

2013 JPND Joint Transnational Calls

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

General framework

How does JPND pick the particular topics for calls for proposals?

JPND developed a strategic research agenda (SRA) for neurodegenerative diseases (ND), which was [published in February 2012](#). This strategy provides a roadmap to guide ND research activity in Europe over the next ten years. Since the launch of its strategy, JPND has agreed a phase one implementation plan for the period of 2012-2014. This plan identified a number of near-term priority activities that could be pursued to begin implementing the SRA. Some of the conditions JPND took into account when devising these priorities are:

- the interconnectivities between the identified themes and priorities
- the degree of EU-wide added value
- the level of innovation
- the practicality for implementation through existing mechanisms

JPND also considered the scale of the initiatives and the level of investment required to achieve the necessary impact. As a result, JPND intends to regularly launch calls for proposals to address several of these high priority areas in neurodegenerative disease research.

We recommend viewing the recorded JPND presentation to better understand the context of JPND calls, in addition to an explanation of how JPND funding works:

<http://www.neurodegenerationresearch.eu/initiatives/annual-calls-for-proposals/overview-presentation>

How does JPND funding work?

Amongst those countries that are part of JPND, respective national funding organisations agree to fund a joint transnational call for proposals. Funders are free to choose which calls they wish to support and this decision is often dependent on their own priorities and focus areas. The current JPND calls feature a central application procedure for proposals, and are coordinated centrally by a Joint Call Secretariat.

JPND funding is based on the “virtual common pot” model. This virtual common pot of money is a total of the individual budgetary commitments of all countries that participate in the call. These budget commitments of the countries are made in advance of the call publication and are based on several factors, including budget availability and the anticipated response from their respective national scientific communities.

Countries only pay for their own participants - each country will fund its own national project participants of successful proposals and covers its own administrative effort. Therefore, researchers are not funded by JPND directly, but exclusively by their respective funding organisations, taking into account the budgetary limits of each country (for this reason, the funding model is called “virtual” common pot).

Money cannot be transferred between funding agencies. If the budget of one funding organisation is spent completely, no more researchers from that country can be funded, even though there may still be money available in the “virtual” common pot from other funding organisations. On the other hand, if there are only few researchers from a specific country among the top ranked proposals, this country may not spend its entire budget allocation.

Are there preferred topics or diseases that JPND would like to fund?

No, there are no “preferred” topics or diseases that should be addressed. Scientists are free to develop their own ideas, as long as they fit into the general framework of the call, which is provided in the call text. However, it must be taken into account that clinical relevance is one of the evaluation criteria. As a consequence, the topic of the project, the scientific approach, and the methodology should be well justified in the pre-proposal.

What about rare diseases?

A pre-proposal on a rare disease will have the same chance in the evaluation process as compared to a proposal on, for example, Alzheimer’s Disease – as long as the clinical relevance is convincingly shown.

Who is eligible to apply for a JPND call?

These calls are being conducted by a number of JPND countries, represented by their respective funding organisations. In fact, only those researchers that are eligible according to the rules of their relevant national funding organisation may apply for funding. The call text provides all information on the participating funding organisations and eligibility criteria. This information is complimented by the country-specific information sheets, which provide additional information on national eligibility criteria for each participating country. If, after reading these documents, you are still uncertain about your eligibility to apply to these calls, we strongly recommend consulting the respective national contact point (contact information is given in the call text as well as in the country-specific information sheets).

Meeting the eligibility criteria is absolutely mandatory! If one or more partners of a consortium are not eligible, the whole proposal may be rejected without further review. Therefore, we strongly recommend checking the eligibility of all partners very carefully and consult with your national contact point if in doubt. Please note that some countries demand additional forms to be completed by the applicants (this information is provided in the country-specific information sheets).

If there are uncertainties, whom can I contact to get further information?

If you have questions regarding these calls for proposals, you should either contact the JPND Joint Call Secretariat or your respective national contact point. Contact information for both is given in the call text, which can be downloaded from the JPND website.

The JPND Joint Call Secretariat may help you with regard to general aspects of the call (e.g., if you have questions on the call topic, the proposal template or the evaluation process). The JPND Joint Call Secretariat will be able to communicate in English language by email or phone. In contrast, the national contact points will be able to advise you on all aspects of national regulations or restrictions, e. g., budgetary issues, eligibility aspects or additional requirements for potential applicants.

When shall I contact my national contact point?

The national contact point can provide specific information on national regulations, restrictions and on the available national budget to its researchers. Please keep in mind that failing to fulfil respective national regulations/restrictions by even one consortium partner may result in a rejection of the entire proposal. Therefore, it is helpful for each member of a consortium to contact its national contact point personally. Contact details are provided in the call text and in the country-specific information sheets, which can be downloaded from the JPND website.

Building a consortium

What must be considered regarding the composition of a consortium?

The composition of a consortium is one of the evaluation criteria for reviewers. All information about requirements and restrictions regarding consortia are specified in the call text. Within these framework conditions, applicants are free to compose their consortium according to scientific needs. For example, it is possible to include different groups from the same country. At the same time, the added value of transnational collaboration may be higher with diverse research groups from different countries. Against this background, it is unlikely that a consortium will be recommended for funding if groups from one country are dominating a consortium.

However, we would like to emphasise that there are no “hidden expectations” or “political issues” that should be considered, e. g., including partners from selected countries due to political reasons.

Can I include external collaborators in a proposal?

Yes, it is possible to include external collaborators in a consortium (e.g. for co-working on specific aspects or for including patients, cohorts, biomaterial samples or data). An external collaborator is a research group that is part of a proposal, but does not apply for funding. In principle, this could be a research group from either

- a non-JPND member country (e.g., the United States)
- a JPND member country that is not participating in the specific call
- a JPND member country that is participating in the call, but the research group is not requesting funding.

External collaborators must be able to secure their own funding. It must be stated clearly in the proposal if these funds are already secured or, if not, how the external collaborators plan to obtain funding in advance of the project start. The number of external collaborators should be well justified. Although the number of external collaborators is not formally restricted, external collaborators should not be overrepresented in a consortium. In addition, an external collaborator cannot be the coordinator of a JPND-supported research consortium.

Can collaborators from non-JPND countries be involved?

It is possible to include external collaborators (from both JPND- and non-JPND member countries) in a research project (see question and answer on external collaborators). However, external collaborators cannot be funded by these calls, and thus must be able to secure their own funding, or provide their work for free (*pro-bono*). It must be clearly stated in any proposal if these funds are already secured or, if not, how the external collaborators plan to obtain funding in advance of the project start. Additional limitations include the following:

- A project must involve research groups applying for funding from at least three different JPND member countries participating in the individual call.
- The coordinator of a research consortium must be from one of those countries.

The call text, which can be downloaded from the JPND website, provides you with all information on countries and organisations that participate in the call.

How do I find partners for a joint research project?

For these calls, JPND is recommending use of the pilot [JPND Partnering Tool](https://jpnd.induct.no/login/). The JPND Partnering Tool is free of charge and can be used by anyone. The tool allows researchers to present their research group and expertise in a closed forum, tailored for JPND, thus making it easier for research partners to locate each other and collaborate on a proposal. Researchers can also register a new idea and receive comments from expert scientists and researchers who signed up within the tool. Consortia can then be built around this idea and a proposal can be drafted directly within the Partnering Tool. We believe that this tool will especially support early-career researchers and research groups not yet included in established consortia. Experienced researchers may use the tool to find specific expertise which may be missing from their pre-existing consortia.

The JPND partnering tool can be directly accessed here:

<https://jpnd.induct.no/login/>

How much money can I apply for and which costs are eligible?

In principle, there is no formal restriction with regard to the maximum budget requested by a consortium. However, the budget should be justified by the work plan of the proposal. It is important to note that there is no direct funding of projects by JPND itself, but all successful call applicants are funded by the relevant national funding organisation(s) participating in the call. As a consequence, funding rules depend on the relevant national regulations and restrictions, which differ between the funding organisations. Each funding organisation provides detailed budgetary information as part of the country-specific information sheet of each participating country. The country-specific information sheet includes important information on the maximum budget available, eligible and non-eligible costs, overhead costs and specific regulations and restrictions. In addition, applicants should also consult their national contact point. Contact information is provided in the call text as well as in the country-specific information sheet.

Are there limitations with regard to the size of a consortium?

Yes, the minimum and maximum size of an eligible consortium is explicitly stated in the call text. Within these limitations, there is some flexibility to apply with a bigger or smaller consortium. Although the size of a consortium - within the permitted range - is not a direct review criterion, the reviewers will evaluate whether the size of a consortium is in-line with the indicated aims and the work plan. Therefore, the number of research groups participating in a consortium should be well-justified.

May I join or even coordinate more than one proposal?

Yes, joining more than one proposal as an applicant may be possible, even within the same call, depending on the national/regional regulations of the respective funding organisations. Applicants who wish to join more than one proposed consortium must be able to demonstrate that they have the capacity to fulfil their work in case that several proposals they are participating in are suggested for funding. However, please make sure to check your national regulations with regard to this issue. Any applicable restrictions will be included in the country-specific information sheets.

However, this policy is different with regard to the coordinator of a proposal. Being a coordinator is a high responsibility, very time consuming and demanding. Therefore, although there may be no formal restriction set forth by your national/regional funding organisation, it is not a good idea to act as a coordinator in more than one proposal.

Writing a proposal

When preparing a proposal, which documents do I need?

At the very least, you need the following documents, which are provided at the JPND website:

- Call text
- Country-specific information sheets (for all partners)
- Additional country-specific forms (only if appropriate)
- Pre-proposal template

The call text provides you with all information concerning the topic and the general framework that applies for the call. This information is complemented by the country-specific information sheets, which provide you with additional information on national regulations and restrictions for each country. Please keep in mind that JPND applications are multinational collaboration projects where each country has its own specific regulations (for example, some countries request additional forms from their researchers before submitting a proposal). Use of the pre-proposal template is absolutely mandatory for preparing your pre-proposal!

How precise must a pre-proposal be?

As you can see from the pre-proposal template, which can be downloaded from the JPND website, pre-proposals are rather short and space is limited. As a consequence, you should place emphasis on transmitting your general idea (e. g., your aims, research questions and the work plan) to the reviewers who will evaluate the pre-proposals. The aim of a pre-proposal is to convince the reviewers, who are all scientists from the respective field(s) of research, that your proposal should be considered for the full proposal stage.

How do I submit a proposal?

If you plan to submit a pre-proposal for these calls, please make sure that you are using the pre-proposal template, which can be downloaded from the JPND website. Sticking to this template when preparing your pre-proposal is absolutely mandatory!

Your application to the call is completed by uploading a PDF version of your pre-proposal via the electronic submission system (link provided at the JPND website). No other means of pre-proposal submission will be accepted. A user registration is needed to use the electronic submission system. However, only the coordinator of a consortium needs to register. Once registered, the coordinator may directly enter into the system, which will provide guidance for the rest of the submission process. No further action is needed after uploading your pre-proposal file. We strongly encourage you to upload your pre-proposal well in advance of the deadline to avoid the call closure rush.

Is it possible to submit attachments (references, CVs, letters of intent.) to a pre-proposal?

No, it is not permitted to submit any attachments or annexes to a pre-proposal. All information has to be included in the main document, adhering to the structure and the page limits of the pre-proposal template (provided at the JPND website). Any attachment or annex to the pre-proposal will be deleted automatically. Information that is not requested in the pre-proposal template is not relevant for the evaluation process (e. g., letters of intent).

Can I submit a pre-proposal shortly after the deadline if this is well justified?

No, this is not possible. The electronic submission system will close at 23:59 C.E.T. on the day of the submission deadline. No pre-proposal submission is possible thereafter and no other means of submission will be accepted. We recommend finalising your pre-proposal well in advance of the deadline.

Evaluation and decision making

Who will evaluate the submitted proposals?

Evaluation of proposals for these calls is undertaken by separate expert panels composed of internationally-renowned scientists. These experts (reviewers) are chosen for their expertise in the field of the topic of the call, their thematic orientation, their overall expertise in brain research and neurodegenerative diseases and their complementary expertise with regard to these fields. Reviewers are appointed based on their scientific expertise and their selection is not restricted to countries participating in JPND. Insofar as possible, JPND will strive to ensure a balance of gender and country representation of the review panel members. The reviewers will not adopt national considerations nor will they represent any of the JPND joint call partner organisations.

Who decides which proposals receive funding?

The final decision on which proposals receive funding is taken by the JPND funding organisations. However, this decision does, of course, depend on the results of the scientific evaluation, which is done by an independent peer review panel. This panel of experts decides whether a proposal receives a funding recommendation or not. Proposals with no funding recommendation cannot be funded. Proposals that are recommended for funding will be ranked by the peer review panel according to their quality, based on the evaluation criteria described in the call text. Funding will be given to the very best proposals of this ranking list, taking into account the available national budgets.

How many stages of decision making will be applied to a proposal?

For these calls, there will be two steps of decision-making: A pre-proposal and a full proposal decision.

Firstly, the submitted pre-proposals are evaluated based on international scientific peer review, and a decision is made on which proposals to invite for the full proposal stage. Coordinators who submitted a pre-proposal will be informed by the JPND Joint Call Secretariat about the outcome of the pre-proposal evaluation.

Secondly, coordinators of successful pre-proposals will be offered to submit a full proposal within a time-frame of four to six weeks. All information on the full proposal stage will automatically be sent by the JPND Joint Call Secretariat. Full proposals are evaluated by international scientific peer review. Following the peer review process, the JPND funding organisations finally decide on which proposals will receive funding. Again, coordinators who submitted a full proposal will be informed by the JPND Joint Call Secretariat on the final funding decision.

How long does it take until a funding decision is made?

The decision on all submitted pre-proposals will be communicated approximately three months after the original submission deadline. Coordinators of successful pre-proposals will then be offered to submit a full proposal within a time-frame of four to six weeks. The separate decision on full proposals will be communicated approximately four months after the full proposal submission deadline.

Please note that the indicated time points of decision communication are based on former experience and may vary. However, in all cases, coordinators of all submitted pre- and full proposals will automatically be contacted by the JPND Joint Call Secretariat as soon as a decision can be communicated.

What happens to a consortium if one or several partner(s) cannot be funded?

It should be noted that research groups are not funded by JPND directly but by the participating national/regional funding organisations of their country. Each country has its own individual budget allocation for the call. It can happen that a consortium recommended for funding contains one or more research groups from a country that has already spent its budget completely (for example, because the country budget had already been allocated to research groups from other consortia which were ranked higher). In this scenario, the JPND funding organisations will attempt to find a solution to secure funding of that consortium (for example, a country whose budget allocation is running low may be able to increase it). However, in the case where no solution can be found, the proposal will be rejected and the entire consortium will not be funded.

What happens to proposals of very similar scope?

In principle, proposals of similar scope are welcome. However, when it comes to a funding decision, the final ranking may take into account the optimal portfolio spread that will provide most benefit (i.e., where there are two or more proposals of similar scope and of similar high scientific quality, funding may be restricted to the best application only).

Can I revise my proposal at any stage?

No. The inclusion of a rebuttal phase would result in a strong prolongation of the decision making. Therefore, the funding organisations participating in these JPND calls for proposals have decided to exclude the possibility of rebuttal.