



1st Call for Proposals for Joint R&D Projects between China and the Netherlands

Co-development of circular chemistry and materials (circular plastics,
biobased materials and carbon capture & utilization)

Time Schedule

Opening of the call in the Netherlands	31 March 2026
Opening of the call in China	Between mid-March and mid-April 2026
Application deadline in the Netherlands	30 June 2026
Application deadline in China	Between early June and end of June 2026
Funding decision communicated	November-December 2026
Project Start	Q1 2027

Please note: The timelines indicated for the Netherlands and China may differ. National procedures and schedules apply, and timelines may vary accordingly. Applicants are advised to consult the national funding organization for the most up-to-date and applicable information.

1. Introduction

Innovation in circular chemistry and materials is essential for achieving a climate-neutral and circular economy. As the world's largest producer and consumer of chemical products, the People's Republic of China (hereafter referred to as China) has become a global leader in the sector, driving nearly half of worldwide growth over the past two decades. The country's significant investments in research and development have positioned it at the forefront of chemical innovation, particularly in areas that align with its ambitious climate objectives.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands (hereafter referred to as The Netherlands) is a European frontrunner in green chemistry, with a strong chemical industry, leading research institutions, and a focus on circular and bio-based materials. Its well-developed innovation ecosystem and government support for sustainable technologies position the country as a valuable partner for international collaboration.

Together, China and the Netherlands offer complementary strengths. Dutch expertise in circular chemistry and sustainable innovation aligns with China's scale and investment power. This creates promising opportunities for joint research, technology development, and market collaboration in support of the transition, upgrading, and sustainable development of global chemical industry.

As a concrete next step in building the strategic relationship, this bilateral call aims to support bilateral collaboration in the development of circular chemistry and materials. This bilateral initiative directly supports the ambitions of both countries to accelerate the transition towards a climate-neutral and circular economy, in line with international agreements such as the Paris Climate Accord and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2. Call overview

This bilateral call aims to foster collaboration between China and the Netherlands in the development of circular chemistry and materials, including circular plastics, biobased materials, and carbon capture & utilization (CCU), and to establish a platform for academic and industrial exchange between China and the Netherlands on new developments in this area. With mutual consent, the funding organizations in China (Ministry of Science and Technology - MoST) and the Netherlands (Netherlands Enterprise Agency - RVO) are launching a joint call for proposals to support collaborative R&D projects aimed at advancing circular chemistry and materials.

Participants are invited to submit collaborative project proposals focused on the development of innovative products and applications with strong market potential. Projects must bring tangible added value through international cooperation, leveraging complementary expertise and resources from both countries.

3. Scope

This call invites innovation-driven research and development consortia to submit high-quality R&D proposals in the field of circular chemistry and materials. Projects should fall within Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) 4–7, should lead to economically viable innovations and must address at least one of the following thematic areas:

- **Circular plastics:**
Projects should target the development of advanced mechanical or chemical plastic recycling technologies, including the development of renewable and circular plastics as well as innovations in sorting, washing, and characterization if these directly contribute to circularity. The goal is to create solutions that enable plastics to be reused or recycled more efficiently and at higher quality.
- **Biobased materials:**
Projects should target the development of renewable and circular materials or building blocks based on biobased feedstock, biobased polymers, and controllable biodegradable materials.
- **Carbon Capture & Utilization (CCU):**
Projects should target the development of technologies that utilize CO₂ as a circular raw material for new, sustainable materials, and production processes, with clear pathways to industrial application.

Please note: Projects focused on biofuels or other topics outside the scope of circular chemistry and materials are not eligible under this call.

Applicants must demonstrate how their proposed R&D activities address key technological or societal challenges in circular chemistry and materials, and how they will lead to industrial application, preferably within three years of project completion. The project should offer a clear route to commercialization and deliver measurable societal and environmental impact, with quantifiable outcomes in terms of circularity, CO₂ reduction, and economic value.

4. Qualification Criteria

To ensure the quality and impact of the joint R&D projects, consortia must meet the following qualification criteria:

Consortium composition

- The consortium should include at least two companies that are independent from each other, one from China and one from the Netherlands.
- The main applicant in the Netherlands must be a company. The main applicant in China can be a company, university or research organization.
- The project must benefit all involved partners in a well-balanced consortium.
- Consortia are encouraged to include partners with diverse backgrounds, expertise, and gender balance, fostering multidisciplinary collaboration and inclusive innovation.
- The consortium must clearly demonstrate the added value of international cooperation, such as access to unique infrastructure, complementary expertise, or new market opportunities.

Innovation and impact

- The project must fit the scope of the call.
- The project must be directed at researching or developing an innovative product, process, or service with the goal of commercialization.
- The product, process or service must be innovative, and there must be a technological risk involved for all involved partners.
- Applicants should clearly outline the expected time frame for industrial application, with a preference for innovations that can be implemented within three years after project completion.
- The expected impact of the innovation must be quantified in terms of circularity, CO₂ reduction, and economic value.

Project duration, structure and Funding

- The maximum duration of a project may not exceed 36 months.
- Only projects with a civilian purpose are eligible for funding.
- No individual organization or participating country may claim more than 70% of the total eligible project costs of the joint project, ensuring balanced participation.
- Eligible costs and any restrictions (e.g., personnel, equipment, overhead, subcontracting) must be specified according to the rules of the respective funding organizations.

Application and submission

- Project partners must submit national applications to their respective funding organizations, using the exact same project title to ensure clear linkage between applications.
- All partners are strongly advised to contact their respective funding agencies for a pre-check of eligibility before submitting their application.

Consortium agreement (CA)

- A signed consortium agreement on the execution and commercialisation of the projects results is mandatory for selected projects upon approval, and must be sent to the funding agencies before the actual start of the project. It ought to include clear provisions on the scope of the collaboration and the expected output, IP contributions of the parties, foreground IP ownership, data management and dispute settlement.
- The signed CA must be submitted to the funding agencies no later than three months after the results of the evaluation have been communicated and before the start of the project.

Third-Country Participation

- Partners from countries other than China and the Netherlands may participate provided they secure their own funding and comply with all eligibility and submission requirements.
- Any restrictions on the number of third-country partners should be clarified with the respective funding agencies.

Any partner whose cooperative R&D project is consistent with the aforesaid criteria can apply to the present call in accordance with their own laws, rules, regulations and procedures in effect, on a non-exchange of funds basis, and subject to budgetary availability. The amount of funding available per project partner is subject to the respective rules and regulations of the participating funding organizations.

5. Application

All project partners are required to submit a related funding application to their respective funding bodies, taking into account all relevant procedures and submission rules. To ensure clear linkage between applications, all consortium partners must use the exact same project title when submitting their national applications.

- Applicants in China must submit their application via the designated application system. Detailed application guidelines (including the application link, deadline and time) will be notified separately.
- Applicants in the Netherlands must submit their application on the e-loket (<https://mijn.rvo.nl/eloket/login-start.html>) before June 30 2026, 17:00 hours CEST (23:00 hours CST)

All applications are assessed against the qualification criteria of the call before being forwarded for evaluation based on the eligibility and evaluation criteria of the participating funding bodies.

All partners are strongly advised to contact their respective funding agencies for a pre-check of eligibility before submitting their application. Participation in the information session and online matchmaking event is also encouraged to facilitate strong consortia and high-quality proposals.

Incomplete or late applications may not be considered for evaluation. Applicants are therefore encouraged to start preparing their application and required documents well in advance of the deadline.

6. Evaluation

Applications will be evaluated by the participating funding organizations. The evaluation will be based on the qualification criteria for the joint call, the applicable eligibility and evaluation criteria of the participating funding bodies, and the information provided in the national application forms.

MoST and RVO will conduct a full evaluation in accordance with national rules. This process will be carried out by independent experts and/or bilateral panels appointed by the funding organizations.

The results of the national evaluations will be discussed in a consensus meeting. Based on the national evaluation results and the consensus meeting, both funding agencies will decide which projects to approve and recommend for funding. Once a common list of approved and non-approved projects has been agreed upon, the funding organizations will notify the applicants of the results.

Applicants can expect to be informed of the evaluation results by November-December 2026.

7. Funding Conditions

Funding will only be provided to projects that are positively evaluated and ranked by the two participating funding organizations, subject to budgetary availability and funding conditions stipulated by each funding organization.

Each partner will receive support from its respective funding body in accordance with national laws, rules, and procedures. Funding is provided on a non-exchange of funds or soft loan basis, as applicable, and is subject to the specific modalities of each funding organization. Disbursement of funds will follow the procedures of the respective funding bodies.

Any intellectual property rights (IPR) arising from cooperative project activities under this call will be regulated in a consortium agreement, in accordance with the relevant laws applicable to the project partners.

A signed consortium agreement on the execution and commercialisation of the projects results is mandatory for selected projects upon approval, and must be sent to the funding agencies before the actual start of the project. It ought to include clear provisions on the scope of the collaboration and the expected output, IP contributions of the parties, foreground IP ownership and dispute settlement.

8. Contact Points from each participating funding organization:

Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST)

International Science and Technology Cooperation Center

Email: zjf@istcc.most.cn

Phone: +86 10 5888 1083

Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO)

International Innovation & Cooperation department

Mr Arnold Meijer

Email: Arnold.Meijer@rvo.nl

Phone: +31 6 4627 3471

Mr. Niels van Leeuwen

Email: Niels.vanLeeuwen@rvo.nl

Phone: +31 6 5256 3310

9. Eligibility Criteria for each participating funding organization:

Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST)

The call will be posted on the National Public Service Platform for Science and Technology Management Information System. At that time, please stay tuned to the relevant notifications under the "Intergovernmental International Innovation Cooperation in Science and Technology" Key Program (政府间国际科技创新合作重点专项).

More information: <https://service.most.gov.cn/>

Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO)

Project partners from the Netherlands need to submit an application to RVO, including a detailed project plan and budget. The application must be submitted by a for-profit Dutch company. Other Dutch organizations may join the application as project partners.

The deadline for national submission is June 30, 2026, at 17:00 CEST. RVO invites partners to participate in a pre-check of their project ideas. More info: www.rvo.nl/techbridge

Before submitting an application under this call, applicants are strongly advised to verify that they are not considered an undertaking in difficulty within the meaning of EU State aid rules. Applications from undertakings in difficulty are generally not eligible for funding. You will be required to submit a declaration confirming that your enterprise is not in difficulty as part of your application. For more information, please visit www.rvo.nl/iom

Companies and research organizations can apply for grant funding of up to 50%, depending on the type of organization and the activities involved. Only direct R&D costs are eligible for funding:

- Large companies: 35% for research activities, 25% for development activities
- SMEs: 45% for research activities, 35% for development activities
- Universities / research organizations: 50% for research activities, 25% for development activities

The maximum grant per project is €350,000, with a total budget of €700,000 for this call. Eligible costs and restrictions (e.g., personnel, equipment, overhead, subcontracting) must follow RVO guidelines.