential.
- Clear Explanation and Justification: Well-articulated activities and programmes, with sound justification and proposed methodologies.
- Coherence of Objectives with Expected Outcomes: Alignment of project goals with anticipated results.

- Adequate and Coherent Methodology: Detailed, appropriate, and logically structured methodological approach throughout the project.

These criteria ensure that the project proposals are scientifically relevant, and innovative, and contribute significantly to progress in their respective fields.

- Qualification and Expertise of the Project/Research Teams

In evaluating the project teams, consideration is given to the project objectives, proposed methodologies, and the academic reputation of the partner institutions. Key aspects include:

- Added Value of Bilateral Cooperation: The scientific contributions of each partner should be clearly described and explained, emphasizing the added value of their cooperation.
- Integration of Diversity and Gender Perspectives: The proposal should integrate diversity and gender perspectives within the partnership, project plan, and desired outcomes, where relevant.

These criteria ensure that the project teams are well-qualified and possess the expertise necessary to achieve the project objectives effectively.

- Assessment of the Sustainability of the Initiatives, Exploitation, and Dissemination Measures Towards the Project's Impact

In evaluating the project's impact, it is crucial to assess how its results uniquely contribute to the specific objectives of the call, with a particular focus on the long-term sustainability of the initiatives. Key considerations include:

- Contribution to Call Objectives: The project's results should be clearly aligned with and significantly contribute to the specific objectives outlined in the call.
- Sustainability: The proposal should address how the project's outcomes will be sustained ensuring ongoing impact.
- Knowledge Dissemination: The proposal should comprehensively describe plans for disseminating the generated knowledge in relevant scientific forums.
- Target Groups Identification: Clear identification of the main target groups for communication and dissemination of the project's results is essential.

These elements are vital to ensure that the project's outcomes are impactful, widely disseminated, and sustainably managed.

- Management and Budget

The proposed activities are meticulously conceived and organized, supported by an operational plan that includes well-defined milestones and deliverables to facilitate effective project monitoring. Key aspects include:

- Well-defined Milestones and Deliverables: The operational plan clearly outlines project results, ensuring structured progress and accountability.
- Justified and Cost-Efficient Funding: The total funding requested is well-justified and demonstrates cost-efficiency in relation to the expected outcomes.

These elements ensure that the project is managed efficiently, with a budget that supports its successful implementation and addresses all relevant concerns.

Preference will be awarded to:

- proposals involving more than one Tunisian and Italian public or private research or higher education institutions;
- Joint collaboration in relevant multilateral programmes (e.g., PRIMA, Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, etc.);
- coherence and synergy within already existing initiatives;
- Initiatives with potential industrial impact and/or involving a private company which may contribute to the project as a Societal/Industry Partner.

5. FUNDING PROCEDURES

5.1. Funding decision and grant administration

The Funding Organizations will select at least five (5) projects and ten (10) projects in maximum for funding based on the results of the joint evaluation process, considering the budgets made available by each Funding Organization. The joint Call Management Committee will ensure the fair and equitable nature of the evaluation and selection process.

Italian Party (MUR):

Funding for selected projects will be provided in two installments, a pre-payment after the signature of the Grant Agreement, equal to 80% of the total funding, and the balance at the end of the project after verification of the final financial report.

The contribution granted by MUR is intended as co-funding support for the project, equal to 70% of the eligible costs. Therefore, co-funding by the participating Italian entities of 30% of the total costs of the project is mandatory. Any other financial contribution from public or private, Italian or Tunisian Institutions, will be positively evaluated.

The maximum cost of the project activities of the Italian partner(s) is 100.000 euros, including co-funding by the applying institution.

Tunisian Party (MHESR):

The execution and financing conditions for selected projects will be outlined in the grant award agreements. The Principal Investigator (PI) of each approved project will sign an agreement with the MHESR/General Directorate of Scientific Research.

Funding will be provided in three installments. The second installment will be disbursed once at least 50% of the first installment has been spent and a scientific and financial report on the first year's achievements has been submitted. The third installment will be released after at least 70% of the total funds allocated for the first two years have been utilized and upon submission of a comprehensive progress report.

The total funding for each project will range from a minimum of 50,000 euros to a maximum of 100,000 euros over a three-year period.

5.2. Reporting

- Italian Applicants shall submit an annual report on the progress of their project to the Funding Organisation. The reports will be due each January 31st as indicated in the text of the Ministerial Decree establishing the projects selected for funding. The first annual report is not required if the Project's lifespan is less than 6 months as of January 31st.
- Tunisian Applicants shall submit an interim report (scientific and financial) to the MHESR, the granting of the second and third budget depends on the submission and positive evaluation of the interim reports. At the end of the third year, a final report is required.

5.3. Contact Information

Specific questions about eligibility and additional information on the present call, applicants can refer to the Contact Points listed in the table below.

In Italy	In Tunisia
Office III - Directorate General of Internationalization and Communication (MUR)	Directorate General of Scientific Research (MHESR)
e-mail: bandibilaterali@mur.gov.it	e-mail: Hayet.Souai@mes.rnu.tn/ souaihayet@gmail.com
	saida.rafrafi@mesrs.tn coopint2@gmail.com

6. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

6.1. Data Management and open access

Proposals must have a reasonable and credible Data Management Plan¹ for open data access.

Applicants will be requested to describe their Data Management Plan in their proposal. The plan should include information about types of data, information, models, software, workflows and code, or other digital products being generated by the project. It should outline the accessible archives or other open repository where these products and accompanying metadata will be housed.

The funded projects are expected to make their best efforts to ensure open access to data as soon as possible.

6.2. Intellectual Property Policy

In the event that Intellectual Property has been jointly created by Italian and Tunisian beneficiary(ies), the joint owners shall enter into an Intellectual Property Management Agreement, which shall govern how the jointly owned results will be protected, managed, and exploited.

6.3. Data Protection

Data are expected to be securely shared between Italian and Tunisian Parties to enable the secure and efficient processing of full proposals for the Italian and Tunisian Parties funding opportunity. Data shared may include anonymized reviews and panel summaries. Italian and Tunisian Parties are committed to maintaining data confidentiality, protection, and privacy and intend to fully abide by their own applicable laws and policies concerning the sharing of data in collaborative activities.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/cross-cutting-issues/open-access-data-management/data-management_en.htm