

## **1<sup>st</sup> Call for proposals for Joint Research and Development (R&D) Projects between France and Italy**

Project applications and national funding applications will be accepted from 15<sup>th</sup> September 2025

### **1. Scope**

Bpifrance and Invitalia intend to support joint French-Italian research and development projects (R&D projects) in order to develop innovative products, processes, or technical services in all technological and application areas.

Funding will be available for R&D projects in which new products, technical services or processes with a high market potential are developed and subsequently transformed into marketable products. In Italy, funding is provided through Invitalia *via* the “Smart & Start Italia” funding scheme. In France, funding is provided through the Bpifrance *Aide pour le Développement de l’Innovation* funding scheme.

Bpifrance and Invitalia will assist the French and Italian project partners with basic information during the submission of project proposals, in the evaluation and in the implementation phase.

### **2. Call Structure**

The call invites partners to present joint proposals for R&D projects **from 15<sup>th</sup> September 2025** according to the following procedures used by Bpifrance and Invitalia, specified on the Bpifrance website and the Invitalia website.

#### **2.1. Financing**

Eligible project participants from Italy and France will finance their costs from their respective national funding schemes applicable for this call set by Bpifrance and Invitalia, and complementarily from their own resources. Provision of funding from one funding agency will neither indicate that funding from the other funding agency will be provided, nor bind the other national scheme in its provision of funds to the eligible project participants.

#### **2.2. Minimum requirements**

Project results will have to contribute to the development of commercial products, processes and / or technical services which are based on the international state of the art.

The project proposals have to comply with the following guidelines:

- The project must include at least one participant based in France and one participant based in Italy.

- The participants must include at least one participant eligible for financial support.
- The participants must be independent from each other and provide substantial R&D and innovation contributions to the project.
- Research and technology organisations (RTO) and other (large) companies are welcome as additional partners – on a self-funded basis – or subcontractors according to each country's funding schemes.
- Companies and/or RTOs from other countries may also participate. These partners' participation is neither funded by Bpifrance nor Invitalia. They have to be included into the Proposal Application Form. The project must focus on the development of new products, technical services or processes which generate solutions with a high market and commercialisation potential.
- The project should have an obvious advantage and differentiated value proposition resulting from the cooperation between the participants from the two countries (e.g. increased innovation capability, access to R&D infrastructure, new fields of application, etc.).
- Project duration should in principal not exceed two years.
- The project should demonstrate a balanced technological contribution by the participants from both countries and must be equally significant to all participants.

Any partner whose cooperative R&D project is consistent with the aforesaid criteria may apply to the present announcement in accordance with the national laws, rules, regulations and procedures in effect.

### 3. Submission

From 15 September 2025, the project consortium must submit the joint Proposal Application Form (in English), filled out and signed by all organisations participating in the project. This document must be submitted electronically [international.innoproject@bpifrance.fr](mailto:international.innoproject@bpifrance.fr) and sent to Invitalia at the following link: <https://www.invitalia.it/incentivi-e-strumenti/smartstart-italia/presenta-la-domanda/come-presentare-la-domanda>.

The Proposal Application Form as well as additional country-specific information are available at [Partnership con imprese francesi | Invitalia](#) and [Appels à projets et concours | Bpifrance](#).

**In addition to the Proposal Application Form, project partners who want to apply for funding within this call must submit a national application according to the respective national rules (see below).**

A Consortium Agreement that regulates the terms of cooperation between all partners (in English) is to be drafted between the Italian and French consortium members.

In case of a positive funding decision, the project partners must provide Bpifrance and Invitalia with a copy of the draft **before** signing it and once again after signing it in order to obtain funding.

The minimum requirements for the Consortium Agreement are:

- Naming of all project partners
- Description of the project aims, scope, role division and differentiation of the subprojects of the partners including their work plans with person months (alternatively the joint Proposal Application Form can be declared as part of the agreement)
- A clause that provides for all partners to be informed if third parties are involved in the project
- Regulation of intellectual property rights (background and foreground)
- Basic regulation of joint commercialization and apportioning of benefits
- Joint final reporting is to be done according to the regulations set by Invitalia and Bpifrance

### 3.1. France

In order to check their eligibility for national funding, French participants must contact their Bpifrance *chargé(e) d'affaires innovation*, cc [international.innopproject@bpifrance.fr](mailto:international.innopproject@bpifrance.fr), **prior** to applying.

Then, each French partner must submit their individual national funding application on Bpifrance *En Ligne* platform with all mandatory appendices included, **within one month** of submitting the joint application. The short project title used in the Proposal Application Form with their Italian partner must be provided. The Bpifrance *en Ligne* account will be opened with the help of the *chargé(e) d'affaires innovation*.

- Eligible Beneficiaries: French companies up to 2,000 fulltime equivalents (FTEs)
- Eligible costs: Industrial research and experimental development (industrialization and commercialization costs are not eligible)
- Funding: Financial support may be provided to eligible French companies in support of industrial research or technological development activities. Eligible French partners can be funded through an ADI (*Aide pour le Développement de l'Innovation*), which usually takes the form of a reimbursable advance or a subsidized rate R&D loan of up to 3M€ within the limit of own equity.

NB: If the company is considered as a Deeptech company, the funding could be different.

In any case, all the above information regarding French funding could be adapted to the company's profile and project.

Before the application, the French partner can apply to a [Diagnostic Partenariat Tech International](#), if they plan on working with an external expert to help them build their consortium, project or application. The Diagnostic is a grant covering up to 50% of the expert's consultancy services (see limit depending whether the company is the consortium leader) and planning on helping companies structuring their international collaborative project.

French partners may also participate in a collaborative project on a self-funding basis. There is no direct funding for French universities nor research institutions (they may participate either on a self-funded basis or as subcontractors). Large companies with more than 2,000 FTEs are not eligible for public funding; however, they may join the consortium as self-funded partners.

**Any payment is subject to a signed consortium agreement.**

### 3.2. Italy

Only one Italian start-up – established less than 5 years ago according to the aid scheme (art.22 GBER Regulation) – per project can receive Invitalia funding

Each Italian partner (innovative start-up) must submit their individual national funding application on Invitalia platform (<https://www.invitalia.it/incentivi-e-strumenti/smartstart-italia/presenta-la-domanda/come-presentare-la-domanda>) with all mandatory appendices included.

The requirements that qualify an enterprise as an “innovative start-up” are indicated in art. 25 of Italian Decree-Law no. 179/2012. To learn more about the requirements, consult the site [startup.registroimprese.it](http://startup.registroimprese.it).

The goal is to stimulate a new entrepreneurial culture connected to the digital economy, valorise the results of scientific and technological research and encourage the return of “brains” from abroad.

The incentive targets:

- **innovative start-ups** of small size, established for no more than 60 months and enrolled in the special section of the Companies Register;
- **teams of natural persons** who want to set up an innovative start-up in Italy, even if resident abroad, or foreign citizens in possession of a “start-up Visa”;
- **foreign companies** that want to set up at an office in Italy.

The investment program must range between €100,000 and €1.5 million, to be used for the purchase of investment goods and services, to support personnel expenses and corporate

function costs, and eligible expenses must be incurred only after the application has been submitted and must be completed within 24 months from the date of signing the loan agreement.

The entrepreneurial project must possess at least one of the following characteristics:

- have significant technological and innovative content;
- be oriented towards the development of products, services or solutions in the field of the digital economy, artificial intelligence, blockchain and the Internet of Things;
- focus on the economic valorisation of the results of public and private research.

Smart&Start Italia is a zero-interest loan, without any guarantee, covering 80% of the costs eligible (90% if the startup is made up entirely of women and/or young people under 36, or if there is at least one expert among the partners ). In addition to zero-interest financing, innovative startups receive non-repayable grants equal to 40% of the loan amount if the startup is based in Southern Italian regions such as Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Molise, Puglia, Sardinia, or Sicily, or 30% if located in other regions of Italy.

Furthermore, the subsidized loan can be converted into a non-repayable grant up to an amount equal to 50% (fifty percent) of the sums contributed by third-party investors or by natural person shareholders and, in any case, to the extent of a maximum of 50% (fifty percent) of the total facilities granted, taking into account the portion of the non-repayable contribution, if granted.

Italian startups that have an agreement with a French company which has not obtained funding from Bpifrance may still be eligible to request funding under the Ministerial Decree of 24 September 2014.

For more information, please contact Invitalia's team of experts for support:  
<https://www.invitalia.it/incentivi-e-strumenti/smartstart-italia/servizio-di-accompagnamento>.

## **Contact**

The national funding organisations Bpifrance (France) and Invitalia (Italy) will be available to provide all interested parties with all relevant information. All applicants are advised to consult with their respective national funding agencies at an early stage.

**Italy**

Roberto Passetti (He/ Him)

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