



The present text is a translation from BASES COMPLETAS REGULADORAS DEL PROGRAMA I-LINK Y SU CONVOCATORIA 2026. The Spanish text prevails over the English version.

COMPLETE REGULATORY GUIDELINES FOR THE I-LINK PROGRAM AND ITS 2026 CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

I. PURPOSE OF THE CALL

The primary objective of the **I-LINK** Program is to promote, through its own funding, collaboration between CSIC research groups and internationally renowned research groups. No thematic restrictions are established in this call; however, there must be a common and complementary research topic between the partners, for which each group must have appropriate and independent funding at their respective institutions. All collaborative efforts must align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The central objective of this program is to foster the **creation and consolidation of international consortia of excellence** in order to compete in future international calls for Research and Innovation (R&I) projects.

The activities promoted by this program include work and specialization stays for CSIC research groups, as well as for research groups from the participating entities, in both directions. The program also supports the organization of meetings, seminars, and other internationalization activities among the participating research groups within the framework of a joint research project. The expected impact of the Program is the enhancement of CSIC's internationalization through the consolidation of stable scientific collaboration links between CSIC teams and leading foreign research institutions.

2. TERMS OF THE CALL

A maximum of 20 grants are announced, each with a maximum amount of €30,000 (up to €15,000 per year), covering the period from January 1, 2027, until the end of fiscal year 2028. Therefore, the total funding available under this call will amount to a maximum of €600,000.

Of the total number of grants awarded, at least 10% will be reserved for actions coordinated by research staff from institutes belonging to the global area of Society. However, if no applications are submitted from this area, this quota may be allocated to other areas.

2.1. Eligible actions

2.1.1. Eligible actions shall be all those aimed at the creation and consolidation of stable international collaboration links with research groups from foreign scientific institutions and international companies.

2.1.2. The call is open to any thematic area pursued within the CSIC.

2.1.3. Only collaborations that have not received an I-LINK2025 grant with the same consortium will be considered eligible.

2.1.4. Applications that include relevant entities from the following countries will be positively evaluated: **Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, South Korea, Singapore, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and USA.** Likewise, in the interest of promoting the European Research Area in the so-called EU13, the participation of relevant entities from any of the following countries will also be positively valued: **Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.**

2.1.5. Proposals including entities from countries¹ receiving Official Development Assistance (ODA) will not be considered eligible, as they are eligible to receive funds through the I-COOP call.

2.2. Participants

2.2.1. All proposals must have **one CSIC research group** (CSIC participating team), whose leader will act as coordinator of the network, and **one or more groups from one or more foreign institutions, from the same or different countries** (foreign participating team(s)). **Each participating foreign team shall be led by a coordinator from the foreign institution.**

2.2.2. Both research (predoctoral, postdoctoral, and teaching staff) and technical staff may participate in the teams.

2.2.3. Foreign institutions may be a non-profit public or private entity, i.e. a university, research or technological center, museum, foundation, and Public Administration. Throughout the duration of the grants, each member of the foreign institutions will remain under the exclusive direction and dependence of their home institution.

¹The list of such countries, established by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), may be consulted at the following link: <https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/topics/policy-sub-issues/oda-eligibility-and-conditions/DAC-List-of-ODA-Recipients-for-reporting-2025-flows.pdf>

2.2.4. Spanish universities, research centers, and Public Administrations may participate in the action as long as they commit their own funds and infrastructure to finance the activities in which they take part in within the framework of the action.

2.2.5. Both Spanish and foreign companies and other private for-profit entities may participate, provided that they contribute their own funds to finance the implementation of the activities in which they participate within the framework of the action. **Companies and other private for-profit entities shall not be considered as members of the consortium**, but their participation shall be considered in the second phase of the evaluation.

2.2.6. Research groups participating in the network must have their own funding, as well as appropriate facilities and equipment to carry out scientific research related to the proposed activities at their respective institutions.

2.3. Requirements for the CSIC² research group

2.3.1. The person responsible for the action may be any CSIC research staff³ member providing services at the institutes, centers and units of the State Agency CSIC, hereinafter referred to as ICUs, under either statutory or employment status. Staff of Joint Centers may participate as the person responsible or as a member of the CSIC team. Staff of Associated Units may participate only as members of the team.

2.3.2. Members of the participating CSIC team may only be involved in one I-LINK 2026 proposal, regardless of whether they participate as coordinator or as a team member.

2.3.3. The CSIC coordinator must maintain a statutory or employment relationship with CSIC throughout the expected duration of the grant. In the event that the CSIC coordinator is unable to continue leading the action for any reason (contract termination, incompatibility, etc.), continuity of the action must be ensured through a replacement, which must be approved by the Vice Presidency for International Affairs (VRI).

2.3.4. The remaining members of the participating research team must maintain a statutory or employment relationship with CSIC at least until the completion of the activities in which they are involved within the action.

² Those forming part of the CSIC research group must be registered in the Entity and People Management application (GEP) and must provide services at the institutes, centers and units of the State Agency CSIC.

³ Law 14/2011, of 1 June, on Science, Technology and Innovation. Research staff serving in Public Research Organizations of the General State Administration comprise research staff, technical staff and management staff.

2.3.5 In the case of individuals holding a contract under subsidized programs or research projects, it must be ensured that their contracts allow participation in internationalization networks.

2.3.6. The Vice Presidency for International Affairs (VRI) will be responsible for **authorizing any additions or removals of team members**, upon a reasoned request submitted by the CSIC coordinator to i-link@csic.es

2.4. Eligible expenses

2.4.1. Grants for travel, subsistence and accommodation expenses for the CSIC team travels among the partner countries, and exceptionally to Brussels where duly justified.

These grants shall be governed by the terms set forth in this call for applications. The calculation of their amount shall be based on Royal Decree 462/2002, of May 24, on compensation for service-related expenses, and they shall be processed in accordance with the *Resolution issued by the President of the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), which approves the Operating Budgets of the Institutes, Centers, and Units; the allocation of project funding; the management of the Operational Treasury Allocation (DTO) system and Advance Payments; as well as certain criteria for financial management and administrative contracting.*

In the event that members from different ICUs are part of the CSIC team, travels between the participating ICUs will be permitted for meetings held at any of these ICUs.

Transportation expenses must be processed by the ICU, in compliance with the travel service contract applicable to CSIC.

The grant amount allocated for transportation may include expenses related to the management of visas and/or vaccinations not covered by the Spanish National Health System, when such requirements are mandatory for entry into the destination country.

Expenses related to medical or travel insurance for CSIC participants traveling to countries without a reciprocity agreement shall be managed by the ICU. Additionally, expenses related to accident and civil liability insurance will be eligible for funding if they are mandatory for the execution of the stay; the procurement and management of such insurance shall also be the responsibility of the ICU.

2.4.2. Grants for travel, subsistence, and accommodation expenses for members of the foreign team to carry out activities related to the internationalization network in the countries of the entities participating in the action. These grants will be processed in accordance with the aforementioned Resolution.

The amounts for accommodation and subsistence will be those established in the *Resolution of February 18, 2025, issued by the Presidency of the State Agency CSIC, which sets the allowance for stays (accommodation and subsistence) for VRI calls*. The breakdown is as follows, depending on the duration of the stay:

	Daily allowance in Euros (€)
During the first 15 days	150,00
From day 16 to day 30	100,00
From the day 31 until the end of the stay	70,00

EXAMPLE: 15 days	2.250,00
EXAMPLE: 30 days	3.750,00
EXAMPLE: 45 days	4.800,00
EXAMPLE: 90 days	7.950,00
EXAMPLE: 180 days	14.250,00

The first and last day of the stay shall be understood as the departure and return day of the trip, to and from the municipality where the participant has their official residence, in accordance with the provisions established for this concept in the Royal Decree 462/2002.

Regarding travel arrangements, transportation may be contracted through the ICU Management Office, in which case it will be processed via the centralized contract (except for exceptions⁴), or directly by the individual, who will be reimbursed upon submission of appropriate justification to the management office.

The grant amount allocated for transportation may include expenses related to the management of visas and/or vaccinations not covered by the National Health System, when such requirements are mandatory for entry into the destination country.

Expenses related to medical or travel insurance for foreign team members traveling to countries without a reciprocity agreement shall be managed by the ICU. Additionally, expenses related to accident and civil liability insurance will be eligible for funding if they are mandatory for the execution of the stay; the procurement and management of such insurance shall also be the responsibility of the ICU.

⁴ It is reminded that, under the current centralized travel agency service contract, transportation originating from abroad is granted a direct exception.

2.4.3. Other eligible expenses (including non-deductible VAT) include those intended for:

- Newly acquired or replacement inventory materials related to the activities carried out within the action and intended for the CSIC ICU.
- Costs of internal services (inter-center transfers to be requested from the Budget Area prior to expenditure) or external services.
 - Also included are expenses related to sample collection or fieldwork (e.g., shipment of samples to consortium members or rental of transport to access hard-to-reach areas).
- Consumable materials intended for scientific use, excluding those classified as indirect costs.
- Organization of meetings, seminars, or workshops at the foreign consortium entities and at CSIC:
 - Expenses for room rental and audiovisual equipment.
 - Up to a maximum of €1,500 per action, from the budget allocated to 'Other expenses,' for coffee breaks (meal expenses will not be eligible).
 - Expenses related to event support staff will not be accepted.
 - Exceptionally, and with prior authorization from the Vice Presidency for International Affairs, expenses related to organizing meetings at locations other than those mentioned may also be charged to the action.
- Registration fees for conferences held in the participating country where the stay is taking place during the visit period. In such cases, transportation costs from the city of stay to the conference venue, as well as accommodation expenses at the conference location, may be eligible. Any other circumstance that may arise must be consulted in advance with the VRI.
- Registration fees for official training courses, organized in the participating countries, related to the scientific objective of the action, for the participating teams during their stay.

Expenses in this category **must not exceed 40% of the total grant amount** for each of the two years.

2.4.4. Companies and other private for-profit entities must participate in the action with their own funds and, under no circumstances, may receive funding from any of the sections included in point 2.4 of this call.

2.4.5. All planned **expenses must be clearly indicated in the work plan** and be consistent with the proposed activities. Those expenses included in the proposal that do not correspond to those outlined in section 2.4 of this call will not be eligible for funding.

2.5. Duration and execution of the grants

2.5.1. Grants are expected to last 24 months, divided into two 12-month periods.

2.5.2. For the execution of expenses included in the grant, the processing deadlines established in the corresponding CSIC instructions for the closure of the financial year 2027 and 2028 shall be respected.

2.5.3. The VRI shall authorize the full financial allocation for the first yearly period after publication of the award Decision to the CSIC ICUs, for implementation and expenditure control by the Management Offices. Failure to carry out the planned activities without justification, or improper use of the allocated funds, may result in cancellation of the grant and recovery of the credit.

2.5.4. All expenses must be incurred according to the proposed work plan and the corresponding budget, with a maximum allocation of €30,000 per grant (maximum €15,000 per year), and must comply with the terms of the call. Any deviations must be approved in advance by the VRI.

2.5.5 Results arising from the collaboration shall belong to the Party that generates them. Where they are generated with contribution from both parties, ownership shall be determined by written agreement between the participating institutions, detailing the conditions governing such joint ownership. Each institution shall retain ownership of the background knowledge contributed to the collaboration. Such background knowledge shall be confidential and shall be governed by the provisions on industrial and intellectual property laid down in Spanish legislation.

3. APPLICATION PROCEDURES AND SUBMISSION DEADLINE

3.1. The proposal and the required documents shall be submitted as a single application by the CSIC coordinator of the action, through the online call application system on the CSIC Intranet: <http://siw.csic.es/icv/> Menu option: Convocatorias activas → PROGRAMA CSIC CONEXIÓN INTERNACIONAL PROMOCIÓN COLABORACIÓN INTERNACIONAL.

3.2. Applications shall be written in English, or in Spanish if all participating foreign teams belong to Spanish-speaking countries, using Times New Roman or Arial font, with a minimum size of 11.

3.3. Pages exceeding the maximum length established for the application documents shall not be considered in the evaluation.

3.4. Only the following standardized documents shall be used for the call:

3.4.1. Internationalization network proposal, including, as indicated in the templates, and with a maximum size of 5MB:

A) Internationalization activities (maximum 3 pages, excluding timeline and graphics):

- Summary of the proposal and scientific-technical excellence: defining the content of the objectives, scope of the study, international relevance, and added value of the action (quality and originality, or degree of novelty).
- List of keywords (both in Spanish and English).
- Thematic evaluation panel (see Annex I of the call)
- Consortium composition:
 - Background and current state of the collaboration.
 - Description of the participating teams and their experience.
 - Alignment and relevance of the application with the SDGs.
 - Complementarity of the partners from a scientific perspective.
- Implementation: a work plan including the proposed internationalization actions, scientific objectives, as well as a timeline for their execution of the action.
- Scientific, social and economic impact, differentiated for the research group, the ICU and CSIC, as well as for the foreign research groups and institutions and their countries of origin.

B) Detailed budget related to the proposed activity **timeline** (maximum 3 pages).

C) CV of the CSIC coordinator highlighting the main achievements from 2022 to the present (maximum 2 pages).

D) CV of each foreign coordinator highlighting the main achievements from 2022 to present (maximum 2 pages).

Likewise, in the case of participation by persons associated with the entities described in sections 2.2.4 and 2.2.5, who must participate using their own funds and infrastructure, the CV of the responsible person may also be provided if it is considered beneficial to the proposal; in that case, the main achievements from 2022 to the present must be highlighted (maximum 2 pages).

E) Letters of acceptance/commitment from the foreign institutions to which the participating teams belong. These letters must include authorization for the foreign coordinator to participate in the action, committing to carry out the activities outlined in the submitted scientific-technical report and their corresponding funding.

The document must be presented as an official letter from the institution, dated and signed by the competent authority (institutional head or senior scientist). In cases where the person authorized to sign the commitment letter for each entity coincides with the foreign team coordinator or its members, this fact must be indicated in the grant application in the corresponding section.

If entities described in sections 2.2.4 and 2.2.5 take part in the consortium, they must also submit their letter of acceptance or commitment under the terms laid down in section 3.4 of the call.

3.5. The application will be electronically validated by the director of the CSIC ICU to which the applicant belongs. Subsequently, before the application submission deadline, the CSIC team coordinator must submit the application definitively.

3.6. The deadline for submission of applications shall be June, 30th 2026 at 23:59 hours.

3.7. Once the submission period has ended, a final list of applications admitted for evaluation and those excluded from the evaluation shall be published on the CSIC Intranet. **There will be no period for rectification of errors.**

3.8. Personal data collected in the application will be subject to the protection established by *Organic Law 3/2018, of December 5, on Personal Data Protection and Guarantee of Digital Rights (LOPD, 3/2018)*, and by *Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament*. Based on Articles 6 and 7 of said Regulation, submission of the application will be deemed as authorization for the processing of the submitted personal data.

3.9 This call will be governed by the principles, objectives, and priorities of the Spanish cooperation policy for sustainable development as set forth in Article 2 of *Law 1/2023, of February 20, on Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Global Solidarity*⁵.

4. EVALUATION

4.1. Proposals shall be evaluated in **two phases**, in accordance with CoARA⁶ criteria for CV evaluation (CoARA, 2023).

The final score for each proposal will be the sum of the scores obtained in each phase, which will be conducted according to the following criteria:

- Score obtained in the first phase: 20% of the total score.
- Score obtained in the second phase: 80% of the total score.

4.2. In the **first phase**, a technical evaluation committee, appointed for this purpose by the VRI, will assess the alignment of the applications with the CSIC internationalization strategy and the budget planning, awarding a maximum of 10 points. Specifically, the following criteria will be considered:

⁵ <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2023-4512>

⁶ <https://www.coara.org/>

I. Consortium composition (maximum 7 points):

- Number of participating entities (up to 4 points):
 - 2 foreign institutions from the same country: 1 point
 - 2 foreign institutions from different countries: 2 points
 - 3 or more foreign institutions from the same country: 3 points
 - 3 or more foreign institutions from different countries: 4 points
- Countries prioritized in this call, with their value in the network duly justified (up to 3 points):
 - 1 country: 1 point
 - 2 countries: 2 points
 - 3 countries or more: 3 points

2. Budget (maximum 3 points)

- Consistency of the budget with the timetable and eligibility of the included costs, as well as compliance with the limitations and other specifications laid down in the call with regard to stays and expenditure.

4.3. In the event of a tie in this first phase of evaluation, priority shall be given to those applications obtaining the highest score in section I of this point (consortium composition).

4.4. In the second phase, proposals will be evaluated by expert personnel collaborating with the Spanish State Research Agency (AEI). Only a maximum of the **40 highest-scoring proposals** in the first phase of the selection process will be evaluated.

The evaluation criteria for the second phase are as follows:

- **Scientific excellence** (maximum 3.5 points):
 - Definition and content of the objectives and the added value of the action described in the summary section (quality and originality, or degree of novelty) (up to 1 point).
 - Scientific-technical excellence of the CVs of the responsible persons for each team, recognizing track record, main contributions, relevance and impact of the work, coherence of the line of research, considering the disciplinary context and professional career stage, and considering different types of contributions beyond publications (open data, software, transfer activities, academic leadership, mentoring, contributions to open science, social or policy impact) (up to 1 point).

- Relevance of the proposed activities and their relationship to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which must be explicitly identified and justified (up to 1.5 points).
- **Implementation** (maximum 3.5 points)
 - Feasibility of the activities according to the work plan including the objectives and proposed actions, and their consistency with the timetable and the purpose of the participation modality (up to 1 point).
 - Suitability and complementarity of the CSIC teams with the foreign teams for the implementation of the action (up to 2.5 points).
- **Expected impact of the action in relation to the objectives of the call** (maximum 3 points)
 - Sustainability of the collaboration in the future (for newly created consortia), or track record of the collaboration (for existing consortia), considering: published and/or under review articles, training of early-stage researchers (postgraduates and/or PhDs), jointly conducted projects, organized workshops, etc. Emphasis on the creation and consolidation of international excellence consortia aimed at competing in future international R&I (Research and Innovation) project calls, with explicit reference to programs and calls (up to 2 points).
 - Participation of a multidisciplinary consortium in which the participating groups carry out their research in different global areas of the CSIC⁷ (up to 0.5 points).
 - Thematic alignment of the proposal with the 14 major scientific challenges⁸ of CSIC 2030, as detailed in Annex II of the call (up to 0.5 points)

4.5. Once the scores from both phases have been added using their corresponding weightings, in the event of a tie, priority shall be given to those proposals with the highest score in the Implementation section.

5. INFORMATION ON THE CALL RESULTS

5.1. The result shall be made public by means of a Decision of the CSIC Presidency, which shall be published on the CSIC Intranet and communicated by email in the second half of 2026. It shall also be communicated individually to the persons responsible for the successful proposals.

⁷ Global Areas of CSIC: Life, Matter, and Society

⁸ See Annex II of this call: <https://www.csic.es/es/investigacion/conexiones-csic-y-libros-blancos-desafios-2030/libros-blancos-desafios-2030>

5.2 Once the final decision has been published, the CSIC responsible person may request from the VRI the corresponding evaluation report for their proposal, which shall include the score awarded in accordance with the criteria laid down in the call.

6. SCIENTIFIC AND ECONOMIC JUSTIFICATION

6.1. The beneficiaries of this program must justify the activities and expenditure carried out in two annual reports (interim and final), the standard form for which shall be sent by the VRI⁹.

The **intermediate report** must be submitted before December 15, 2027, and the **final report** before January 31, 2029.

The justification reports will include the following documents:

- **Scientific-technical report:** activities carried out, results obtained, and observations on the degree of fulfilment of the objectives initially proposed.
- **Financial report:** expenses incurred in accordance with the call's guidelines and the approved schedule. An extract of the accounting statement allocated to the action must be included, detailing the transactions carried out during the executed year.

The reports must be submitted electronically to i-link@csic.es, including the action code in the subject line of the e-mail.

6.2. Coordinators of the participating teams may eventually be required to present these results publicly before a committee of experts.

6.3. Any reference to the action in any dissemination medium relating to these grants must include the phrase: FUNDED BY CSIC, I-LINK 2026 CALL, together with the logo of the call (for publications: CSIC/I-LINK2026/action code).

7. CONTACT DETAILS

Inquiries about the I-LINK call may be addressed to i-link@csic.es

Madrid, May 29, 2026

The President of CSIC
Eloísa del Pino Matute

⁹ Failure to comply with the rules of this call may result in reduction of the credits received that were improperly justified, and even in sanctions by the VRI.

ANNEX I:
THEMATIC EVALUATION AREAS OF THE SPANISH STATE RESEARCH AGENCY

- Area 1. CSO / Social Sciences
- Area 2. DER / Law
- Area 3. ECO / Economy
- Area 4. MLP / Mind, language, and thought
- Area 5. FLA / Culture: Philology, literature, and art
- Area 6. PHA / Studies of the past: history and archeology
- Area 7. EDU / Education sciences
- Area 8. PSI / Psychology
- Area 9. MTM / Mathematic sciences
- Area 10. FIS / Physical sciences
- Area 11. PIN / Industrial production, civil engineering and engineering for society
- Area 12. TIC / Information and communication technologies
- Area 13. EYT / Energy and transport
- Area 14. CTQ / Chemical sciences and technologies
- Area 15. MAT / Material sciences and technologies
- Area 16. CTM / Environmental sciences and technologies
- Area 17. CAA / Agrarian and agri-food technologies
- Area 18. BIO / Biosciences and biotechnologies
- Area 19. BME / Biomedicine

ANNEX II:
CSIC 2030 Scientific Challenges

The 2030 CSIC Scientific Challenges include the following topics:

- 1- New foundations for a sustainable globalized society.
- 2- Origins, (co)evolution, diversity & synthesis of life.
- 3- Genome and epigenetics.
- 4- Challenges in biomedicine & health.
- 5- Brain, mind and behaviour.
- 6- Sustainable primary production.
- 7- Global change impacts.
- 8- Clean, safe and efficient energy.
- 9- Understanding the basic components of the universe, its structure and evolution.
- 10- Digital and complex information.
- 11- Artificial intelligence, robotics and data science.
- 12- Our future? Exploration and colonization of space.
- 13- Ocean science challenges for 2030
- 14- Dynamic Earth: probing the past, preparing for the future