

Call for Proposals: SaxoCell Cluster – 3rd Funding Phase

Start April 2026

1. Strategic Objectives

With the third funding phase, the SaxoCell Cluster is strengthening its position as a leading innovation ecosystem for cell and gene therapies with a clear focus on translation and industry.

The goal is

1. to accelerate highly innovative projects toward preclinical and clinical development
2. to substantially expand industry participation
3. to generate sustainable value and intellectual property within the cluster

The legal basis is provided by the [funding guidelines](#) of the Federal Ministry of Research, Technology, and Space (BMFTR).

2. Scope of Funding

In particular, collaborative projects are eligible for funding

A) Highly innovative projects in cell or gene therapy

- Applied research and development
- Preclinical validation
- Preparatory R&D leading up to clinical trials (e.g., GMP scale-up, regulatory preparation)

B) Interdisciplinary projects that develop innovative approaches to automation and digitization in biomedicine by integrating artificial intelligence, robotics, and microelectronics, thereby unlocking new technological and economic potential.

Including structural and cross-cutting measures

- Foresight projects to identify new scientific, technological, and societal potential
- Investments in shared research infrastructure (no construction projects)
- Location and expertise marketing as well as public relations
- Cross-cutting projects to improve innovation capacity
- Support for start-ups in the field
- Approaches and instruments for mutual personnel exchange among stakeholders

3. Financial Framework

Funding is provided for so-called **flagship** and **satellite projects**. The funding criteria are as follows:

Flagship Projects: Translational flagship projects with a clear path to clinical application or industrial scaling

- TLR 5-7
- Preclinical validation → clinical development (Phase I/II)
- GMP process development and scale-up
- Manufacturing and quality assurance

Goals:

- Translation into clinical applications or market readiness
- Development of industrial production capacity
- Establishment of new platforms for therapy and diagnostics

| Parameter | Requirement |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Max. Project size* | 7.000.000 € |
| Minimum own funds | 50 % (3.500.000 €) |
| Companies | At least 50% of the eligible costs must be covered by the applicant |
| Duration | Up to 3 years |

Satellite projects: Technology- or component-driven projects aimed at risk reduction, validation, or the development of enablers

- TRL 4 –6
- Target Identification und Validation
- Proof of concept in the laboratory or in an animal model
- Development of key technologies

Goals:

- Solving specific scientific and technical problems
- Developing enabling technologies
- Supporting regulatory or methodological requirements

| Parameter | Requirement |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Max. Project size* | 1.200.000 € |
| Minimum own funds | 50 % (600.000 €) |
| Companies | At least 50% of the eligible costs must be covered by the applicant |
| Duration | Up to 3 years |

* If your requirements are higher than expected, please contact the SaxoCellutions team as soon as possible (SaxoCell Cluster Management, via info@saxocell.de).

Eligible costs include, among others:

- Personnel costs
- Material costs
- Instruments and equipment
- Contract research
- Acquisition of knowledge and patents (arm's-length principle)
- Consulting services

The aid intensity per beneficiary is determined in accordance with the applicable state aid regulations as set forth in the announcement by the BMFTR.

4. Submission Deadline and Selection Process

Deadline for project submissions: September 30, 2026

Three-step process:

- **Phase 1** - Project outline (max. 10 pages; see separate template)
- **Phase 2** - Pitch to cluster representatives and the cluster advisory board
- **Phase 3** - Submission of a full application to the funding agency

Late submissions will not be accepted.