

## NATO SCIENCE FOR PEACE AND SECURITY

### SPECIAL CALL FOR PROPOSALS ON COUNTERING UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEMS

The NATO Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme promotes dialogue and practical cooperation between NATO member states and partner countries based on scientific research, technological innovation and knowledge exchange. It enables scientists, experts and officials from Allied nations and NATO partner countries to work together to address emerging security challenges and their impact.

Through the SPS Programme, NATO has demonstrated its longstanding commitment to science, innovation and practical cooperation with NATO partner countries. The SPS Programme offers funding, expert advice and support to tailor-made, civil security-relevant activities that respond to NATO’s strategic objectives. Participation in the SPS Programme enables experts and scientists to develop innovative solutions to address today’s security challenges, and to build partnerships among peers in NATO member states and partner countries.

For more information on the SPS Programme and the management of its activities, please visit the NATO SPS website at [www.nato.int/science](http://www.nato.int/science).

*The rules set out in this call for proposals complement the SPS Events Handbook and the SPS Multi-Year Project (MYP) Handbook. In addition to details set out in the award letter, these documents will guide the execution of grants awarded as a result of this call for proposals.*

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## **ELIGIBILITY**

Only applications meeting all of the following criteria will be taken into consideration.

Applications submitted to the SPS Programme must:

1. Contribute toward NATO's strategic objectives and have a clear link to security;
2. Address at least one of the SPS Key Priorities;
3. Be developed jointly by scientists or experts from at least one NATO member nation and one eligible NATO partner country.
  - All participants in the proposed activity must be nationals of a NATO member nation or an eligible NATO partner country;
  - Each activity must include a scientist or expert taking on the role of NATO country Project Director (NPD). This person must be a resident and employed in a NATO member country;
  - Each activity must include a scientist or expert taking on the role of Partner country Project Director (PPD). This person must be a resident and employed in an eligible NATO partner country (see list below);
  - Additional Co-Directors from either NATO nations or eligible NATO partner countries may be included in proposals for Multi-Year Projects.
4. Be developed and implemented by Co-Directors employed by governmental, academic, or other non-profit institutions. For-profit private companies are not eligible for SPS funding;
5. Include realistic plans and budgets;
6. Be developed and managed in alignment with rules and regulations outlined in the SPS handbooks available on the SPS website at the following link: <https://www.nato.int/en/about-us/organization/nato-structure/science-for-peace-and-security-hub/managing-sps-grants>.

### **Eligible countries**

Individuals and institutions from the following countries are eligible to participate in activities supported by the SPS Programme:

**NATO member countries:** Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, the Republic of North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Türkiye, United Kingdom, United States of America.

**Eligible NATO partner countries:** Algeria, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Egypt, Georgia, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Kyrgyz Republic, Malta, Mauritania, the Republic of Moldova, Mongolia, Morocco, New Zealand, Pakistan, Qatar, Serbia, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan.

## **FOCUS OF THIS SPS SPECIAL CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

Technologies to counter Unmanned Aerial Systems face many challenges in both the civilian and military domain. The rapid development cycle and complexity of UAS now far outpace the rate at which defensive capabilities can adapt. The growing affordability of small commercially available drones has increased the cost imbalance, greatly challenging traditional measures used to protect from airborne threats.

These developments threaten critical infrastructure, such as airports, energy facilities, and ports, and pose significant risks to public security. The ability to respond rapidly using cost-effective, innovative solutions is therefore essential.

To confront this challenge, the SPS Programme is launching a **Special Call for Proposals on Countering Unmanned Aerial Systems (CUAS)**.

The SPS programme is seeking **innovative research-based solutions for detecting, tracking and identifying**, small UAS (up to 25 KG). Proposals focussed on dual-use research are particularly welcome.

**Applications received for this special call must contribute to one or more of the following challenge areas:**

- detection of objects under difficult conditions (e.g. high volume of objects, small objects, adverse weather, friend or foe);
- advancing sensor fusion techniques;
- passive radar detection.

**Expected use cases include:**

- high interference and/or high traffic, e.g. urban environments, ports, airports;
  - sensitive environments involving critical infrastructure and assets, such as airports, energy facilities, public venues;
  - border and shoreline protection.
- **Available grants:** For this special call for proposals, the SPS Programme welcomes applications for Multi-Year Projects and Events (Advanced Research Workshops, Advanced Training Courses and Advanced Study Institutes).
- **Themes:** Applications for this special call must be aligned with these SPS Programme Key Priorities: <https://www.nato.int/en/about-us/organization/nato-structure/science-for-peace-and-security-hub/key-priorities>

## **HOW TO APPLY**

- **For all grant mechanisms:**
  - To familiarize themselves with information required to submit a complete proposal, potential applicants may find templates of the application forms for each SPS grant mechanism on the [SPS website](#) under the heading “Managing SPS grants”.
  - Proposals must be drafted and submitted via the SPS grant platform (<https://natosps.grantplatform.com/>). Proposals submitted in any other format or means (e.g. via email) will not be taken into consideration.
  - Therefore, interested applicants must:
    - Register an account on the SPS grant platform.
    - Identify available opportunities on the SPS grant platform homepage.
    - Click on “Start application” to access the application form, select the grant mechanism they are interested in, and submit their proposal.
    - The SPS Programme strongly advises against last minute submissions.
  - Note that the proposal will undergo evaluation by the SPS office and the Independent Scientific Evaluation Group (ISEG). Proposals recommended by the ISEG for award will be shared with the NATO Partnerships and Cooperative Security Committee (PCSC) for approval.
- **For Events only:** A complete application includes a duly filled out application form on the SPS grant platform, as well as supporting documentation. The following documents, which are also accessible via the application form and available for download on the [SPS website](#) under the heading “Managing SPS grants”, are an integral part of a complete application:
  - [SPS Events Budget](#)
  - [SPS Events Acceptance of Funds](#)
  - [SPS Events Cooperation Agreement](#)
- **For Multi-year Projects only:** A complete proposal includes a duly filled out application form on the SPS grant platform, as well as supporting documentation. Supporting documentation required to submit a complete application includes:
  - Project Schedule (Gantt or another suitable chart).
  - An end-user commitment letter for each of the project’s end-users.
  - Brief overview of participating institutions.
  - The following documents, which are also accessible via the application form and available for download on the [SPS website](#) under the heading “Managing SPS grants”:
    - [SPS MYP Detailed Budget \(Excel spreadsheet\)](#)
    - [SPS MYP Acceptance of Funds](#)
    - [SPS MYP Agreement for Joint Research](#)
    - [SPS MYP Sample Intellectual Property Rights \(IPR\) Agreement](#) or an IPR waiver, agreed by all participants and their institutions.

## **GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS**

- **Review outcomes:** All applicants will be informed about the result. Please note that no further feedback will be provided.
- **Multiple submissions:** Co-Directors are limited to one proposal per call. (i.e. it is not possible to be Co-Director of multiple proposals at the same time).
- **Ongoing activities:** Prospective Co-Directors should ensure that any other ongoing SPS activity directed by them is formally closed before applying (i.e. it is not possible to be Co-Director of multiple activities at the same time). Provided that this does not interfere with

their ongoing work, Co-Directors of ongoing activities may be involved in new proposals as participants, but not as Co-Directors.

- **Before submitting a proposal**, applicants must map the state-of-the art and identify how their idea innovates on existing academic and industrial efforts. Proposals should demonstrate awareness of the state-of-the-art, and clearly mention how they differ from ongoing work by the project team and others, using appropriate and recent literature references where possible. Mapping the state-of-the-art may not be the objective of a proposed activity, nor a significant component of its implementation.
- **Proposals for Events** should focus on objectives beyond the execution of the event itself. They should clearly elaborate on how events and their results are relevant to NATO, and explain how organisers will ensure that the results will have an impact on relevant stakeholders and communities of interest. Networking is an integral component of SPS-supported events, but it may not be presented as a goal in itself.
- **Proposals for Multi-Year Projects:**
  - A sound project should be feasible to implement within the proposed timeframe, and the budget should be realistic, reflecting the work required to reach the desired end-state.
  - Project results should aim to reach Technology Readiness Levels 3-6, improving on the state of the art, including upon commercial off-the-shelf solutions.
  - **Timelines:**
    - The typical duration of Multi-Year Projects is 24 to 36 months. Shorter implementation timeframes may be considered if adequately justified in the project proposal.
    - Note that anticipated procurement timelines should be factored into the project timeline.
  - **Budgets:**
    - Budgets should be balanced. Each Co-Director's institutions should be allocated a part of the project's budget.
    - **While there are no hard limits for the budget of Multi-Year Projects, budgets for 36-month projects are typically in the €400,000 range.** When adequately justified, higher budgets may be considered for activities aligning with priority deliverables, and for proposals involving large consortia of institutions.
    - Should applicants choose to make use of co-financing, a reasonable amount is up to 1/3 of the total grant amount. SPS may consider budgets exceeding this ratio on a case-by-case basis, provided that the proposals provide sufficient justifications.

## **DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS**

Full proposals must be submitted **before 14 June 2026 (23:59 CEST)** via the SPS grant platform. Data pertaining to incomplete applications will be lost after the deadline.

All relevant enquiries prior to application submission should be addressed to SPS via the [contact form on the SPS website](#).

*The NATO SPS Programme is committed to diversity and inclusion, and welcomes eligible applicants from all NATO and eligible NATO partner countries, independent of gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, religion or belief, cultural background, sexual orientation, and disability.*