

Sixth joint call of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Science, Technology and Innovation Funding Authority (STDF)

“German-Egyptian Research Fund” (GERF)

Deadline: 16-December-2024

1. Funding aim and purpose

1.1 Funding aim

This funding announcement is for cooperation between Egypt and Germany in the field of research and innovation. The aim is to develop long-term innovation partnerships between universities, research institutions, and companies that closely coordinate their respective research work to optimise the transfer of technology and knowledge. The partnerships to be established are based on a concept of innovation that encompasses not only technological but also social innovations and includes society as a central player. Training is one of the main outputs of this program.

If possible, the foundations for the development of a sustainable innovation structure (e.g. start-up, research-based small business) should be created or a plannable and presentable perspective for this structural development should be opened up. The aim is to achieve regional socio-economic value creation of the project results in the two partner countries and to accelerate innovation processes.

This BMBF funding guideline makes an important contribution to the objectives of the Federal Government's Research and Innovation Strategy for the Future (2023). It is also part of the BMBF's Africa Strategy (2018) and the Federal Government's Strategy for the Internationalisation of Education, Science and Research (2017).

This guideline aligns with Egypt's Vision 2030 and is consistent with the strategy of the Egyptian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

Funding is provided by the German-Egyptian Research Fund (GERF), which has been in existence since 2007 and is based on a ministerial agreement between the BMBF and the Egyptian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MHESR).

The achievement of objectives is documented by the publication of results, for example in scientific journals or conference papers, through pre-competitive prototypes and joint commercialisation projects and/or innovation structures. An intensive exchange with innovation drivers and political decision-makers in Germany and Egypt should be demonstrable on the part of the funding recipients.

1.2 Funding purpose

The bilateral collaboration between science and industry that is expected to produce innovative and socio-economically utilisable research results in the form of technologies, products, processes, and/or services will be funded in the addressed focus areas of "One Health" and "Green Transition". The promotion of close co-operation between university and non-university research institutions and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is of particular importance. Within the framework of this funding guideline, existing co-operations can be expanded and new project co-operations can be initiated. Great importance is also attached to the involvement of young researchers.

In addition to innovation-driving research work, project-related mobility of scientists and experts, scientific workshops and symposia, or similar activities will also be supported as part of the collaborative projects.

The results of the funded project may only be used on the basis of the respective national law.

2. Funding Objectives

Funding will be provided for collaborative projects in applied research which jointly address the following priority topics:

- One Health: Human, animal, and environmental health, including medical and veterinary research issues, environmental sciences, food-water-energy nexus, applied biotechnology, and the health sector
- Green Transition: Resource-efficient economy in the context of ecological change, including smart cities / (digital) urban development, circular economy, green mobility / sustainable transportation

Joint project proposals are expected to make innovative contributions to solving regional and/or transregional challenges and to the further development of scientific and technological research on the above-priority topics. Furthermore, they should be of great practical relevance and set out strategies for the political, societal and economic implementation of research findings.

Special emphasis will be placed on cooperation between different partners in the area of R&D, on their scientific skills and industry participation. Therefore, the project consortia should, if possible, include universities and R&D institutions as well as companies involved in the commercial application of the results of applied research.

Funding will take place in two successive phases based on a (two-stage) application procedure:

- In Phase 1 (usually up to 24 months), a research-performing company partner (an SME in particular) must be involved on the German side and is highly recommended to be included on the Egyptian side.
- In Phase 2 (usually up to 18 months), the involvement of research-performing company partners (preferably SMEs) is mandatory on both the German and the Egyptian sides.

Special importance is attached to the participation of junior researchers on both sides.

Furthermore, it is desirable that the collaborative projects adopt high-profile measures to stimulate a discourse between the political and research communities, society, and industry on research and innovation policy issues.

No funding will be provided for export promotion measures under this call.

2.1 Funding Phase 1

In the first funding phase, individual and collaborative projects can receive funding for up to 24 months. Members of the German and Egyptian science communities are expected to work together in this phase, involving at least one research-performing company partner (SME in particular) on the German side and – highly recommended to be included on the Egyptian side.

At the end of the first phase, all projects will be evaluated by external experts with regard to the innovation potential of the delivered research results. A selection of consortia and/or collaboration partners will be chosen for further funding for usually up to 18 months.

The first phase should as a rule be designed in such a way that the delivered results could be used as a starting point or basis for potential follow-up project activities, for example under Horizon Europe, should the proposed project not receive further funding under this measure.

2.2 Funding Phase 2

Successful completion of the first 24-month funding phase is a prerequisite but not a guarantee for receiving funding in a further usually up to 18-month (maturation) phase.

During this second funding phase, the selected collaborative projects can receive funding for a further period usually of up to 18 months for the targeted maturation of their results for utilization. The involvement of scientific institutions or collaboration partners from both countries and at least one research-performing company partner on both the German and the Egyptian side (2+2 format) is an indispensable precondition.

3. Funding Recipients

Only bilateral projects are eligible for funding. The German-Egyptian project consortia must involve universities, teaching hospitals, non-university research institutions and other institutions contributing to research as well as commercial companies, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Applicants are required to have a plant or branch (company) or another entity to act as funding recipient (university, research institution) in Germany at the time of payment of the grant.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) under these funding regulations are companies that meet the requirements of the EU definition of SMEs.

Further partners may participate in the research project if this benefits the project and if these partners contribute their own funds.

Projects proposed for funding under this call should document their potential contributions to long-term sustainable cooperation with Egypt.

The project teams are expected to include both a German and an Egyptian project leader (PI); the latter's affiliation with an institution having an Egyptian legal personality must be guaranteed on the Egyptian side.

4. Type, scope, and rates of funding

Funding will be awarded in the form of a non-repayable project grant. Under these regulations, funding for the German partner(s) involves the award of

- A maximum of up to *EUR 450,000* as a rule for a period of *up to 24 months* (funding phase 1) as well as
- A maximum of up to *EUR 150,000* as a rule for further funding (funding phase 2) over a period usually of up to *18 months*.

No German partner may apply for more than 75% of the overall German share in the funding for the project.

Funding for the Egyptian partner involves the award of:

- A maximum of *EUR 300,000* as a rule, for a period of *up to 24 months* (funding phase 1) in case of participation of an industrial partner, and a maximum of *EUR 150,000* in case of non-inclusion of an industrial partner as well as
- A maximum of up to *EUR 450,000* as a rule, for further funding (funding phase 2) over a period usually of up to *18 months*.

No Egyptian partner may apply for more than 75% of the overall Egyptian share in case of involvement of an industrial partner.

4.1 Applications on the German side (for both funding phases) shall cover:

- a. Financial resources for staff required for the project.
- b. The following applies to the funding of travel and stays by researchers and by experts employed with the German partner institutions:
 - the costs/expenditure for travel at home and abroad required for the project (if by air: economy class) are governed by the travelling expenses provisions applicable at the respective German institution.
 - the sending country funds travel and stays by foreign project researchers and experts.
- c. Workshops with existing partners or aimed at opening up new potential for cooperation may receive the following support in Germany and in the partner country: For example, grants can be provided for expenses such as accommodation of guests, transfers, provision of workshop

documents, adequate hospitality and rental of premises. The amount of the grant depends on the size of the event and the number of foreign guests.

- d. Project-related non-cash resources and funds for equipment (see guidelines for applicants).
- e. Contracts: the costs/expenditure for necessary contracts awarded to third parties in Germany or Egypt may be eligible for funding in duly substantiated cases.

4.2 Applications on the Egyptian side *shall* cover:

- a. Incentives up to 1.2 million EGP
- b. Travel up to 800,000 EGP
- c. Indirect costs (institutional costs) up to 150,000 EGP
- d. Workshops with existing partners or aimed at opening up new potential for cooperation
- e. Project-related funds for equipment, supplies, and materials

*For industrial partner: Salaries, Travel, Consultation, dissemination fees, and indirect costs are not eligible for funding

5. Procedure

The application procedure consists of two stages:

5.1 Submission and selection of project outlines

In the first stage, identical versions of project outlines (for the possible overall period covering both funding phases) in readable PDF format must:

- for the **German Partners**: be submitted in electronic form to the DLR Project Management Agency at the latest via the PT-Outline application website
- for the **Egyptian Partners**: be submitted to STDF at: <http://www.stdf.eg/> (The proposal must be submitted by the Egyptian PI to the STDF website).

The applying consortium must name a collaboration coordinator (PI on both sides), who will submit the jointly drafted project outline.

The outline is expected to describe the following aspects of the project:

- I. Information about the project coordinator (PI) and the German and Egyptian project partners
- II. A meaningful summary (of goals, research priorities, utilization of results)
- III. The scientific framework of the project
 - a. planned activities for implementing the goals of the funding measure mentioned in sections 1 and 2 above
 - b. description of the (scientific) objective of the project
 - c. information about the current state of science and technology
 - d. any third-party involvement

- IV. International cooperation under the project
 - a. added value of international cooperation
 - b. contributions of the international partners, access to special resources
 - c. experience of the participating partners in international cooperation, previous collaborations
- V. Sustainability of the measure / utilization plan
 - a. expected project results
 - b. potential for implementation and further scientific, economic, societal and technical prospects for utilization of the project results
 - c. lasting consolidation of the cooperation between the partners
 - d. plans for cooperation in follow-up projects
 - e. plans for expanding cooperation to other institutions and networks
- VI. Description of the planned steps of the cooperation project
- VII. Estimated expenditure/costs
- VIII. Presentation of the planned measures for involving experts and the general public
- IX. Clear and precise project Impact
- X. Industrial partner participation and role
- XI. For the Egyptian partner these documents must be attached:
 - A cover page signed and stamped by the President of the PI institution and the industrial partner legal representative and signed by the Egyptian PI stating:
 - o the project title
 - o the name, position, and affiliation of the PI of the pre-proposal
 - o that the project idea was not funded or submitted to another funding agency (national or international)
 - o declaration of the institution's approval of the project.
 - o the total requested funds for the project
 - o the participation of industry in the project
 - Research team information table and CVs of the principal investigator (PI) and all other members of the research team) must be included.
 - Research team tables of the industrial partners (If any)
 - Gantt chart
 - Budget table

The outline must show clearly how all the partners will participate in the project's tasks and results. The protection of intellectual property also plays an important role in this context.

The project outline should not exceed twelve pages (excluding annexes). The project outline with the annexes should be submitted in English, in addition to a one-page summary in German and a one-page summary in Arabic.

The project outlines received will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

- I. Fulfilment of the formal prerequisites for funding
- II. Compliance with the funding aims of the call stated in section 1 above and the object of funding stated in section 2
- III. Scientific criteria
 - a. scientific quality and originality of the project

- b. relevance to BMBF and STDF programmes on the topic
 - c. expertise of the applicant and the German and international partners involved
 - d. scientific benefits and prospects for the utilization of the expected results
 - e. presentation of the planned measures for the involvement of experts and the general public using targeted communication, dialogue and participation formats (for example as part of an innovation forum)
- IV. Criteria concerning international cooperation
- a. experience of the applicant in international cooperation
 - b. quality of cooperation and added value for the partner institutions
 - c. initiation/development of new partnerships
 - d. creation of lasting bilateral/international partnerships
 - e. support for young researchers
- V. Plausibility and feasibility of the project (financing, milestones, and time frame)

Suitable project outlines will be selected for funding on the basis of the above criteria and evaluation with the involvement of German and Egyptian experts. Applicants will be informed in writing of the result of the selection.

Eligibility Criteria for the Egyptian partners:

- Proposals must be written in English
- Proposals must have a maximum duration of 24 months for the first phase
- Each PI can submit only one proposal
- PI must be a PhD/MD holder
- The Principal Investigator (PI) must be affiliated with an Egyptian research entity (university, research institution/center...etc.), which has an Egyptian legal identity
- According to STDF policy, all submitted proposals will be checked for plagiarism

Reasons for exclusion are:

- Lack of any one of the requirements listed above
- Incomplete application
- Proposals submitted in only one of the two countries
- Proposals fail to pass plagiarism and eligibility check
- Non-identical proposals submitted on each side
- On the Egyptian side:
 - Proposals in which maximum allowable contracted STDF project participation limit has been exceeded (The PI & Co-PI can't contribute with a less than 40% of their time and the contribution of any team member can't exceed 80% (in all the submitted/running projects), except the technicians and full-time research students (non-teaching assistance).
 - Proposals not submitted by the PI.

5.2 Submission of formal applications and decision-making procedure

In the second stage of the procedure, the German project partners and the Egyptian project partners whose project outlines have been evaluated positively, will be invited to submit identical content formal applications in readable PDF format for funding (for the possible overall period covering both funding phases).

For the **German Partner**, an application for funding is only considered complete if at least the requirements of Article 6 (2) GBER (cf. Annex) are fulfilled.

The "easy-Online" electronic application system must be used for drafting formal applications (taking into account the requirements set out in the Annex).
(<https://foerderportal.bund.de/easyonline/>).

This portal enables the electronic submission of the application using the TAN procedure or a qualified electronic signature. Submission of an application in paper form is also possible.

For the **Egyptian Partner**, applications should be submitted to STDF at: <http://www.stdf.eg/> (The proposal must be submitted by the Egyptian PI to STDF website).

In the case of collaborative projects, funding applications for the sub-projects must be submitted in consultation with the envisaged collaboration coordinator.

Formal applications for funding must include:

1. A cover page, to be signed by the Egyptian PI, and stamped by his/her respective institution, containing the following: [one page]
 - a. title of the project
 - b. the name, title and contact information of the Egyptian and the German PI applicants
 - c. the contracting organizations
 - d. the Research Area of the project
 - e. grant duration
 - f. total budget
2. A detailed (sub)project description
 - a. abstract - 1 paragraph - in Arabic, German and English
 - b. background
 - c. objectives of the proposed work
 - d. description of what each PI will do and the nature of collaboration
 - e. expected outcomes and impact of the proposed program of research
3. A detailed work plan and time schedule
 - a. feasibility of the work plan
 - b. plausibility of the time schedule
 - c. Gantt chart
4. Detailed information about the financing of the project:
 - a. appropriateness and necessity of the requested amount of funding
 - b. guarantee of overall financing during the entire project period
 - c. funding requests for Egyptian and German PIs shown in euros
 - d. detailed Egyptian and German budget justification.
 - e. for the Egyptian partners, a justified budget table for the Egyptian funding must be attached
5. **For the Egyptian partner:** Egyptian institutional endorsement letter stating: the project title; the name, position, and affiliation of the PI of the proposal; that the project idea was not funded or submitted to another funding agency (national or international); and a declaration that the institution approves the project. It must be signed and stamped by the President of the PI institution.

6. **For the Egyptian Partner:** research team information table and CVs of the principal investigator (PI) and all other members of the research team) must be included.
7. **Egyptian applicants** shall submit applications as per STDF guidelines. Supportive documents should be submitted from the Egyptian PI, including the acknowledgment form.

The work and financial plans will be mainly evaluated in accordance with the criteria listed above:

- eligibility for funding (including in respect of section 5 of these regulations)
- necessity and appropriateness of requested funding
- plausibility of the explanations regarding the financial plan
- fulfilment of possible requirements resulting from the first stage
- quality and meaningfulness of the utilization plan, also with regard to the funding objective of these regulations
- statement of reasons why government funding is required; presentation of scientific/technical and economic risks
- organization of cooperation in the collaboration
- determination of milestones with quantitative and verifiable criteria

5.3 Selection of research collaborations for the subsequent, **second funding phase**

5.3.1 Submission and selection of refined / more detailed concept papers

Refined, more detailed concept papers for implementation which are based on the research results of previous project funding (phase 1) and which target maturation during the subsequent, second funding phase (usually of up to **18 months**) must be submitted to the Project Management Agency and STDF **in readable PDF format, at least three months prior to the end of the first (normally 24-month) funding phase**. They provide the basis for an evaluation by external experts and thus for potential follow-up funding during the above-mentioned second funding phase (usually of up to **18 months**).

The concept papers should be drafted in English, include an informative summary in German and Arabic and contain the following:

- a) specification of the planned activities, detailed description of the planned work on the tasks listed in section 2.2 (such as current situation, including the state of research and technology, and need for topic-specific R&D) as well as motivation and needs of the companies and/or participating partners
- b) objectives based on the state of research and technology and planned result; novelty of the project idea and expected knowledge gain (for example, increase of the TRL by at least one level on conclusion of the project)
- c) description of the planned approach, the necessary research work and own previous work on which this can build as well as work-sharing within the project
- d) description of the current and the planned project consortium and of the expected specific contributions by all partners (including plans for networking at national and international level as well as specific measures for planned public relations work)

- e) estimate of costs and/or expenditure, sound planning with regard to work, time and staff requirements in person-months, description of management structures, dependencies, milestone criteria and partial results as well as risk assessment
- f) consistent finalized strategy for the planned translation of the results into socio-economic value creation: Possibilities for broad use – particularly for SMEs – and utilization of the results in industry, society and the scientific community, possibly in specialized training or higher education and by professional associations and intermediaries
- g) brief presentation of company/organization, business model, ownership structure as appropriate, number of staff. In the case of companies: Information about the provision of the required own contribution.

The requested concept papers to be submitted for the second funding phase must provide evidence (via new or updated Letters of Intent/Lol as appropriate) that the political/societal/economic agencies/players/stakeholders that are relevant for project implementation in Germany and Egypt are involved in the project consortium for the second funding phase.

The following criteria will be applied in the evaluation of the concept papers:

- Scientific quality of the proposal to pursue the objective described in section 1 and address the tasks mentioned under 2.2 above
- Quality of the consortium
- Quality of the planned cooperation and project management
- Evaluation of the strategy for translating the results into practical application; evaluation of the prospects for application-oriented and political, societal and economic utilization; feasibility of the utilization plan with regard to market potential and/or large-scale effectiveness
- Level of support provided by the political/societal/economic stakeholders that are relevant for project implementation in Germany and Egypt
- Evaluation of the planned public relations measures
- Plausibility and feasibility of the project (financing, milestones, and time frame)

Based on the elaborated strategy and concept papers that are submitted and applying the specified criteria, the funding provider, relying on support from an independent selection panel and/or expert opinions, where appropriate, will issue recommendations on whether continuation of the collaborative project in the second funding phase promises success, specifying any adaptations considered necessary. The collaboration partners will be informed in writing of the result of the selection.

5.4 Procedure for submission

Funding for participating eligible Egyptian institutions will be provided through the Egyptian Science, Technology, and Innovation Funding Authority (STDF) in accordance with the national funding regulations applicable in Egypt.

The Egyptian side will publish a short English version of the call via the Science, Technology and Innovation Funding Authority (STDF) (<http://www.stdf.eg>), which sets out the national Egyptian regulations.

contact for Egyptian project partners:

Science, Technology and Innovation Funding Authority (STDF) in Cairo, Egypt
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Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)

Science, Technology and Innovation Funding Authority (STDF) in Cairo, Egypt