CALL FOR INTEREST July 2024

**RESEARCH PROGRAMME 2024/2026**

**Articulation of demographic challenges of ageing and socio-economic contexts in the Western Balkans and Southeast Asia**

**PROGRAM DURATION**

24 months

**SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS**

09 September 2024 at 11:59

**CONTRACTING AUTHORITY (PURCHASING BODY)**

Agence Française de Développement – 5 rue Roland Barthes – 75012 PARIS

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### Presentation of the AFD

The Agence française de développement (AFD) group is a public institution that finances, supports and accelerates transitions towards a more just and sustainable world. It implements France’s development and international solidarity policy. It brings together AFD, its subsidiary Proparco dedicated to financing private sector players, and the inter-ministerial agency for technical cooperation Expertise France since 1 January 2022. As a French platform for official development assistance and sustainable development investment, we build shared solutions with our partners, with and for the people of the South. Our teams are involved in more than 4,000 projects in the field, overseas and in 115 countries, for the common good of humanity – climate, biodiversity, peace, gender equality, education and health. We contribute to the commitment of France and the French to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through grants, loans, guarantee funds or debt reduction and development contracts, AFD finances projects, programmes and studies and supports its southern partners in building their capacity. AFD also collaborates with French and international academic networks to stimulate debates and forward-looking reflections on development. It manages the French Global Environment Facility (FFEM), which co-finances projects that reconcile environment and development, and it hosts the Innovation Fund for Development (FID). All information relating to AFD, and in particular its Charter of Ethics, which tenderers are strongly invited to consult, can be found at www.afd.fr

**Background:**

In terms of population growth, the world population, after peaking at around 9 billion around 2050, is expected to gradually decelerate due to a downward trend in the rate of population growth. Taken over the long term and in a global/worldwide approach, three demographic trends are at work: a constant and quasi-universal decline in fertility, an increase in life expectancy and an assertive and growing ageing of the world population.

Focusing on long-term development trajectories related to settlement/depopulation dynamics is a key topic, which is not taken into account at this stage and yet has major strategic and financial implications for a development agency.

Ageing is an «unprecedented event in the history of humanity» according to the population division of the United Nations. 2020 marks a historic turning point where the evolution curves of the proportion of people aged 65 and over on the one hand, and people under five years of age intersect and engage in strongly divergent directions, on the other hand.

Changes in the proportion of people aged 65+ and under 5

 (World population 1950-2050)



Indeed, global ageing results from the combination of a progressive weakness in fertility and the average lengthening of life. This evolution is visually reflected in the transition from a traditionally known pyramid-shaped structure to a bell-shaped structure.

This phenomenon has been known for decades in developed countries and now affects an increasing number of developing countries. Outside Sub-Saharan Africa, the only region still young and in the process of settlement, and assuming an unchanged ratio of the dependency rate, the number of people over the age of 60 will increase sharply in volume.

A note from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) sums up the challenges at the global level: “*These developments herald a prodigious series of health, social and economic challenges in the coming decades. They also predict a widespread population decline that was previously unlikely. Addressing all these challenges will require significant changes in several areas: lifestyle, public and private investment, institutional and policy reforms, innovation and adoption of new technologies. Inaction could have dramatic consequences, with a declining workforce struggling to support a growing retirement population, a concomitant explosion in age-related morbidity and health expenditure, and a lower quality of life for the elderly due to insufficient human, financial and institutional resources.”*[[1]](#footnote-1)

However, the heterogeneous rhythms of aging processes, the different trajectories and the different levels of development in the different regions of the world will have neither the same consequences, including political ones, nor the same magnitude according to the geographies concerned. Identifying and analysing the complexity of the implications of these trends/trajectories calls for research efforts and multidimensional responses in the medium and long term (2050-2100 horizons).

To shed light on the specificities of AFD’s countries/regions of intervention, analyses are therefore already needed on the themes raised by the IMF note mentioned above. It should also include:

* The articulation with the *growing challenges of climate change* by examining whether the sociodemographic characteristics of aging transitions are (or not) essential to limit/mitigate the effects of climate change, what would be the adaptive capacities of aging populations, and if these issues, for the time being, “emerging”, are to be further developed as part of the proposed research programme;
* Major trends in *national, regional and international migration*. Indeed, we can note differences in economic and legal attractiveness (attraction/repulsion) in “geo-historical” migrations between regions and continents (Mexico/United States, Maghreb/Europe, South Asia/United Kingdom, Turkey/Germany, Balkans/Western Europe …); “increased” migration by the evolution of communication technologies and social networks that make permanent settlement migrations evolve towards migrations without definitive break with the countries of origin; migrations of health care providers such as doctors, nurses, care workers; additionally, “constrained” migrations with the spread of conflicts of all kinds and the exacerbation of geopolitical crises; finally, migrations linked to the slowdown of globalization, the return of protectionism and the strengthening of restrictive national laws and regulations and its corollary, the closure of borders (United States, Europe of 28) and finally, progress in regional development and mobility at the continental (Africa, Balkans) or national (China, South Asian countries).

### Purpose and timing of the call for expressions of interest

In order to study in more detail the socio-economic challenges and perspectives for the mentioned geographies (Western Balkans and South-East Asia) and the themes of intervention of AFD, the Department of Economic Diagnostics and Public Policies (ECO) AFD’s Innovation, Strategy and Research (ISR) Executive Directorate is calling for expressions of interest for a 24 month global research programme.

This new research program aims to examine how demographic structures and dynamics as well as plural forms of socio-economic development are articulated/nested. Research is expected to clearly identify, describe and analyze these links, both from an academic perspective but also with a view to an informed operationalization and facilitation of dialogues that AFD conducts with its public partners in the countries in which it operates.

More specifically, the research projects covered in this call will focus on population dynamics in three of the traditional fields of demography (mortality/ morbidity, aging, migration) and modes of (de)settlement and territorial planning (territorial identities, urbanization/ rural areas in particular in relation to natural environments) and their impacts/ interactions with the socio-economic issues present and to come in these geographies. The ambition of this program is to feed AFD into its dialogue with public authorities in the Balkans and South-East Asia: it therefore has a strong operational aim.

Only one proposal will be selected. All proposals will have to jointly address three sub-projects:

* Sub-project 1: a literature review;
* Sub-project 2: country studies;
* Sub-project 3: Valorization activities in order to deepen knowledge on the one hand and feed the dialogue of AFD with its public partners, on the other hand.

For sub-project 2, proposals will have to present multidisciplinary contributions from the social, political and economic sciences in at least 4 countries and at most 5 countries in the following two geographies:[[2]](#footnote-2)

* Western Balkans (2 to 3 countries, with a priority given to the following countries sur Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Macedonia)
* Southeast Asia (Vietnam, the Philippines and free choice of a possible additional country).

Proposals should in particular:

* For the literature review:
	+ Describe how, by whom and on what sources will be produced the academic literature review of aging issues presenting in an historical (a) and prospective (b) dimensions the effects of aging on societal values, political systems, macroeconomic issues, in particular consumption patterns, and typologies of social protection systems (objectives, organisations, funding methods). This global review of the scientific progress/knowledge about aging should recall examples, experiences and lessons learned from already advanced countries in their ageing transition, thus shedding light on emerging and/or future challenges in the above mentioned geographies.
	+ Enunciate the questions and methodological principles for the elaboration of the deliverable related to this sub-project (see below).
* For Country Studies:
	+ For the countries to be studied in the Western Balkans (there are 2, Serbia and Bosnia) and in Southeast Asia (there are 3 maximum, including Vietnam and the Philippines), explain the relevance of the subject and share research questions articulating demographic determinants (mainly aging), socio-economic and climate issues and more if necessary. Proposed research questions should cover the following:
		- The importance of ageing contexts for each country studied
		- Challenges related to ageing in terms of existing and future public policies
		- Ageing and its social consequences
* Propose preliminary hypotheses with a view to presenting later when carrying out country studies, scenarios to quantify financial efforts and investments with a perspective of sustainable development and under the constraint of climate change and its consequences.
* List the methodological questions and principles for the development of research deliverables (see below)
	+ Demonstrate the ability to identify the existence and value of the work of local research teams working on these topics and explore opportunities for research partnerships with them.
* For dialogue activities:
	+ Propose specific deliverables in short and comparable formats for decision-makers and public actors as well as valorisation activities.

**Additional details of research production activities**

### Research questions

Without claiming to be exhaustive, various research questions are proposed below, but other suggestions are also welcome.

Concerning the Balkans,

* Impact of ageing on: public finances (pensions, health expenditure), labour shortage, overall productivity, desertification of certain territories and access to basic services…
* Risks of «demographic disaster»: are these trajectories reversible and under what conditions? Parallel to the experience of countries that have joined the EU (ex: Romania)?

More generally,

* Developed countries with so-called «advanced» economies have implemented various approaches to ageing. What is the situation for target countries i.e. middle-income countries at a time when globalization, the growth model and climate change may have a different impact on these trajectories?
* How will cash transfers from a relatively declining youth population to an increasing population (parents and grandparents) be analyzed/defined and implemented and over what time scale?
* Which public policies to prioritize (re-stimulating fertility, prolonging productive life beyond age 60-64, pushing socio-cultural norms to be changed around the issue of the role and position of women in the workforce in particular, and in society in general, what are the trade-offs between Bismarckian and Beveridgian models…)?
* How to ensure that gender inequalities are taken into account when women make up the majority of the population aged 60 or over in the regions studied, and their growing share above 80?
* What about the articulations, for example in terms of harmonizations or tensions, between the needs of the 65+ and the expectations of the younger generations still important demographically and this, in terms of food, leisure, housing, travel, in short, autonomy and well-being?
* How is the time factor taken into account in the analysis and implementation of public policies related to ageing?
* What budgetary challenges to support the long-term care system and retirement pensions? What tax policies to implement? What philosophy of social transfers? What financial mechanisms (distribution and/or capitalisation; redistribution and/or insurance)? What regime should be adopted: risk sharing or pooling? With what long-term consequences for the budgetary situation?
* Pressure on pension systems and poor returns on financial assets severely limit policy-makers' choices (Reduce intergenerational transfers by increasing retirement age? Reduce payments? Maintain status quo and leave decisions to future decision makers?)
* Beyond the social and economic challenges, what are the internal political and geopolitical implications to consider? What could impacts and feedbacks be on the environmental transition?
* Role of socio-anthropological structures in the face of the risk of breaking social ties within national entities?
* Ageing transitions in particular, as observed in most developed countries (particularly in Europe) are key determinants for limiting/mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change. What about in Asia?
* How can we characterize the validity of the link between ageing and climate change (in terms of emissions/consumption) and ensure that it is truly a relevant research issue, especially in the target countries? Why rather focus on topics of adaptation and vulnerabilities instead of mitigation?
* How does the question of territorial development and the transfer of old age related risks to local authorities arise? What are the challenges of desertification in certain geographies (negative natural balance, migration and environmental degradation) especially in the Balkans?

### Disciplinary fields, methodology and proposal submission process

Research projects should, as far as possible, involve the following disciplines: sociology, demography, geography, history, political science, urbanism and spatial planning, economics, legal and administrative sciences (taxation, social protection, employment), environmental and biodiversity sciences.

Multidisciplinary work is sought after and particular attention will be paid to the quality of researchers, either individually or mobilized by research institutions. Proposals for country studies must have a partnership dimension including research institutions from the countries in which the studies are carried out. In addition, research involving academic and non-academic actors (think tanks, statistical institutes for example) sharing their knowledge, their skills and experiences in providing concrete answers to scientific questions that can be later endorsed by public actors will be privileged.

### Eligibility criteria for applications

**Constitution of the research team**

AFD encourages candidate institutions to call on partners from other institutions/organizations in the target countries to complete their team and meet the requirements of this call.

The application must specify the main institution of the team and the affiliations. The main institution that will submit the application on behalf of the entire team will imperatively be an academic institution (university, research center, laboratory) or recognized as having produced knowledge recognized as such (*think tank* for example).

A single lead institution may submit several projects, provided that the principal researchers have the expertise to conduct the proposed thematic analysis and that the proposals include operational tracks/ proposals (of the policy papers style*) consistent with the chosen research axis.*

### Proposal Structuring

Applications can be written in French or English, in Calibri 11 font, in Word format. They will include, in addition to the names and surnames of the researchers, the institutions/laboratories of attachment, their discipline, status, e-mail addresses. Those who have written the successful proposals at this stage will then be invited to submit a more complete proposal (including terms of reference) to be discussed with ISR/ECO before being considered by the Research Projects and Partnerships Committee (RPPC) of AFD for validation. Finally, it will include the main bibliographic references on the basis of which the proposal is formulated.

Applications will be no more **than 12 pages** (excluding appendices) and will be structured as follows:

1. **Summary**: General narrative of the project in 15 lines maximum.
2. **Detailed Section: A** clear and concise description of the nature and importance of the proposed research, its scope and limitations, its general context and objectives, including the feasibility and relevance of the proposed project. The proposal should make it clear which priority questions it intends to address. It should propose a first analytical examination of the relevant literature supporting the research questions. The proposal should specify the academic work to be carried out or on which they intend to refer, the academic resources to be created or already available, the academic partners mobilized. The methodology will be detailed and the research protocol specified.
3. **Presentation of the team**: A maximum page presenting the team and its members (the CVs of each team member of up to 4 pages presenting in particular the academic and/or project references related to the themes of ageing will be put in appendices). This document, which will provide information on the research expertise of the team in relation to the proposal will be considered with great attention.
4. **Deliverables**: The nature of the deliverables will be determined on an *ad hoc* basis by the research project team. The deliverables expected are of two types and therefore in three distinct phases:
5. *Deliverable of sub-project 1***: An academic literature review of advances/ scientific knowledge of ageing at the global level** (less than 50 pages)
6. *Deliverables of sub-project 2***: A research report for each target country** (less than 50 pages)

Observations/analyses of the Phase 1 deliverable will feed into the work contributing to the Phase 2 deliverables.

In any case, these productions may be published in AFD’s collections.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**(c*)*** *Deliverables of sub-project 3*: For the **valorization phase of the research conducted**, the proposal should present the main envisaged activities that will feed into public policy dialogues with policy makers and practitioners (as examples (non-exhaustive list): more operational documents such as *policy briefs*, *policy papers, feedback workshops, webinars ...*

1. **Budget**: The proposed budget (in euro) must include all research and dissemination expenditure. They should be presented based on the expected results (see deliverables above). The budget items for each outcome will need to be detailed.

The lead institution submitting the request undertakes to receive the funds and to transfer them to the various team members and institutions. The institution will submit its invoice requests *via* the Chorus Pro online platform. The total budget requested for the expected deliverables may not exceed **EUR 200,000**. Co-financing is encouraged. The deadline for payment of funding is **two years maximum**. Overheads (for administrative, management or internal purposes other than research and dialogue activities) may not exceed 8% of the total funds requested.

1. **Provisional schedule**: A short presentation of the provisional schedule of the project will be inserted and will be organized according to the expected results.
2. **Contacts**: The contacts or contacts of the main institution who will interface with AFD on behalf of the team will be specified.
3. **Appendices**: The appendices will include bibliographic references, team members' CVs, and any presentation documents (including electronic links, websites, etc.) that your institution(s) and evaluate them against the eligibility criteria mentioned above.

### Intellectual property rights

The research results from the project and all intellectual property rights that may be attached to these results will jointly belong to AFD and the main institution.

### Evaluation of proposals and continuation of the process

This call will make it possible to select particularly promising research intentions, whose sponsors will then be invited to develop a final proposal in connection with AFD.

As such, the timeline for the proposal review and selection process is as follows:

* The call for expression of interest will be open until 09 September2024 at 11:59pm.
* The Selection Committee’s responses to all candidates will be returned no later than 10 October 2024.
* After a negotiation phase, the contract is scheduled for 28 November 2024, for work to be spread over approximately 24 months

AFD reserves the right to terminate the process at any tim

1. [Ageing as a demographic bomb (imf.org)](https://www.imf.org/fr/Publications/fandd/issues/Series/Analytical-Series/aging-is-the-real-population-bomb-bloom-zucker#:~:text=Le%20ph%C3%A9nom%C3%A8ne%20effectivement%20en%20train,cohortes%20dans%20le%20troisi%C3%A8me%20%C3%A2ge.) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. These priorities have been defined by AFD according to its own capacity for involvement in public policy dialogues on just transition issues. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.afd.fr/en/research-publications [↑](#footnote-ref-3)