

## HELIOS FOUNDATION

# Call for Projects “Advancing Preventive and Systemic Approaches to Wellbeing at Work”

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### 1. Context

Mental wellbeing at work is a central determinant of individual quality of life, organisational performance and societal sustainability. While work can be a powerful source of meaning, connection and growth, it also exposes workers to cumulative psychosocial risks that, if left unaddressed, contribute to stress, burnout, absenteeism and long-term disengagement.

The Helios Foundation was established to advance preventive, evidence-based and system-oriented solutions, practices, knowledge, and behaviours that strengthen mental wellbeing and resilience at work across the Belgian workforce. Helios focuses explicitly on upstream interventions that improve work design, leadership practices and wellbeing literacy, rather than curative or purely individual-level responses.

With this call for proposals, Helios seeks to support high-quality, policy- and practice-relevant projects having a real and measurable impact on wellbeing. They should generate actionable knowledge, test innovative approaches, and contribute to sustainable improvements in wellbeing at work in Belgium.

### 2. Purpose

This call for proposals aims to fund ambitious, rigorous, and impactful initiatives that:

- Address clearly identified needs related to mental wellbeing at work;
- Align with at least two of the 3 Helios Foundation pillars (see below);
- Contribute to preventive and systemic solutions rather than downstream remediation;
- Generate knowledge that can inform policy, organisational practice and societal debate;
- Demonstrate potential for impact, transferability or scaling within the Belgian context.

### 3. Strategic Focus Areas (Foundation Pillars)

Proposals must align with at least two of the following Helios pillars:

#### **Pillar 1 – Healthy Work Design & Organisational Prevention**

Initiatives focusing on structural and organisational determinants of wellbeing at work, such as: psychosocial risk prevention; workload, work intensity and work organisation; role clarity, autonomy and job design; organisational culture and preventive HR policies; preventive approaches aligned with Belgian legislation on wellbeing at work.

#### **Pillar 2 – Leadership Development & Relations at Work**

Initiatives addressing the role of leadership, management and social relations in preventing mental ill-being and promoting inclusive workplaces where everyone can thrive, including: a balanced and inclusive company culture

with clear rights and responsibilities for all; leadership behaviours supporting early detection and prevention; inclusive and supportive management practices; evidence-based interventions targeting relational dynamics at work; initiatives focused on equal and shared responsibility of all team members, in creating an inclusive work culture.

### **Pillar 3 – Workforce Wellbeing Literacy**

Initiatives focused on increasing worker knowledge and attitudes about wellbeing at work, stimulating preventive behaviours towards more resilience. This could include multilingual (FR/NL/EN) self-care, resilience, and early-help resources, promoting a healthy narrative about how to increase wellbeing at work, educating people on what ‘normal behaviour’ at work actually means in terms of rights & obligations, peer support networks, employee-led wellbeing initiatives, continuous preventative communication streams, programs working on daily behaviour supporting resilience, etc.

## **4. Target Groups and Context**

Helios prioritises initiatives that address critical moments of vulnerability and resilience at work, including:

- **Professional life stages:** such as early career phases, young parenthood, focus on the 20-40 age category;
- **Organisational stages:** such as rapid growth, restructuring, high pressure, understaffing, downsizing or mergers;
- **Sectors:** proposals targeting all kinds of sectors are welcome.

All projects must demonstrate a clear Belgian impact, while international collaborations are encouraged where relevant.

## **5. Eligible Proposals**

Proposals may be submitted by any organisation that can drive real impact. Non-exhaustive list: companies; academic or research institutions; non-profit organisations or foundations; sectoral organisations or social partners; consortia combining research, practice and target-group representation. Consortia are strongly encouraged where they enhance relevance, co-creation and implementation capacity.

## **6. Project Duration and Financial Support**

Selected projects will receive a funding envelope of minimum 50.000 euros per project and per year, for 2 consecutive years. The project duration lies between 18 and 24 months, with possible extension subject to results. Co-funding is permitted but not required; proposals must demonstrate a clear financial gap and independence from routine public or market funding. Proposals with fast-track implementation are encouraged.

Project proposals will be assessed in two phases:

### **PHASE 1**

(i) on the basis of a **letter of intent of up to three pages and 2.000 words** outlining:

- problem statement and relevance
- objectives and alignment with at least 2 of the 3 Foundation Pillars (as described under 3.)
- proposed approach and methodology, including a timeline

- expected impact and implementation perspective; what is success and how do we measure it?
- consortium & team members: why this team will deliver what you promise
- indicative budget spread over the project duration
- signed endorsement of a sponsor that can confirm your capacity to execute (strongly encouraged)

(ii) a smartphone **video of max. 3 min.** answering the following questions:

- Why this approach and how does it connect to the Helios Foundation pillars?
- What impact do you expect to deliver within 2 years?
- Why is your team capable of executing your proposed plan?

Proposals can be introduced in Dutch, French or English. An English summary of the proposal should be included. They need to be submitted on our application platform at [\[link to the application page\]](#).

## PHASE 2

(iii) projects selected in the first phase will be notified on Monday 1 February 2027. They will be invited to submit **a detailed proposal** in 15 pages for assessment of the project's quality and potential contribution to wellbeing at work experts. Full proposals need to include a detailed methodology, work plan, timeline with milestones of delivery, risk analysis, budget, team capabilities and impact strategy.

Proposals can be introduced in Dutch, French or English. An English summary of the proposal should be included.

Use of AI tools: you are free to use generative AI tools when preparing your proposal. If you do, please state briefly which tools you used and for what purpose. This statement does not count towards the word or page limit and does not in itself affect the assessment. The video is how we get to know your team, so we would like to see and hear the people who will carry the project, in their own voice. AI-generated presenters, avatars or synthetic voices do not fit that purpose. Using AI for practical help, such as subtitles or basic editing, is fine; please mention it in your AI statement.

## 7. What are the selection criteria?

Projects should clearly position themselves within one or more of the following phases:

- development or piloting of preventive interventions
- implementation or evaluation of promising approaches
- generation of new knowledge relevant for policy or organisational practice.

Expected outputs may include empirical findings, validated tools, campaigns, implementation frameworks, policy briefs or dissemination materials, as appropriate to the project scope.

Projects must meet ALL of the following criteria

- Consortium team quality, collaboration and track record in driving change and impact
- Target group definition and diversity strategy
- Relevance and demonstrated need amongst the target groups (professional & organisational life stages & sector of choice)
- Financial need/gap and justification for Helios funding
- Project positioning and phase appropriateness
- Scientific quality and innovation
- Feasibility and responsible research practices
- Implementation capacity and collaboration

- Impact and scaling potential

Each criterion will be scored on a 1–10 scale. Final selection will be based on overall quality, strategic fit and portfolio balance.

The submission and evaluation deadlines for both phases have been set so that selected projects will be announced on Monday 5 July 2027.

## 8. What is the project selection process?

- “Letter of intent” - pre-selection: review & selection by the Advisory Board
- “Detailed proposals” - selection: review by the Advisory Board, selection by the Helios Foundation Board of Directors

## 9. What is the timing?

- 1 October 2026: Launch of call for projects to collect “letters of intent”;
- 26 October 2026: Online briefing sessions in English, please register upfront and share any questions before the session;
- 30 November 2026, 23:59 CET: Deadline for receipt of “letters of intent”;
- 1 February 2027: Announcement of shortlisted projects and launch of the second phase of the call for “detailed proposals”;
- 8 March 2027, 23:59 CET: Deadline for receipt of “detailed proposals”;
- 5 July 2027: Announcement of the selected projects.

## 10. Where to apply?

You can apply via the Helios webpage: <https://heliosfoundation.be/call-for-projects/>. If you have any questions, you’ll find the FAQ below the form on that same page. Any other questions can be sent to [questions@heliosfoundation.be](mailto:questions@heliosfoundation.be).

## 11. Outline for letters of intent

**Maximum 2.000 words and three pages**

**Written in English, French or Dutch.**

**Add a summary in English if your letter of intent is in another language.**

**Before you start: don't waste pages sharing general facts & insights on the wellbeing topic in Belgium.**

**Use your words to articulate the specific target groups you want to address, what specific problem, how you will do that and what very concrete impact you set as ambition for success.**

### 1. Project Identification

**Project title**

**Lead organisation**

**Contact person (name, role, email)**

**Consortium partners (if applicable)**

(short description of each partner and role – max. 150 words)

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### 2. Problem Definition and Relevance

- What wellbeing-at-work problem is addressed?
- Why is this problem urgent and relevant in the Belgian context?
- Which target group(s) are concerned and why are they particularly vulnerable or strategically important?
- How does the proposal align with **Helios' prevention-first and system-level approach?**

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### 3. Alignment with Helios Pillars

Indicate clearly which pillar(s) the project addresses and how.

Make sure you connect the proposal to at least 2 of the 3 pillars.

- Pillar 1 – Healthy Work Design & Organisational Prevention
- Pillar 2 – Leadership Development & Relations at Work
- Pillar 3 – Workforce Wellbeing Literacy

Briefly explain the alignment (max. 300 words).

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### 4. Objectives and Project Positioning

- Project objectives (max. 3–5, clearly formulated)
- Positioning of the project: development, implementation, evaluation and/or knowledge generation for policy/practice
- Expected contribution beyond “business as usual”

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### 5. Proposed Approach and Methodology (High-level)

- Core concept or intervention
- Research or implementation logic
- Degree of innovation or added value compared to existing approaches

*(No technical detail required at this stage.)*

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### 6. Expected Impact and Scaling Potential – What's success and how do we measure it?

- Expected effects on wellbeing at work; input, output and outcome
- Organisational, sectoral or policy relevance
- Potential for replication, transfer or upscaling

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#### 7. Consortium and Collaboration

- Rationale for consortium composition
- Role of research partners, practice partners and target groups
- Co-creation or stakeholder involvement mechanisms

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#### 8. Indicative Budget and Funding Rationale

- Total budget requested from Helios
- Indicative duration
- Brief justification of why Helios funding is required and alternative funding is not sufficient

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#### 9. Ethical and Responsible Considerations & Endorsements

- Ethical considerations (if applicable)
- Inclusion, diversity and sustainability aspects
- Signed endorsement of a sponsor that can confirm your capacity to execute as a team is strongly encouraged
- Use of AI tools in preparing this letter of intent and video: which tools, for which tasks (e.g. drafting, structuring, translation, editing)? Max. 100 words.

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#### 10. Videopitch

- A short video of max. 3 min. outlining your proposal, so we can meet your team
- Keep it simple, made on a smartphone
- Show the people who will carry the project, in their own voice: AI-generated presenters, avatars or synthetic voices do not fit the purpose of the video. AI for subtitles or basic editing is fine.
- Explain the following:
  - Why this approach and how does it connect to the Helios Foundation pillars?
  - What impact do you expect to deliver within 2 years?
  - Why is your team capable of executing your proposed plan?

## 12. Outline for Full Proposal (phase 2)

**Maximum length:** 15 pages (≈ 8.000–10.000 words, excluding annexes)

**Language:** Dutch, French or English, with an English summary

**Format:** PDF + annexes

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### 1. Executive Summary (1 page)

- Problem statement
- Objectives
- Approach
- Expected impact
- Alignment with Helios pillars

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### 2. Context, Need and Scientific Background

- State of the art and relevant literature
- Policy, practice and societal context
- Identified gaps the project addresses

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### 3. Objectives and Theory of Change

- Overall objective and specific objectives
- Conceptual or theoretical framework
- Pathways from activities to impact

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### 4. Project Description and Methodology

- Detailed description of activities
- Research design or implementation strategy
- Data collection, analysis and validation (if applicable)
- Innovation aspects and methodological strengths

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### 5. Target Groups, Diversity and Engagement Strategy

- Definition and justification of target groups
- Diversity, equity and inclusion strategy
- Active involvement of target populations

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### 6. Consortium, Governance and Collaboration Structure

- Partner roles and expertise
- Governance structure and decision-making
- Collaboration and co-creation mechanisms

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### 7. Work Plan, Timeline and Feasibility

- Work packages and milestones

- Timeline (Gantt chart recommended)
  - Risk analysis and mitigation strategies
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## **8. Impact, Dissemination and Scaling Strategy**

- Expected short-, medium- and long-term impact
  - Dissemination to stakeholders, practitioners and policymakers
  - Conditions for scaling or replication
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## **9. Budget and Financial Justification**

- Detailed budget breakdown (FTE, fixed/variable costs, etc.)
  - Cost justification
  - Co-funding (if any)
  - Long-term sustainability perspective
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## **10. Team, roles & responsibilities**

- CVs of key team members
  - Track record in driving societal impact and structural change
  - Endorsements of sponsors are encouraged
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## **11. Ethics, Data Management and Responsible Research**

- Ethical approval and safeguards
  - Data management and open science principles
  - Equality, sustainability and social responsibility
  - Use of AI tools in preparing this proposal: which tools, for which tasks? Max. 100 words.
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## 13. Guidance for Applicants

### What Strong Proposals Look Like

The Helios Wellbeing at Work Foundation funds research that leads to **preventive, evidence-based and system-level improvements in wellbeing at work in Belgium**. Strong proposals share a number of common characteristics across content, structure and ambition.

This guidance explains what evaluators look for when assessing proposals.

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#### 1. A clearly articulated problem with real-world relevance

Strong proposals:

- address a **clearly defined wellbeing-at-work problem**, rooted in the Belgian context;
- demonstrate that the problem matters **for workers, organisations and society**, not only academically;
- support the problem definition with **evidence** (research literature, data, stakeholder insights).

Weak proposals are vague, purely descriptive, or fail to show why the problem requires new action rather than existing solutions.

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#### 2. Explicit alignment with Helios' preventive and systemic focus

Strong proposals:

- clearly align **with at least TWO Helios pillars** (Healthy Work Design, Leadership & Relations at Work, or Workforce Wellbeing Literacy);
- focus on **prevention, early action or structural change**, rather than curative or individual-only approaches;
- explain *how* the project contributes to changing systems, practices or norms—not just raising awareness.

Projects that are primarily therapeutic, advocacy-driven or detached from organisational contexts are out of scope.

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#### 3. Well-formulated objectives and logical project positioning

Strong proposals:

- articulate a **small number of clear, achievable objectives**;
- explain whether the project is about development, implementation, evaluation or knowledge generation;
- show how the project fits realistically within the proposed duration and budget.

Evaluators favour coherence and realism over overly broad ambition.

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#### 4. Scientific quality combined with practical usefulness

Strong proposals:

- demonstrate appropriate **scientific rigour** for the project type;
- use methods that are justified, proportionate and fit for purpose;
- show **added value or innovation**, either conceptually, methodologically or in application;

- produce outputs that can inform **practice, policy or further scaling**.

Purely academic projects without a plausible pathway to impact are less competitive.

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## 5. Meaningful involvement of relevant partners and target groups

Strong proposals:

- involve the right mix of **research, practice and target-group actors**;
- clearly define everyone's role in the project;
- use **co-creation or structured collaboration**, not symbolic partnerships.

Credible collaboration strengthens feasibility, impact and relevance.

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## 6. Credible impact and scaling perspective

Strong proposals:

- explain what will **change as a result of the project**, for whom and why;
- link expected outcomes to wellbeing at work (e.g. prevention, culture, leadership, literacy);
- show potential for **transfer, replication or scaling**, even if full scaling is beyond the project scope.

Impact does not have to be immediate but must be plausible.

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## 7. Clear justification for Helios funding

Strong proposals:

- explain why the project **cannot be sufficiently funded** through regular public or market channels;
- show how Helios funding fills a **real financial or strategic gap**;
- present a budget that is transparent, proportionate and justified.