

JPND Call for Proposals:

”European research projects for Cross-Disease Analysis of Pathways related to Neurodegenerative Diseases”

Submission deadline for proposals: 18th February 2014

Proposal template

Electronic proposal submission

For further information, please visit us on the web

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

or contact

Dr. Thomas Becker

at:

JPND Joint Call Secretariat
Project Management Agency
Member of the German Aerospace Center
Health Research Unit
Heinrich-Konen-Str. 1
53227 Bonn, Germany

Phone: +49-228-3821-1686
E-mail: Thomas.Becker@DLR.de

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Aim of the call
3. Application
4. Evaluation and decision
5. Funding procedure
6. Annex

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 per year 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.

There is a lack of understanding of the patho-physiological mechanisms being the basis for prognosis and diagnosis of neurodegenerative diseases. However, there is clinical, genetic and biochemical evidence that similar molecular pathways are relevant in different neurodegenerative diseases. Similarities in pathways have also been found with other chronic diseases, suggesting that neurodegenerative diseases are part of a continuum of phenotypic chronic diseases. A systems approach is needed to characterize diseases as multi-level network perturbations. It should merge computational as well as experimental approaches, considering molecules, cells and organs. Therefore, JPND launches this joint transnational call for proposals in order to encourage combined analysis of diseases across traditional clinical boundaries, which may lead to a re-definition of clinical phenotypes and new approaches in the treatment of neurodegeneration as part of a complex chronic disease.

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).

- **Belgium, Research Foundation – Flanders**
- **Canadian Institutes of Health Research***
- **Finland, Academy of Finland**
- **France, French National Research Agency**
- **Germany, Federal Ministry of Education and Research**
- **Italy**
 - **Ministry of Health**
 - **Ministry of Education, Universities and Research**
- **Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland**
- **Luxembourg, National Research Fund**
- **Netherlands, The Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development**
- **Norway, The Research Council of Norway**
- **Poland, National Science Centre**
- **Portugal, 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**
- **Turkey, Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey**

* NOTE: CIHR contributions are shared 50/50 between the CIHR-Institute of Aging and the CIHR-Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction.

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

- combine experimental approaches from fundamental, pre-clinical and/or clinical with computational approaches
- perform network analyses in different neurodegenerative and other chronic diseases to elucidate the underlying mechanisms common and differing in the investigated diseases
- will add value to existing research by analysing diseases across traditional clinical boundaries, thereby gaining deeper understanding of the patho-physiological mechanisms of the diseases.

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).**

Cross-Disease analysis may solely comprise different neurodegenerative diseases or neurodegenerative and other chronic diseases. However, at least one of the above mentioned neurodegenerative diseases must be addressed.

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 for the future development of therapeutics for neurodegenerative diseases across Europe must be explicitly stated. Appropriate access to relevant well-characterized populations, biomaterial collections, or infrastructure necessary for conducting the research project must be demonstrated. Pooling and synergistic usage of existing data, biomaterial collections, or animal models 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. Socio-economic factors, as well as issues such as gender or comorbidities, should be taken into account.

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

- Examining pathological processes related to neurodegeneration using computational and systems-biology approaches.
- Defining key regulatory steps affecting the onset or the progression of different diseases
- Understanding the variability in neurodegenerative and other chronic diseases, using cutting edge technologies.
- Identifying common disease pathways and mechanisms.
- Modelling of multi-level network dysfunction and generating new hypothesis for biological testing.
- Discovering modulators in order to ultimately determine protective and resilience factors
- Identifying new drugs, drug targets or new uses of existing drugs in the treatment of neurodegenerative diseases. The involvement of the pharma industry in proposals would be of great benefit.
- Re-defining clinical phenotypes related to neurodegenerative diseases.

Training of young researchers and mobility (e.g., research 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 attract expertise from areas outside of neurodegeneration research that can lead to innovative approaches. 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, materials, consumables, equipment, travel expenses, 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 organisations (see contact details in annex below).

Each proposal must involve **a minimum of three and a maximum of six (3-6) research groups (principal investigators) applying for funding**. Only transnational projects will be funded: each consortium must involve funded research groups from at least three different countries of the funding organisations participating in this call (see list above). In addition to those funded research groups, also external collaborators (e. g. from countries that are not partners in this JPND joint transnational call or research groups from countries that are partners in this JPND joint transnational call but do not ask for funding) may participate in projects. These external collaborators must be 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 coordinator must be from a country 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/initiatives/annual-calls-for-proposals/open-calls/cross-disease-analysis-2013>

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

There will be a **two-stage procedure** for joint applications: **pre-proposals** and **full proposals**. In both cases, one joint proposal document (in English) shall be prepared by the partners of a joint transnational proposal, and must be submitted to the Joint Call Secretariat by the coordinator.

Pre-proposals must be submitted by the coordinator in electronic format **no later than February 18, 2014** via the **electronic submission system** (https://www.pt-it.de/ptoutline/application/JPND_CD). No other means of submission will be accepted. A pre-proposal template is available at the JPND website (<http://www.neurodegenerationresearch.eu/initiatives/annual-calls-for-proposals/open-calls/cross-disease-analysis-2013>). Adhering to this template is a requirement. Individual funding organisations will receive copies of this pre-proposal from the JCS. The decision on selection of pre-proposal applications will be communicated by end of May 2014.

Full proposals will be accepted only from those applicants explicitly invited by the JCS to submit them. Full proposals must be submitted by the coordinator in electronic format **no later than June 23, 2014** via the **electronic submission system** (https://www.pt-it.de/ptoutline/application/JPND_CD). No other means of submission will be accepted. A full proposal template will be delivered by the JCS together with the invitation to submit a full proposal. Adhering to this template is a requirement. Individual funding organisations will receive copies of this full proposal from the JCS. The information given in the pre-proposal is binding. Thus, any fundamental changes between the pre- and full proposals, e.g. composition of the consortia, objectives of the project, must be communicated to the JCS with detailed justification and will only be allowed under exceptional circumstances. After full proposal evaluation, funding recommendations will be communicated to applicants as soon as possible.

3.4 Further information

The forms that have to be used for submission of proposals as well as further information on how to submit proposals electronically will be made available through the JPND website (<http://www.neurodegenerationresearch.eu/initiatives/annual-calls-for-proposals/open-calls/cross-disease-analysis-2013>). In case of any questions concerning the forms or proposal submission, **please contact the JCS** (see first page for contact details).

Country specific regulations must be considered by each applicant. For applicants from some countries/regions, it might be necessary to submit **additional information before the submission** deadline directly to the country/regional funding organisation. Therefore, applicants are strongly advised to **contact their national/regional funding organisations** for more details (see annex for contact information) and to consult the country-specific information on the JPND website (<http://www.neurodegenerationresearch.eu/initiatives/annual-calls-for-proposals/open-calls/cross-disease-analysis-2013>). Pre-proposals or full proposals not meeting country specific regulations, at least for one single partner, might be rejected without further review.

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. Scientific quality of the proposal including level of innovation and originality of the proposal along with novel methodology and feasibility of the project and related risk analysis (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 in the field of neurodegenerative diseases.

4.3 Decision

4.3.1 Pre-proposals

The eligible pre-proposals will be reviewed via a written (remote) peer review process. Based on the scores in the written reviews a ranking list will be set up. By mid of May 2014, the coordinators of the top proposals will be invited by the Joint Call Secretariat to submit a full proposal no later than June 23, 2014.

4.3.2 Full proposals

The international Joint Peer Review Panel will rank the fundable proposals based on scientific 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. The results of the full-proposal evaluation will be communicated to applicants as soon as possible.

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 2014.

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. For this purpose, a JPND dissemination strategy has been agreed by all member states. Adhering to the JPND dissemination guidelines, which can be downloaded from the JPND website (<http://www.neurodegenerationresearch.eu/news-events/dissemination-communication>), is mandatory for researchers funded under the umbrella of JPND.

6. 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
Belgium	Dr. Olivier Boehme	Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO) olivier.boehme@fwo.be +32 (0)2 550 1545
Canada	Marilyn Desrosiers	Canadian Institutes of Health Research Deputy Director, Strategic Program Design and Analytics (613) 954-6242 marilyn.desrosiers@cihr-irsc.gc.ca
Finland	Dr. Sanna Marjavaara	Academy of Finland (AKA) Health research unit sanna.marjavaara@aka.fi +358 29 533 5070 www.aka.fi
France	Dr. Natalia Martin Dr. Serena Battaglia	French National Research Agency (ANR) Health & Biology Department http://www.agence-nationale-recherche.fr/en/ natalia.martin@agencerecherche.fr + 33 173 54 81 33 serena.battaglia@agencerecherche.fr +33 178 09 80 14
Germany	Dr. Thomas Becker	Project Management Agency (PT-DLR) – Health Research on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) Thomas.Becker@DLR.de +49 228 3821 1686 www.gesundheitsforschung-bmbf.de
Italy	Dr. Gaetano Guglielmi	Ministry of Health (MOH) and Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MIUR) g.guglielmi@sanita.it +39 0659942186 http://www.salute.gov.it/
Ireland	Dr. Manus Ward	Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) manus.ward@sfi.ie +353 1 607 3230 www.sfi.ie
Luxembourg	Dr. Frank Glod	National Research Fund (FNR) +352 261925 33 frank.glod@fnr.lu www.fnr.lu

Netherlands	Dr. Edvard Beem	The Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development (ZonMw) Beem@zonmw.nl +31 70 3495104 www.zonmw.nl
Norway	Dr. Alexandra Bjørk- Skaflestad	Research Council of Norway alb@forskningsradet.no +47 22037224 www.forskningsradet.no
Poland	Dr. Marcin Liana	National Science Centre Królewska 57 30-081 Kraków +48 12 341 9161 marcin.liana@ncn.gov.pl www.ncn.gov.pl
Portugal	Dr. Ricardo Pereira	Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT), Portugal ricardo.pereira@fct.pt +351 21 391 15 96 www.fct.pt
Slovakia	Ms. Lubica Pitlova	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic lubica.pitlova@minedu.sk +4212 59102641 www.minedu.sk
Spain	Ms. Elsa Moreda	National Institute of Health Carlos III (ISCIII) – Subdirección General de Programas Internacionales de Investigación y Relaciones Institucionales era@isciii.es +34 91 82 22874 www.isciii.es
Sweden	Dr. Pontus Holm	Swedish Research Council pontus.holm@vr.se +46 8 54644317 www.vr.se
Turkey	Ms. Melike Sevimli	Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) EU Framework Programmes National Coordination Office melike.sevimli@tubitak.gov.tr +90 312 468 5300 – 1976 (ext.) www.tubitak.gov.tr