

## **JPND Call for Proposals:**

# **"Multinational research projects for Pathway Analysis across Neurodegenerative Diseases"**

**Submission deadline for pre-proposals:**

**March 6, 2017, 23:59h C.E.T.**

For further information, please visit us on the web

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

or contact the JPND Joint Call Secretariat:

Dr. Sabrina Voß  
sabrina.voss@dlr.de  
(+49) 228-3821 1821

Dr. Vera Mönter  
vera.moenter@dlr.de  
(+49) 228-3821 1717

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Neurodegenerative diseases are debilitating and largely untreatable conditions that are strongly linked with age. Worldwide, there are estimated to be 47 million people suffering from Alzheimer's disease and related disorders, the most common class of neurodegenerative diseases. This figure is expected to double every 20 years as the 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 EU Joint Programme on Neurodegenerative Disease Research (JPND) was established in order to better coordinate research efforts across countries and disciplines to more rapidly find causes, develop cures and identify better ways to care for people with neurodegenerative disease. The JPND Research Strategy, published in 2012, identified research priorities and provided a framework for future investment.

There is clinical, genetic and biochemical evidence that similar molecular pathways are relevant in different neurodegenerative and other chronic diseases. Therefore, clinical phenotypes alone seem insufficient to provide an understanding of the underlying mechanisms involved, and to be the sole basis for prognosis and diagnosis of neurodegenerative diseases. For this reason, JPND is launching a call for multidisciplinary proposals to perform network analyses in different neurodegenerative and other chronic diseases to elucidate the underlying mechanisms involved. The combined analysis of diseases across traditional clinical boundaries, technologies and disciplines may lead to a re-definition of clinical phenotypes and new approaches in the treatment of neurodegenerative diseases. A similar call has been successfully launched in 2013: Cross Disease Analysis of Pathways.

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.

- **Australia, National Health and Medical Research Council**
- **Canada, Canadian Institutes of Health Research**
- **Czech Republic, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports**
- **Denmark, Innovation Fund Denmark**

- **France, French National Research Agency**
- **Germany, Federal Ministry of Education and Research**
- **Hungary, National Research, Development and Innovation Office**
- **Ireland, Health Research Board**
- **Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland**
- **Israel, Chief Scientist Office, Ministry of Health**
- **Italy, Ministry of Education, Universities and Research**
- **Italy, Ministry of Health**
- **Luxembourg, National Research Fund**
- **Netherlands, The Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development**
- **Norway, The Research Council of Norway**
- **Poland, The National Centre for Research and Development**
- **Romania, National Authority for Scientific Research and Innovation**
- **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**
- **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

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

The following neurodegenerative diseases are included in the call:

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

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Cross-disease analysis may solely comprise different neurodegenerative diseases or include other chronic diseases (e.g. chronic mental or physical disorders). However, at least one of the above mentioned neurodegenerative diseases must be addressed.

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

- Examining pathological processes related to neurodegeneration, e.g. by using computational and systems-biology approaches.
- Defining key regulatory steps affecting the onset or the progression of different diseases
- Understanding the commonalities and 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 hypotheses 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.
- Re-defining clinical phenotypes related to neurodegenerative diseases.

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 future development of treatments for neurodegenerative diseases should be explicitly stated. Appropriate access to relevant, well-characterized patient populations or suitable biomaterial collections must be demonstrated. Pooling and synergistic use 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. A plan for the management of the consortium should also be provided.

Data, tools and bio-resources being generated within the research projects should be made widely available to the public domain to increase their added value. Access must be provided to other bona fide research groups. Consortia are strongly advised to define arrangements to deal with this issue within their application.

Research proposals should have plans that adequately involve patients, carers and the public (Patient and Public Involvement or PPI). Applicants are expected to make every effort to include PPI approaches, where appropriate, at each stage of the research process and/or specify plans for future involvement. Please see the JPND website for further information on how to address PPI.

Applicants should consider the ways in which socio-economic factors, gender-related research questions or comorbidities should be taken into account and incorporate these factors when formulating their research hypotheses, aims and work plans.

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, where this can be specifically justified in terms of the training opportunities provided to the individual and the needs of the field. Please note that there may be restrictions according to national regulations. To have an impact at European and partner country levels, 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 bring innovation to the approach to be pursued. The case must be made for the added value that will be provided by the collaboration.

### **3. MANAGEMENT OF THE CALL**

Below we outline the role of the three bodies that are responsible for the management of the call and the evaluation of proposals. Any person being involved in one of these bodies will not be allowed to submit or participate in proposals within this call.

- The Joint Call Secretariat is led by DLR-PT, Health Research, Germany. The Joint Call Secretariat is responsible for the management of the call. It is a point of contact for both applicants and partner organisations.
- The Call Steering Committee is composed of a single representative from each participating funding organisation. All decisions concerning the call procedures will be taken by the Call Steering Committee. Based on scientific recommendations from the Peer Review Panel and budget considerations it will confirm the list of consortia that will be invited to submit full proposals and also confirm final funding recommendations to the national/regional funding organisations.
- The Peer Review Panel is composed of internationally recognised scientific experts from different fields of research related to the topics of the call. The Peer Review Panel is responsible for the scientific evaluation of proposals at both the pre- and full proposal stage. The Peer Review Panel makes funding recommendations to the Call Steering Committee. It will also rank the proposals according to the evaluation criteria.

### **4. APPLICATION**

#### **4.1 Eligibility**

Projects can be funded for a period of up to three years. 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 specific administrative requirements of each participating funding organisation and may therefore vary. Applicants are strongly advised to consult the specific national regulations and contact their funding organisations to clarify eligibility issues and national regulations (see contact details in Annex).

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Each proposal must involve a minimum of three and a maximum of six (3-6) research groups (principal investigators) applying for funding. If the consortium involves at least one partner from an underrepresented European country (Czech Republic, Hungary, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Slovakia), the maximum number of partners of a consortium is extended to seven partners.

Only transnational projects will be funded: each consortium must involve research groups from at least three different countries participating in this call, with each one funded by the corresponding country funding organisation (see section 1). For reasons of transnational balance, no more than two research groups from the same country are allowed to join a consortium.

In addition, 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 apply 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 majority of research groups in a consortium and the co-ordinator must be from countries of the partner organisations that conduct the call (see section 1).

Funding for travelling and interacting with non-participating countries like the USA is eligible. Details and restrictions can be obtained from the specific information sheets.

Each consortium should have the critical mass to achieve ambitious scientific goals and the proposals should clearly demonstrate the added value of working together. The project co-ordinator will be responsible for the project's internal scientific management and will represent the consortium externally.

Whilst applications are to be submitted jointly by groups from different countries, individual research groups will be funded by the JPND funding organisation(s) for their country/region. Eligibility for funding is decided by individual partner organisations (see Annex) and the details of what may or may not be funded are subject to the regulations of the corresponding funding organisations and thus may vary.

**Inclusion of a partner in a proposal who is not eligible for funding according to the specific regulations of their respective funding agency may result in the rejection of the entire proposal without further review. In addition, for applicants from some countries/regions, it might be necessary to submit advanced information before the submission deadline directly to the respective funding organisation. Information on specific regulations is provided separately in the specific information sheets. Applicants are strongly advised to contact their respective funding organisation (see Annex) to confirm eligibility before the submission deadline.**

#### **4.2 Submission of proposals**

There will be a two-stage procedure for applications: pre-proposals and full proposals. The revision of the application between these stages will be accepted only in the circumstances indicated below.

For both pre-proposals and full proposals, one joint proposal document (in English) shall be prepared by the partners of a joint transnational consortium and submitted to the Joint Call Secretariat by the co-ordinator.

**Pre-proposals** must be submitted by the co-ordinator in electronic format **no later than 23:59h C.E.T. on March 6, 2017**, via the **electronic submission system**. No other means of submission will be accepted. The pre-proposal template is available through the JPND website. There is no need to send copies to individual funding organisations, as these agencies will receive copies of the pre-proposal from the Joint Call Secretariat.

A **revision** of the overall application is allowed after the pre-proposal stage. However, full proposals will be accepted only from those applicants explicitly invited by the Joint Call Secretariat to submit them. Please note that the information given in the pre-proposal is binding (i.e., changes to the overall plans may not be made). Nevertheless, the following modifications are permitted in the preparation of a full proposal:

- Changing the composition of the consortium is normally restricted to one research group applying for funding (i.e., only one research group may be added, removed or exchanged) and in the following cases:
  - where a research group from the pre-proposal has been declared non-eligible by the respective funding agency.
  - where the respective modification is based on the feedback from the pre-proposal evaluation by the Peer Review Panel.

In addition and on the basis of a scientific justification, applicants are encouraged to include partners from underrepresented European countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Slovakia). Please note that in this case the maximum number of partners of a consortium is extended to seven partners (see also section 4.1).

- Research groups not applying for funding (external collaborators) may be included, excluded or changed.
- Changes to the work plan should either be based on a recommendation from the pre-proposal evaluation or well justified in the full proposal.
- Changes to the budget of individual research groups are allowed. However this must be in line with the relevant changes to the work plan and requires approval by the respective funding organisation.

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that any changes are in line with the eligibility criteria of the call (see section 4.1). Changes that exceed the conditions for revision (see above) or result in full proposals not meeting the eligibility criteria may be rejected without further review. Therefore, if there is any doubt, applicants are strongly advised to consult the Joint Call Secretariat and the funding organisations involved in the proposal in advance of submission.

**Full proposals** must be submitted by the co-ordinator in electronic format **no later than 23:59h C.E.T. on June 28, 2017**. An application template will be sent to the co-ordinator by the Joint Call Secretariat. Adhering to this template is a requirement. Any changes introduced in the revision phase (see above) should be described and justified in the full proposal. A separate section will be provided for this purpose. There is no need to send copies to individual funding organisations as these agencies will receive copies of the full proposal from the Joint Call Secretariat.

#### **4.3 Further information**

The forms that must be used for the submission of proposals as well as further information on how to submit proposals electronically will be made available through the JPND website. In case of any questions concerning the forms or proposal submission, please contact the Joint Call Secretariat (see first page for contact details).

## **5. EVALUATION AND DECISION**

### **5.1 Evaluation criteria and scoring**

The Peer Review Panel will carry out the evaluation of pre-proposals and full proposals. The following evaluation criteria will be applied:

- **Relevance** to the aim(s) of the call.
- **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).
- **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.
- **Deliverable outcomes** in the short, medium, long term and potential foreseen impact - potential of the expected results for future clinical and other health relevant applications in the field of neurodegenerative diseases.



## **5.2 Evaluation and decision on pre-proposals**

### **5.2.1 Eligibility and formal check**

The Joint Call Secretariat will check the pre-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 Joint Call Secretariat will forward the pre-proposals to the national/regional funding organisations for a check of compliance with their respective funding regulations. Pre-proposals not meeting the formal or eligibility criteria will be rejected. Pre-proposals passing these checks will be forwarded to the Peer Review Panel for evaluation.

### **5.2.2 Peer Review of pre-proposals**

Pre-proposals passing the formal and eligibility check will be evaluated by the Peer Review Panel. Pre-proposals will be evaluated first by a written evaluation and then at an in-person meeting of the panel. At least three Peer Review Panel members will be asked to evaluate and score each pre-proposal on a written basis. At the panel meeting, a subset of Peer Review Panel members will meet in person to discuss written statements of the pre-proposals, where appropriate. As a result of the meeting, the Peer Review Panel will agree on a ranking list of all pre-proposals and recommend the number of pre-proposals to be invited to the full proposal stage.

### **5.2.3 Decision on pre-proposals**

Based on the results of the Peer Review Panel meeting, the Call Steering Committee will decide how many pre-proposals will be invited to the full proposal stage. The co-ordinators of the pre-proposals will be informed by the Joint Call Secretariat about the outcome of the pre-proposal evaluation and decision by June 2017. They will also receive the written evaluations (with the evaluators remaining anonymous). Projects that have been selected to move on to the full proposal stage will be supplied with all relevant information regarding next steps.

## **5.3 Evaluation and decision on full proposals**

### **5.3.1 Eligibility and formal check**

Full proposals will be checked as described in section 5.2.1. Full proposals passing these checks will be forwarded to the Peer Review Panel for evaluation.

### **5.3.2 Peer Review of full proposals**

Full proposals passing the formal and eligibility checks will be evaluated by the Peer Review Panel. Full proposal evaluation will be performed as described in section 5.2.2. As a result of the meeting, the Peer Review Panel will agree on a ranking list based on the assessment according to the evaluation criteria and will make funding recommendations for each full proposal.

### **5.3.3 Decision on full proposals**

Based on the results of the Peer Review Panel meeting and on available funding, the Call Steering Committee will propose a package of awards for a final decision by the national/regional funding organisations, subject to budgetary considerations. The co-ordinators of the full proposals will be informed by the Joint Call Secretariat about the outcome of the full proposal evaluation and

decision by the end of October 2017. Co-ordinators will receive the anonymised written evaluations and a written summary of the panel discussion.

## **6. FUNDING REGULATIONS; RESPONSIBILITIES AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

Projects can be funded for a period of up to three years with starting dates from the end of 2017 onwards. Funding decisions will be made on a national basis by the relevant funding organisations and administered according to their terms and conditions, taking into account all other applicable regulations and legal frameworks.

A project consortium agreement signed by all project partners in each project consortium is a requirement for the liberation of funds. The project consortium agreement will specify as a minimum: decision making, monitoring, reporting, intellectual property rights management and sharing of data and resources, as appropriate. Administrative and funding arrangements will be stated in the project consortium agreement to be a bilateral responsibility between each project partner and the relevant funding organisation.

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

The project co-ordinator 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 in January of each year. A final scientific progress report on the joint project must be submitted by the co-ordinator, on behalf of the project consortium, to the Joint Call Secretariat within 3 months of the end of the project. It may also be necessary for group leaders to submit reports individually to their funding organisation if required to do so 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 to by all JPND member states. Adhering to the JPND dissemination guidelines is mandatory for researchers funded under the umbrella of JPND.

## 7. Annex

### National contact persons and contact details

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>Australia</b>	Dr. Julie Glover	National Health and Medical Research Council +61 2 6217 9451 dementia.research@nhmrc.gov.au
<b>Canada</b>	Melody Sajedi Flamine Alary	Team Lead, Program Delivery Canadian Institutes of Health Research 613-960-9475 melody.sajedi@cihr-irsc.gc.ca flamine.alary@criugm.qc.ca
<b>Czech Republic</b>	Hana Siskova Grznarova	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MSMT) Department of Research and Development +420 234 811 504 Hana.SiskovaGrznarova@msmt.cz
<b>Denmark</b>	Prof. Dr. Mogens Horder	University of Southern Denmark +45 66502820 MHorder@health.sdu.dk
<b>France</b>	Dr. Sheyla Mejia-Gervacio	French National Research Agency (ANR) +33 178 09 80 14 sheyla.mejia@agencerecherche.fr
<b>Germany</b>	Dr. Sabrina Voß Dr. Vera Mönter	Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) by DLR Project Management Agency (DLR-PT) sabrina.voss@dlr.de (+49) 228-3821 1821 vera.moenter@dlr.de (+49) 228-3821 1717
<b>Hungary</b>	Dr. Klára Horváth	National Research, Development and Innovation Office Budapest 1077, Kéthly Anna tér 1. +36 1 896 37 48 klara.horvath@nkfi.gov.hu
<b>Ireland</b>	Ellen Moran	Health Research Board emoran@hrb.ie
<b>Ireland</b>	Stephen Hammel	Science Foundation Ireland +353 1 607 3200 stephen.hammel@sfi.ie
<b>Israel</b>	Dr. Ahmi Ben-Yehudah	Ministry of Health (CSO-MOH) +972-2-508-2163 ahmi.by@moh.gov.il
<b>Italy</b>	Dr. Aldo Covello Dr. Valeria Cardia	Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MIUR) E-mail: aldo.covello@miur.it - Tel. (+39) 06.5849.6465 E-mail: valeria.cardia@miur.it - Tel. (+39) 06.5849.7333

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<b>Italy</b>	Dr. Giselda Scalera Dr. M. Jose Ruiz Alvarez Ms. Maria Grazia Mancini	Ministry of Health (MoH-IT) +39 06.59943214/3215 research.eu.dgric@sanita.it
<b>Luxembourg</b>	Dr. Frank Glod	National Research Fund (FNR) +352 261925 33 frank.glod@fnr.lu
<b>Netherlands</b>	Ms. Marjolein Scholten	The Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development (ZonMw) +31 70 349 53 35 Scholten@zonmw.nl
<b>Norway</b>	Dr. Alexandra Bjørk- Skaflestad	Research Council of Norway (RCN) +47 22037224 alb@forskningsradet.no
<b>Poland</b>	Dr. Katarzyna Moczulska	National Centre for Research and Development (NCBR) +48 515 061 519 katarzyna.moczulska@ncbr.gov.pl
<b>Romania</b>	Ioana Ispas	National Authority for Scientific Research and Innovation ioana.ispas@ancs.ro
<b>Slovakia</b>	Ms. Lubica Pitlova	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (MESR) +4212 59374741 lubica.pitlova@minedu.sk
<b>Spain</b>	Dr. Mauricio Garcia-Franco	National Institute of Health Carlos III (ISCIII) +34 91 822 2885 mauriciog@isci.es
<b>Sweden</b>	Dr. Patriq Fagerstedt Anh Thu Nguyen Hoang	Swedish Research Council (SRC) +46 (0)8 546 44 246 Patriq.Fagerstedt@vr.se AnhThu.NguyenHoang@vr.se
<b>Switzerland</b>	Dr. Véronique Planchamp	Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) Division Biology & Medicine +41 31 308 22 22 veronique.planchamp@snf.ch
<b>United Kingdom</b>	Dr. Catherine Moody	Medical Research Council (MRC) +44 20 7395 2231 JPNDPathways2017@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk