# SINO-MALTA Fund 2026 Joint Call for R&I Proposals

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

These FAQs are intended to provide general guidance to applicants and are based on the National Rules for Participation (State Aid and Non-State Aid) issued by Xjenza Malta in relation to Malta-based entities.

The FAQs do not constitute a legally binding document and are provided for explanatory purposes only. In the event of any discrepancy, inconsistency, omission or misalignment between the information contained in these FAQs and the National Rules for Participation, or any other official documentation issued by Xjenza Malta, the provisions of the official documents shall prevail and take precedence.

Applicants are solely responsible for ensuring full compliance with the most recent version of the applicable National Rules for Participation prior to submission.

These FAQs specifically address matters relating to Malta-based entities and the national rules administered by Xjenza Malta. Any matters relating to China-based entities, eligibility, funding conditions or national procedures must be consulted directly in the relevant documentation issued by the Ministry of Science and Technology of the People's Republic of China (MOST).

## Eligibility & Participation

### 1. Where can I find the rules applicable to this Call?

The National Rules for Participation (State Aid and Non-State Aid) and the relevant documentation are published on the Xjenza Malta website: SINO-MALTA Fund 2026 – Joint Call for R&I Proposals. China-based applicants should refer to the documentation published by MOST.

### 2. Who is eligible to apply under this Call?

Eligibility depends on whether the applicant carries out an economic activity. Undertakings carrying out economic activities are eligible under the National Rules – State Aid. Public entities and Research and Knowledge Dissemination Organisations (RKDOs) that do not carry out economic activities are eligible under the National Rules – Non-State Aid.

Public ownership alone does not automatically make an entity a public entity; the nature of its activities must also be considered.

### 3. What are the minimum consortium requirements?

Each proposal must include at least one eligible Malta-based entity and one eligible China-based entity. This is a minimum requirement: additional Malta-based and China-based partners may participate in the same project.

Unilateral applications are not accepted.

### 4. Is the participation of a private entity mandatory?

Yes. The Maltese side of the consortium must include at least one eligible Malta-based private entity. Other eligible Malta-based entities, such as universities, RKDOs and public entities, may participate alongside it.

Partners should be relevant to the research objectives and tasks of the project, and their expertise and resources should align with the proposal.

### 5. Can an Applicant submit more than one proposal?

Yes. Applicants may submit or participate in more than one proposal, provided that each application independently satisfies the eligibility and funding requirements. Where two or more proposals with the same Principal Investigator are selected for funding, the Principal Investigator may be asked to select one project to proceed, unless alternative arrangements are agreed with Xjenza Malta.

## Application & Submission

### 6. Do Malta-based and China-based partners submit separate applications?

Yes. Malta-based applicants submit their application to Xjenza Malta, while China-based applicants submit their application to MOST in line with MOST's requirements.

Both applications must relate to the same joint project. Applicants should avoid submitting substantially different project descriptions, work plans or budgets to the two funding authorities.

### 7. What are the submission deadlines?

The deadline for Malta-based applicants is 21 December 2026. China-based applicants must follow the deadlines set by MOST, which have been extended to 18 December 2026 (16:00, Beijing time) for online submission and 24 December 2026 (16:00, Beijing time) for the recommendation letter.

As the Chinese deadline falls earlier, partners should agree the project budget, including the Maltese contribution, before the Chinese application is submitted.

## Project Scope & Duration

### 8. Which thematic areas are supported?

The Call supports proposals in the following thematic areas:

1. **SMART Manufacturing**
   - Additive Manufacturing
   - Flexible Automation
2. **Renewable Energy and Storage**
3. **Resource Efficiency and Valorisation**
   - Marine Resources
   - Turning Waste into Resource

The final assessment of thematic eligibility will rest with the evaluators.

### 9. What is the required project duration?

Projects must have a duration of up to 24 months.

## Budget & Funding

### 10. What is the maximum funding available for Malta-based partners?

The maximum funding available per project for Malta-based partner(s) is €200,000. If more than one Malta-based partner participates in the same project, this amount must be shared. China-based partners are funded separately by MOST.

### 11. Is there a required split of funding between Malta-based partners?

No. There is no fixed percentage or ratio between partners, including between academia and industry. The distribution should reflect the work plan, the responsibilities of each partner and the resources required. The requirement to include a private entity does not mean that it must receive a set share of the funding.

### 12. Are project management or coordination costs limited?

There is no single project coordinator. Each side has a lead partner responsible for coordinating its national participants. Project management personnel costs under the Maltese budget are capped at 10% of the total project value, in line with the National Rules for Participation.

### 13. What costs are eligible for funding?

Eligible costs are defined in the National Rules for Participation and may include personnel costs, equipment, consumables, travel, subcontracting, IP and Knowledge Transfer Activites and indirect costs. Funding intensity depends on whether the partner is funded under the State Aid Rules (De Minimis or GBER) or the Non-State Aid Rules. Please note that travel costs are not eligible for partners funded under GBER. Budgets must be realistic and adequately justified.

## Partner Search

### 14. How can I find a partner?

Prospective applicants are encouraged to use the Plumtri matchmaking platform to connect with potential Maltese and Chinese partners interested in the SINO-MALTA Fund 2026.

## Further questions

Questions not covered in this document may be sent to Xjenza Malta using the contact details on the call page. These FAQs will be updated as new questions are received.