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सत्यमेव जयते
DEPARTMENT OF BIOTECHNOLOGY
Ministry of Science and Technology

Indo-Swiss Joint Research Programme (ISJRP)

Joint Research Projects:

Call for Proposals 2020

A maximum of 15-20 projects can be funded for this call

Opening date: 02.06.2020

Closing date: 11.09.2020

1. Introduction

The Indo-Swiss Joint Research Programme (ISJRP) was initiated by the Indian and Swiss governments in 2005 in order to further develop the bilateral cooperation in scientific and technological areas of strategic relevance to both countries. The programme supports cutting-edge research that brings together faculty and young researchers from Switzerland and India. The current call for joint research projects (JRPs) is financed by the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) in Switzerland and the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) in India on the principles of reciprocity, parity and activity matching funding. An Indo-Swiss Joint Committee on Science & Technology defines the strategic goals and orientations of the programme.

The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) in India have been mandated to jointly launch a call for Joint Research Projects (JRPs), organise the evaluation of the submitted proposals and monitor the funded projects.

2. Joint Research Projects (JRPs)

Grants for JRPs are aimed at promoting collaborative projects with clearly defined goals, involving at least one partner based in Switzerland and one based in India. Applications should describe ambitious research and propose innovative approaches. The research is to be carried out at the research facilities involved. Reciprocal visits and short stays in Switzerland for researchers from India and vice versa are also included within the scope of a JRP.

Project duration: The duration of the JRPs is 3 to 4 years. Proposals with a duration outside this range will not be accepted.

3. Research field

The call aims to support research and development projects that advance the implementation of **Systems Medicine** approaches, in both clinical research and medical practice, by funding high quality research projects that will look at health and disease from a systems level perspective.

Project proposals submitted under this call may include, but are not limited to, the following research areas:

- Understanding of disease complexity, early diagnosis of disease and examine disease phenotypes that will lead to better patient classification
- Understanding the influence of gender, age, ethnicity or other relevant data for the development of precision medicine
- Investigation of shared common early pathways among disease models (eg. metabolism, immunology and cell proliferation etc.) to understand the mechanistic basis of disease manifestation and progression
- Usage of the prognostic, diagnostic, preventive and therapeutic value of existing clinical material and data or, where relevant, appropriate models
- Use and development of computational models that lead to a better understanding of the biological processes that play a fundamental role in complex diseases and identify key common underlying mechanisms

The project proposals should clearly define the clinical relevance of the projects. Clear strategies for validation of the predictions of in silico computational models that will be developed using

experimental and already available clinical datasets should be provided. Furthermore, the proposals should also provide evidence on how the investigators expect to access appropriate, relevant and available clinical material and associated data (patient cohorts with comprehensive clinical characterisation/annotation).

Interested applicants may note that the call is also suitable for fundamental systems-level studies relating to epidemics or pandemics such as the current SARS-CoV-2 pandemic including other infectious, non-infectious and chronic diseases.

Expected outcomes: It is expected that the outcomes of the projects will improve our current knowledge of health and disease, leading to new directions for clinical research aimed at delivering better and more efficient and precise prevention, diagnostics and treatments of human diseases. Projects should also aim within their proposed duration to validate the translation of Systems Medicine into medical research and practice by focusing on high quality data sets and clinical relevance.

Proposals outside of the thematic area defined above will not be accepted.

4. Eligibility

Each proposal for a JRP must have at least one main applicant based in Switzerland and one main applicant based in India; they are the principal investigators on the Swiss and Indian side respectively. They bear the main responsibility for the project, including its technical and administrative coordination as well as the timely delivery of scientific and financial reports. Further applicants based in Switzerland and/or India can also participate in a JRP.

Eligibility criteria in Switzerland

Applicants requesting funding must meet the eligibility requirements of the SNSF. The eligibility criteria for the main and the further applicants are identical. The SNSF Funding Regulations, the General implementation regulations and the Regulations on Project Funding are applicable or applicable *mutatis mutandis* where not stated otherwise. All main applicants and further applicants may only submit one application per call. Project partners as described in Article 11.2 of the SNSF Funding Regulations are not entitled to receive funds from the SNSF if their affiliated institution is located in India. Applicants can submit a proposal for a JRP under the present call even if they hold or have applied for another SNSF grant. Moreover, grantees may submit proposals to all SNSF funding schemes during the funding period of a JRP, provided that there is no substantial thematic overlap. Please note that the present call is not in conflict with the restrictions applicable to the SNSF's national project funding in accordance with Article 13 of the Regulations on Project Funding.

Eligibility criteria in India

Please refer to Annex 2 of this document.

5. Funding

JRP proposals contain two separate budgets: one budget in INR for the Indian applicant(s) (paid by the DBT according to its rules) and one budget in CHF for the Swiss part (paid by the SNSF according to its rules). The available budget will enable funding of 15 to 20 projects, provided that a sufficient number of high-quality proposals are submitted. The funding per project is sufficient

for each side to support employees' salaries (PhD students, postdocs, other staff) as well as consumables, some minor equipment and the mobility costs related to the project.

Eligible costs in Switzerland
The maximum permissible budget for a project is CHF 350,000 for four years and CHF 250,000 for three years.

- Personnel costs (salaries within the salary ranges and rates set by the SNSF and social security contributions of scientific and technical employees); please note that the salaries of applicants are not eligible costs
- Material costs, if they are directly linked to the research project, in particular material of enduring value, the cost of expendable items, field expenses, travel expenses or third party charges
- Direct costs incurred through the use of research infrastructure linked to the research
- Costs for granting access to research data (Open Research Data, max. CHF 10,000 per project)
- Costs of organizing conferences and workshops in connection with the funded research
- Costs of national and international cooperation and networking activities directly associated with the funded research

The SNSF regulations apply to the Swiss budget. However, overhead costs are not admissible. Please note that costs for open access publications can be requested separately via the OA platform of the SNSF.

Eligible costs in India
Please refer to Annex 2 of this document.

Visiting costs between Switzerland and India
When budgeting visits between the Swiss and Indian partners, expenses related to international travel are to be charged to the budget of the visiting side and the living expenses (local hospitality etc.) to the budget of the hosting side. Overseas health/medical insurance should be included in the budget of the visiting side. Research visits between Switzerland and India must be balanced in number and duration.

The following flat rates are to be used:

- Living expenses for visiting scientists from India to Switzerland:
    - Short-term visits (up to two weeks): CHF 160 per day
    - Long-term visits: CHF 3600 per month

- Living expenses for visiting scientists from Switzerland to India:
    - INR 2,500 per day for each person plus fully furnished institutional guest house accommodation on actuals subject to maximum of Rs. 4,000 per day

- Travel expenses for visiting scientists from India to Switzerland: INR 75,000 per person

- Travel expenses for visiting scientists from Switzerland to India:
    - To Delhi: CHF 1200 per person
    - To other places in India: CHF 1700 per person

6. Submission

Proposals are to be jointly prepared by the Swiss and Indian applicants. They must be submitted by the Swiss main applicant to the SNSF via its electronic submission system (*my*SNF, www.mysnf.ch). No hard copies will be accepted.

Indian researchers are asked to note that all applications must be submitted via the SNSF online system, as indicated above. The Indian applicants can have access to the electronic submission system through their Swiss partners. After logging into *my*SNF, the correct funding scheme must be selected: *Programmes (national and international) > Bilateral Co-operation (Initiatives of the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation) > Indo-Swiss Joint Research Programme).* Applications submitted in India and not via the SNSF online system in Switzerland will not be processed. Neither the SNSF nor the DBT will be held responsible for non-submission of the application. After the submission on *my*SNF, the Indian applicants need to send a soft copy along with one hard copy to the DBT (address at the end of the call document).

The call process is highly competitive, therefore an application does not guarantee funding. Only positively rated applications will be considered for funding.

Swiss researchers are asked to note that their submission falls under the SNSF Funding Regulations and Regulations on Project Funding which are applicable or applicable *mutatis mutandis* where not stated otherwise.

The application consists of two parts:

- The administrative part, which must be completed online:
    - Personal data of the Swiss main applicant
    - Personal data of the Indian main applicant
    - Personal data of further applicant(s) from Switzerland and/or India
    - Information on the employment of all applicants
    - Basic data on the project (e.g. title, research field, starting date, duration, summary)
    - Funding requested from the SNSF
    - Information on authorisations required in Switzerland
    - Data Management Plan (DMP)
    - Other information (e.g. whether the project is related to other SNSF projects, the name of the Swiss university/research institution at which the planned project will be implemented, statement concerning already available funds or funds requested elsewhere)
- PDF documents that are to be uploaded to *my*SNF:
    - The research plan (must have the structure indicated in Annex 1) including the funding requested from DBT
    - The CVs and publication lists of all applicants and other researchers involved
    - If applicable, equipment quotes
    - Details of ongoing and completed projects with DBT (for the Indian applicants).

For specific questions related to www.mysnf.ch, please contact the support team by e-mail (mysnf.support@snf.ch) or telephone (+41 31 308 22 00). Please note that you need a user account in order to submit proposals via *my*SNF. To open an account, please register with the SNSF as a user. Applicants with existing user accounts need not apply for new ones.

The proposal must include a Data Management Plan (DMP) set up according to the requirements issued by the SNSF. The proposal can only be submitted once the DMP has been completed. Applicants must submit a DMP that is understandable, suits their project and meets the standards set by their research community. **At this stage, the DMP is considered a draft and excluded from the evaluation process. It is not shared with external reviewers**. The final DMP must be provided at the latest by the end of the project. The content of the DMP is directly entered in the *my*SNF submission form. It is not possible to upload a DMP as a separate PDF file. Please keep in mind the time needed to complete the DMP during the submission procedure.

The submitted documents must comply with the principles of scientific integrity. All applicants take responsibility for the correctness of their contributions. If the project plan is not written in accordance with the rules of good scientific practice all applicants are accountable and may be asked to provide a statement; ultimately the project may not be considered. Reference is made to internationally recognised standards on good scientific practice.

Deadline for submission of applications: 11.09.2020, 17:00 CEST. Incomplete applications and applications received after the deadline will not be considered. No request for extension of the deadline shall be considered.

Language: all documents submitted must be in English.

7. Evaluation

Peer review: Proposals for JRPs will be reviewed according to standard international peer review procedures, jointly organised by the SNSF and the DBT. The reviewers are determined by the members of the evaluation panel and the administrative offices. These external experts complete a peer review of the applications and assess the scientific quality of the JRPs using a score system.

Evaluation panel: An ad hoc evaluation panel will be set up, composed of experts proposed by the SNSF and the DBT. Based on the peer reviews, the evaluation panel will assign each project to one of six ratings. The experts' recommendations will include a rationale for the rating. Priority will be given to applications with the highest ratings, regardless of the research area.

Decision: At the SNSF, the list of projects proposed for funding by the evaluation panel must be approved by the Specialised Committee for International Co-operation and the Presiding Board. At the DBT, it must be approved by the Secretary of the DBT. Through this procedure, the projects will be considered as approved by the Indo-Swiss Joint Committee.

The criteria used to evaluate the scientific quality of the proposals:

- Scientific relevance
- Originality of the aims and objectives
- Appropriateness of the methodology and feasibility
- Track record and expertise of the researchers
- Complementarity of the research partners

The evaluation results will be communicated to the Swiss main applicants by the SNSF and to the Indian main applicants by the DBT.

The earliest starting date for the JRPs: 01.05.2021

8. Reporting

Swiss and Indian project partners will report separately to the SNSF and the DBT respectively. Scientific and financial reports are to be submitted annually.

In Switzerland:
The Swiss main applicant will be responsible for reporting to the SNSF. Standard SNSF rules apply both for the financial and the scientific report, which must be submitted annually. They include a qualitative and a quantitative part (output data).

In India:
The Indian main applicant will be responsible for reporting to the DBT. The DBT's rules apply both for the financial and the scientific report.

9. Payments

In Switzerland (SNSF funding):
The standard SNSF rules apply. In principle, the budgets for JRPs are transferred to the Swiss principal investigator (PI) in annual instalments at the beginning of each project year.

In India (DBT funding):
The standard DBT rules apply. In principle, the budgets for JRPs will be transferred to the Indian principal investigator (PI) in annual instalments at the beginning of each project year, subject to submission of annual financial and technical reports.

10. VAT

In Switzerland (SNSF funding):
The JRP grants are not subject to VAT or other taxes and charges. However, research expenses are not excluded from VAT. Therefore, all research expenses budgeted in a JRP (e.g. equipment, consumables, etc.) can be charged to the programme, VAT included, unless the research institution (e.g. university, public research organisation, etc.) is able to recover the VAT.

In India (DBT funding):
The standard DBT regulations apply.

11. Publications and intellectual property

The PIs are obliged to publish research results coming from the JRPs in appropriate form and according to SNSF and DBT standards.

Applicants must consult both the Swiss and Indian host institution concerning their internal intellectual property regulations. It is important that an agreement be reached in advance. It is the responsibility of both PIs to make sure such an agreement is signed before the project starts. A copy of the agreement needs to be sent to the DBT and the SNSF.

12. Further information and contacts

In Switzerland

Swiss National Science Foundation
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Website: www.snsf.ch

In India

Department of Biotechnology (DBT)
Dr. Manish Rana
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International Cooperation
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New Delhi - 110 003.
Email: manish.rana@nic.in
Website: http://dbtindia.nic.in/index.asp

Annex 1: Guidelines for writing the project proposal

For your project proposal, we kindly ask you to use the section headings (points 1 to 6) indicated below. In order to ensure that the scientific content of your proposal can be assessed adequately, please provide detailed documentation which sets out clearly the aims, subject matter and methods of the project you are planning.

1. Summary of the research plan (max. 8,000 characters)

This should include the most important features of your research plan and place your project in a broader scientific context. This summary must be identical with the one you have provided in the *my*SNF data container "Basic data II".

2. Research plan

The research plan (i.e. subsections 2.1-2.5) must not exceed 20 pages and 80,000 characters (including spaces). These upper limits include any blank space, figures, tables and formulae; **however, the references do not count towards these 20 pages**. The font size should be 10pt or larger and the line spacing at least 1.5. Unless indicated otherwise, the research plan should not contain any annexes.

2.1 Current state of research in the field

By citing the most important publications in the relevant field, please set out the scientific background and basis of the project, explain the need to perform research on the topic you propose and briefly describe important research currently being conducted internationally.

2.2 Current state of own research and partnership aspect

- Please describe briefly the work done by the different applicants in the relevant research field or in related fields and indicate the relevant publications.
- Explain how the different applicants complement each other for the proposed research project.
- If applicable, describe past collaborations between the Swiss and Indian partners.

2.3 Detailed research plan

Against the background described in sections 2.1 and 2.2, state the aims that you plan to attain during the lifetime of the project. Please consider the following points:

- Which investigations and/or experiments do you plan to carry out/are necessary to attain the stated aims?
- What is the rationale for getting the project started and how do you intend to develop the work later on?
- What is the expected added value (synergistic benefit) of the collaboration?

Information concerning the methods necessary to attain the aims:

- Which are the methods available to you?
- To which other methods do you have access and how?
- Which methods need to be developed?

Data and data collection:

- Which data are available to you and from where?
- Which data need to be collected?

2.4 Work division, schedule and milestones

- Please indicate how you plan to divide the work among the different partners.
- As far as possible, please give an approximate schedule for the work to be carried out within the project and indicate the most important milestones. In particular, please describe the major tasks of the staff to be employed within the project by the different partners.
- List the planned visits between the Swiss and Indian research groups (visiting scientist, hosting scientist, purpose of visit, date and duration of visit).

2.5 Importance, impact and results

Scientific importance and impact

Please describe briefly the importance of your research for the scientific community and the impact you expect from the project on research and training/teaching in your field/discipline. Please indicate how you will publish/communicate your results.

Expected results and dissemination plan

Describe in detail the project outcomes you envisage. Explain how you will share these findings with stakeholders and the community. Address the potential for knowledge transfer to industry (if applicable).

Broader impact

If your application concerns use-inspired research, please indicate whether and to what extent the proposed project will have a broader impact and what this impact will be. The following points should be addressed:

- Need for research as perceived by practitioners/industry: are there any knowledge gaps? Are innovations and improvements expected?
- Transferability of results: to what degree can research results be put into practice?
- Other potential impacts: in which spheres outside science could the implementation of the research results entail changes and what is the nature of these changes?

3. Ethical, safety and regulatory issues

Does your proposed work raise ethical, safety or regulatory issues? If yes, how will you deal with them? Indicate this clearly.

For the Indian side, all statutory clearances pertaining to Ethical committee clearance, Institutional Biosafety Committee, Biodiversity authority, etc. as applicable in the project should be provided as per the DBT norms.

4. List of ongoing and/or recent research projects between the Indian and Swiss applicants

Project title	**Research area**	**Project duration (xx/yy/zz - xx/yy/zz)**	**Amount of funds & funding source**

Insert additional rows into the table if required.

5. List of ongoing and/or recent research projects with DBT (for the Indian applicants)

Project title	**Research area**	**Project duration (xx/yy/zz - xx/yy/zz)**	**Amount of funds & funding source**

6. Requested funds (India)

(For the Swiss side, please see corresponding data container on *my*SNF.)

Summary of costs in India: Please give the total cost (in Indian Rupees) of the Indian project part

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
A. Non-recurring				
1. Equipment and accessories				
Total A				
B. Recurring				
1. Consumables				
2. Manpower (Studentship and fellowships for PhD and post-doctoral students/experts/helpers etc.)				
3. Travel a. local travel b. International travel c. Expenditure for stay of students in d. Local hospitality for visiting scientist				
4. Review meeting				
5. Contingency				
6. Field and farm expenses				
7. Overheads				
8. Outsourcing				
TOTAL B (1+2+3+4+5+6+7+8)				
TOTAL (A+B)				

Annex 2: Eligibility Criteria and Eligible Costs in India (only applicable for Indian applicants)

Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science & Technology, India

Eligibility:

DBT is the contact point for researchers in India. DBT encourages and supports research, development and innovation, and contributes to favourable research and innovation environment in the country.

Participating entities/organisations:

The participating entities/organisations from India have to be a legal entity as per Indian law. The Indian entities eligible to participate include:

• Government of India supported or recognised (Public or Private) academia; research organisations and urban or other local bodies;

• Government of India recognised not-for-profit, NGO(s) / VO(s) / Trust(s) /Research foundations, having research as one of the imperative mandates are eligible for funding subject to fulfilment of DBT's technical, administrative and financial.

Kindly Note: The number of project partners should be optimum and correspond to the objectives of the project. Each project should clearly demonstrate the partner's essentiality, complementarities, and added value in jointly addressing the topic.

Academic/Research Partners:

• Public and/or private universities and research organisations must have a well established research support system, for basic or applied research; and

• Submission of proof of establishment under Indian statue; recognition documents and registration at Government of India's Public Finance Management System (PFMS) - https://pfms.nic.in shall be obligatory.

Not-for-profit, NGO(s)/ VO(s) / Trust(s) / Research Foundations

• The Indian private R&D performing institutions and Not-for-profit, NGO(s) /VO(s) / Trust(s) / Research foundations should have experience of at least 3years in scientific research, teaching, training and extension activities; and

• Proof of registration at 'NGO DARPAN' of NITI Aayog (http://ngodarpan.gov.in/); Certificate of registration under Society Registration Act; certificate of DSIR in-house R&D recognition and registration at Government of India's Public Finance Management System (PFMS)(https://pfms.nic.in) shall be obligatory.

Ineligible organisations:

• Research centres and academic organisations headquartered and owned outside India and their subsidiaries in India, or vice versa, are not eligible to receive funding from DBT under this programme.

Regulatory and ethical considerations (if applicable)

I. Research using hazardous microorganisms, genetically engineered (GE) organisms & products thereof for R&D purpose

In India, research using hazardous microorganisms, genetically engineered (GE)organisms & products thereof are governed under Rules, 1989 (Rules for the Manufacture, Use/Import/Export and Storage of Hazardous Micro Organisms/Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells) of Environment (Protection) Act, 1986,according to which, necessary intimation/ recommendation/ authorization from concerned Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBSC), Review Committee on Genetic Manipulation (RCGM) & Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) is obligatory based on type & scale of research operations.

Further guidance on regulatory considerations can be obtained from:

• Guidelines and Handbook for IBSCs, 2011

• http://www.dbtindia.nic.in/wp-content/uploads/9.-Guidelines-_Handbook_2011.pdf

• Regulations and Guidelines on Biosafety of Recombinant DNA Research & Biocontainment, 2017,

http://www.dbtindia.nic.in/wp-content/uploads/Draft-Biosafety-Regulations-andBiocontainment-Guidelines-2017-FF.pdf

• Recommendations for Streamlining the Current Regulatory Framework, 2005

• http://www.moef.nic.in/divisions/csurv/geac/draftreport_rpharma.pdf

II. Human and Animal Subjects Research

DBT and SNSF are committed to ensure that projects involving human or animal subjects are protected from research risks in compliance with the rules and policies in respectively countries (ICMR/DBT policies).

All projects recommended for award that involve human or animal subjects will undergo ethics review as well as a review by the Indian Bioethics Committees prior to award request.

For information on ICMR policies, please consult:

• Guidelines and Handbook for IBSCs, 2011

• National Ethical Guidelines for Biomedical and Health Research Involving Human Participants, 2017,

http://www.icmr.nic.in/guidelines/ICMR_Ethical_Guidelines_2017.pdf

Indian PIs should apply to their institutional review boards (IRBs)/ institutional ethics committees (IECs) at the time of submission of proposal to obtain necessary bioethics approvals from all involved institutions. If selected, Indian PIs are required to submit proof of their institution's IRB/IECs approval to DBT.

III. Authorizations for pre-clinical and/or human clinical trials

Investigators must satisfy regulatory and ethical provisions adopted under:

• Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945 (as amended from time to time) of Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940

• Committee for the purpose of Control and Supervision of Experiments on Animals. http://cpcsea.nic.in/Auth/index.aspx

• Schedule 'Y' of Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945

Requirements and Guidelines for Permission to Import and/or Manufacture of New Drugs for Sale or to undertake Clinical Trials:

http://cdsco.nic.in/html/D&C_Rules_Schedule_Y.pdf

• Handbook: Good Laboratory Practice (GLP). Quality practices for regulated non-clinical research and development, 2nd ed. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2009

http://www.who.int/tdr/publications/documents/glphandbook.pdf

• Clinical Trials Registry of India (CTRI) – India

http://ctri.nic.in/Clinicaltrials/login.php

Eligible Costs and Funding:

Budgeted costs of the project to legal entities subject to obligatory fulfilment of eligibility criteria:

DBT will support (Grant-in-aid) 100% of the approved budget costs to the following two categories of organizations:

• Government of India supported or recognised public or private academic institutions or research organisation, and urban or other local bodies;

• Not-for-profit, NGO(s) / VO(s) / Trust(s) / Research foundations, having research as one of the imperative mandates.

Eligible costs for funding are: Capital expenditure (equipment's), Manpower, Consumables, Travel (local and international travel), Contingency, Overheads, Outsourcing, others. (Academia can factor in additional sub heads (in other category) such as training & awareness; workshops; publications; review meetings, etc. under expenditure based on the requirement of the project).

Non-Admissible Cost from DBT:

i. Regulatory approval fees;

ii. Prosecution/litigation costs;

iii. Insurance coverage;

iv. Salary of investigators;

v. Capital expenditure for the purchase of assets such as office furniture, motor vehicles, Office equipment viz. desktops, laptops, tablets, cell phones, scanners, printers, photocopy machines, and renovation or extension of facilities such as buildings and laboratories;

vi. Capital expenditure toward technology(ies), demonstration plants and associated field equipment(s), hardware, software etc. for test and analysis from consortium partner(s) from abroad;

vii. Expenditure toward rental and utilities;

viii. International travel to countries other than the one participating within the consortia;

ix. Mere attendance at conferences/ symposiums/ congresses

Kindly Note Mobility - exchange research visits between Switzerland and India. Travel costs, living expenses and visa costs are eligible for funding. Eligibility is subject to national regulations.

Contact Person:

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