

## **JPND Call for Proposals:**

# **”European research projects for the identification of genetic, epigenetic and environmental risk and protective factors for Neurodegenerative Diseases”**

**Submission deadline for proposals: 19<sup>th</sup> March 2013**

[Proposal template](#)

[Electronic proposal submission](#)

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For further information, please visit us on the web

**<http://www.neurodegenerationresearch.eu/>**

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## 1. Introduction

Neurodegenerative diseases (ND) are debilitating and largely untreatable conditions that are strongly linked with age. In Europe, there are estimated to be between 6.3 and 7.3 million people suffering from Alzheimer's disease and related disorders, the most frequent class of neurodegenerative diseases. This figure is expected to double every 20 years as the European population ages. The total direct and informal care costs of Alzheimer's and related disorders are in the range of €105-160 billion across the European Union. Existing treatments for neurodegenerative diseases are limited in effect and mainly address the symptoms rather than the cause. In this context, the 'Joint Programme Neurodegenerative Disease Research' (JPND) has been established (<http://www.neurodegenerationresearch.eu>) in order to better coordinate European efforts on the level of transnational collaboration and project coordination on the basis of the joint European Research Strategy, published in February 2012

It is widely perceived that a lack of knowledge regarding the causes of specific neurodegenerative diseases is one of the greatest unmet needs to be addressed in ND research. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to better understand:

- the genetic, epigenetic and environmental factors that underlie an individual's risk and resilience
- the triggering events leading to illness
- the relationship and interplay between these factors and their relative importance
- the role of potential environmental and behavioural modulators.

Such knowledge will advance the identification of new targets to which second generation pharmacological therapies can be directed and will ultimately help to advance preventive strategies. Consequently, a pan-European programme is required for:

- comparison of different genetic backgrounds using cutting-edge methodology
- pooling of existing knowledge and resources
- sharing of infrastructure
- provision of methods for bioinformatics studies
- establishing the capacity for analysis of high-throughput data.

Therefore, JPND launches this joint transnational call for proposals in order to encourage the identification of genetic, epigenetic and environmental risk and protective factors associated with ND. The funding organisations that have agreed to fund this joint call for multinational research projects in this scientific area, with a view to adding value to their existing nationally funded activities, are listed below. The call will be conducted simultaneously by the funding organisations in their respective countries and coordinated centrally by the Joint Call Secretariat (JCS).

- **Austria, Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research**
- **Belgium**
  - **Research Foundation – Flanders region**
  - **Agency for Innovation by Science and Technology, Flanders region**
- **Denmark, Danish Strategic Research Council**
- **Finland, Academy of Finland**
- **France, French National Research Agency**
- **Germany, Federal Ministry of Education and Research**
- **Israel, Chief Scientist Office, Ministry of Health**
- **Italy**
  - **Ministry of Health**
  - **Ministry of Education, Universities and Research**
- **Luxembourg, National Research Fund**
- **Netherlands, The Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development**
- **Norway, The Research Council of Norway**
- **Poland, National Science Centre**
- **Portugal, Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology**

- **Slovakia, Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic**
- **Spain, National Institute of Health Carlos III**
- **Sweden, Swedish Research Council**
- **Switzerland, Swiss National Science Foundation**
- **Turkey, Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey**
- **United Kingdom, Medical Research Council**

## 2. Aim of the call

The aim of the call is to establish a limited number of ambitious, innovative, multi-national and multi-disciplinary collaborative research projects that will add value to existing research by identifying new genetic, epigenetic and environmental risk and protective factors associated with neurodegenerative disorders. The following neurodegenerative diseases are included in the call:

- **Alzheimer's disease and other dementias**
- **Parkinson's disease and PD-related disorders**
- **Prion disease**
- **Motor neuron diseases**
- **Huntington's disease**
- **Spinocerebellar ataxia (SCA)**
- **Spinal muscular atrophy (SMA).**

Studies primarily relevant to **other diseases with a neurodegenerative component** (e. g. vascular dementias or multiple sclerosis) **are not included in the call**. Proposals spanning different neurodegenerative disorders are encouraged, although proposals dealing with only one disease may be submitted.

Research should focus on genetic and epigenetic factors in relation to environmental factors. Applicants should consider the ways in which socio-economic factors, as well as issues such as gender or comorbidities, should be taken into account. Proposals should have novel, ambitious aims and ideas combined with well-structured work plans and clearly defined goals deliverable within three years. The added value to ongoing activities and the impact on disease understanding or the future development of therapeutics for neurodegenerative diseases across Europe must be explicitly stated. Appropriate access to relevant well-characterised populations or suitable biomaterial collections must be demonstrated. Pooling and synergistic usage of existing data, patient cohorts, and biomaterial or animal model collections are expected. Applicants should also demonstrate that they have the expertise and range of skills required to conduct the study or that appropriate collaborations are in place, while a plan for managing the consortium should also be provided.

Proposals submitted under this call may include, but are not limited to, the following types of research:

- identification of underlying genetic variability in neurodegenerative diseases, using cutting edge technologies, e.g., exome and genome sequencing
- regional and temporal mapping of the transcriptome, proteome and epigenome of the human brain as it relates to aging and neurodegeneration
- studies to explain phenotypic variability of the neurodegenerative process including the role of gender and the reasons for and the impact of the variable age of onset
- unravelling the mechanisms by which (recently identified) risk genes contribute to the development of neurodegenerative diseases
- understanding the interplay between genetic and environmental factors, for instance by developing new tools and approaches to identify and quantify environmental risk for neurodegenerative disease, and the effective integration of new genetic and molecular assessments e.g., within existing cohorts
- identification of environmental and behavioural modulators of ageing and neurodegeneration in order to ultimately determine protective and resilience factors. Such modulators may include, but are not limited to, nutrition, diet, caloric intake, physical activity, anthropometric and adiposity parameters, sleep habits, social activities and social networks or interactions, intellectual activities, educational and professional attainments, leisure activities and other lifestyle factors.
- identification of genetic factors that protect against the development of neurodegenerative diseases.

**Please note: Excluded from this call are clinical outcome or intervention trials as well as work entirely dedicated to high throughput sequencing to identify novel candidate genes.**

Training of young researchers and mobility (e.g., researcher exchanges for students and postdoctoral researchers with the aim of learning new techniques in other laboratories) within the consortia are encouraged. To have impact at a European level, it is expected that all proposals will link activities across laboratories/clinics within JPND member countries. Proposals are encouraged to import expertise from areas outside of neurodegeneration research that can provide innovation to the approach to be pursued. There should be **clear added value** provided by the collaboration.

### 3. Application

#### 3.1 Eligibility

Joint transnational research proposals may be submitted by research groups working in universities (or other higher education institutions), non-university public research institutes,

hospitals and other health care settings, as well as commercial companies, in particular small and medium-size enterprises. The eligibility of the afore-mentioned institutions, together with details of eligible costs (personnel, material, consumables, equipment, travel money, etc.), are subject to the individual administrative requirements of individual funding organisations and may therefore vary. Applicants will need to obtain clarification from the individual funding agencies (see contact details in annex below).

Each proposal must involve **a minimum of three and a maximum of ten (3-10) funded research groups**. Only transnational projects will be funded: each consortium must involve groups from at least three different countries of the funding organisations participating in this call (see list above). Research groups from countries that are not partners in this JPND joint transnational call may participate in projects if they are able to secure their own funding. They must state clearly in the proposal if these funds are already secured or, if not, how they plan to obtain funding in advance of the project start. However, the majority of research groups in a consortium and the coordinator must be from countries of the JTC partner organisations.

Each consortium should have the critical mass to achieve ambitious scientific goals and the proposals should **clearly demonstrate added value** from working together. The project coordinator will be responsible for its internal scientific management and will represent the consortium externally.

Consortia are strongly encouraged to contribute information on data, tools and bioresources generated by their research to the public domain where it should be made widely available. Access must be provided to other bona fide research groups, with the necessary arrangements in place.

*Whilst applications will be submitted jointly by groups from different countries, individual research groups will be funded by the individual JPND funding organisation(s) respective of their country/region. Eligibility is the matter of individual partner organisations. (see contact details in annex below)*

***Please note: Inclusion of a non-eligible partner (i.e., an applicant applying for funding, although this partner cannot be funded by the funding agency in its country for administrative reasons according to country specific regulations) in a proposal may result in the rejection of the entire proposal without further review. Applicants are therefore strongly advised to contact their national/regional funding organisation and confirm eligibility before participating in an application (see country specific information on the JPND website (<http://www.neurodegenerationresearch.eu>).***

### **3.2 Financial and legal modalities**

Projects can be funded for a period of up to three years. Single research groups will be funded according to national regulations. Eligible costs may vary according to the corresponding funding

organisations regulations. Each group is subject to the rules and regulations of its respective national/regional funding organisation.

A project consortium agreement must be signed by all project partners in each project consortium. The project consortium agreement will specify at least decision making, monitoring, reporting, intellectual property rights (IPR) and sharing of data and resources as appropriate. Administrative and funding arrangements will be stated in the project consortium agreement as a bilateral responsibility between each project partner and the relevant funding organisation.

### **3.3 Submission of joint transnational proposals**

One joint transnational proposal document (in English) shall be prepared by the consortium partners and must be submitted to the Joint Call Secretariat (JCS) by the co-ordinator. A proposal template is available at the JPND website (<http://www.neurodegenerationresearch.eu>).

Adhering to this template is a requirement. Individual funding organisations will receive copies of this proposal from the JCS. Proposals must be received (uploaded) **no later than March 19, 2013** via the **electronic submission system** ([https://www.pt-it.de/ptoutline/application/JPND\\_RF](https://www.pt-it.de/ptoutline/application/JPND_RF)).

### **3.4 Further information**

For further details, please refer to the respective submission forms ("Proposal template") available at the JPND website (<http://www.neurodegenerationresearch.eu>). If you need additional information, please contact the Joint Call Secretariat or your funding organisations representative (see annex for contact data).

## **4. Evaluation and decision**

### **4.1 Formal check of proposals**

The Joint Call Secretariat (JCS) will check the proposals to ensure that they meet the call's formal conditions (date of submission; number of participating countries and groups; inclusion of all necessary information in English; adherence to the proposal template). In parallel, the JCS will forward the proposals to the national/regional funding organisations which will perform a check of compliance with their respective regulations. Proposals not meeting the formal conditions will be rejected. Proposals passing these checks will be forwarded to the joint Peer Review Panel (PRP) for evaluation.

### **4.2 Peer-review of proposals**

The reviewers will carry out the evaluation according to specific evaluation criteria:

1. Relevance to the aim(s) of the call.
2. Excellent scientific quality of the proposal including level of innovation and originality of the proposal along with novel methodology, and feasibility of the project (adequacy of project work plan, time schedule, availability of well characterised patient groups or samples, quality and linkages of data within and between countries, budgetary and other resources).
3. International competitiveness of participating research groups in the field(s) of the proposal (expertise relevant for the field, expertise of the research groups) and their appropriate mix; quality of collaborative interaction between the groups for the proposed work, level of training/knowledge exchange between research organisations, and added value, on both scientific and transnational levels, of the research consortium.
4. Deliverable outcomes in the short, medium and long term and likely impact - potential of the expected results for future clinical and other health relevant applications.

#### **4.3 Decision**

The international joint Peer Review Panel will use a scoring system to establish a threshold above which projects will be fundable in principle. A ranking list will be prepared for those proposals scoring above the fundable level, based on scientific peer review assessment. The final ranking will also take into account the optimal portfolio spread that will provide most benefit (i.e., funding may be restricted to only the best application where there are two or more proposals of similar scope and of similar high scientific quality). Based on these recommendations, final decisions will be made by the funding organisations, which will be responsible for the final contributions to these projects being subject to their predetermined budget limits.

### **5. Funding procedure / Responsibilities / Reporting requirements**

Projects can be funded for a period of up to three years and according to funding organisations' regulations. Funding is expected to start earliest at the end of 2013.

The research groups of successful collaborative projects will be funded directly by the respective funding organisations. Funding will be administered according to the terms and conditions of the responsible funding organisations, taking into account all other applicable regulations and legal frameworks.

Each project must nominate a project coordinator, who represents the consortium externally and is responsible for its internal management towards JPND (such as monitoring, reporting, intellectual property rights (IPR) issues and sharing of data and resources). Within a joint proposal, each group leader will be the contact person for the relevant national/regional funding organisation.



The project coordinator will be required to submit a brief annual scientific progress report on the joint project, on behalf of the project consortium, to the Joint Call Secretariat (JCS) in January of each year. The project coordinator will be required to submit a final scientific progress report on the joint project, on behalf of the project consortium, to the Joint Call Secretariat (JCS) within 3 months after the project ends. It may also be necessary for group leaders to submit reports individually to their funding organisation if required by national/regional regulations. Funding recipients must ensure that all outcomes (publications, etc.) of transnational JPND projects include a proper acknowledgement of JPND and the respective funding partner organisations.

## Annex

Please note that country specific requirements might apply to this call. For further information please contact your national representative:

Country	Contact officer	Funding organisation, contact details
<b>Austria</b>	Dr. Oliver Mayer	Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research (BMWF) oliver.mayer@bmf.gv.at +43 (0)1 53120 7145 www.bmf.gv.at
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<b>France</b>	Dr. Natalia Martin	French National Research Agency (ANR) Health & Biology Department natalia.martin@agencerecherche.fr + 33 173 54 81 33 http://www.agence-nationale-recherche.fr/en/
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<b>The Netherlands</b>	Dr. Edvard Beem	The Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development (ZonMw)  Beem@zonmw.nl + 31 70 3495104 www.zonmw.nl
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<b>Slovak Republic</b>	Prof. Dr. Michal Novak  Ms. Lubica Pitlova	Institute of Neuroimmunology Slovak Academy of Sciences  michal.novak@savba.sk +4212 54788100-1  Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic  lubica.pitlova@minedu.sk +4212 59102641 www.minedu.sk
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<b>Turkey</b>	Ms. Nihan Eryilmaz	Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) EU Framework Programmes National Coordination Office

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