

EU Joint Programme - Neurodegenerative Disease Research (JPND)

Procedures document

“The impact of COVID-19 on Neurodegenerative Diseases research”

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1. SCOPE

This document represents a statement of intent from the funding organisations conducting this call for Working Groups. It is for use by the funding organisations and for information of the applicants that apply to this call. It complements the information provided with the call text. The funding organisations agree to make every reasonable effort to implement the call as described below and to fund as many high-ranked Working Groups as possible.

2. MANAGEMENT OF THE CALL

Four bodies are responsible for the management of the call and the evaluation of the proposals. Members of these bodies are not allowed to submit or participate in proposals to this call.

- The Call Steering Committee is composed of representatives from the participating funding organisations. It takes all decisions regarding the call procedures, operations and funding.
- The Joint Call Secretariat is led by the German Aerospace Center, Project Management Agency. It manages the call and is a contact point for applicants and funding organisations.
- The JPND communications officer disseminates the call, hosts the call website and publishes the call results and reports from the Working Groups.
- The Peer Review Panel is composed of internationally recognised scientists related to the call topic. It provides scientific evaluations of proposals according to the specified criteria.

3. ELECTRONIC PROPOSAL SUBMISSION AND EVALUATION

The JPND electronic submission and evaluation system is provided by the German Aerospace Center, Project Management Agency. Applicants are able to register themselves to allow proposal submission. Members of the Call Steering Committee and the Peer Review Panel are registered by

the Joint Call Secretariat and the specific accounts allow them to access all proposals. However, reviewers are only able to evaluate a subset of proposals assigned to them and the specific evaluations of the other involved reviewers are not visible to them until the alignment phase (section 8). The system also provides information on evaluation criteria and scoring. In addition, the reviewers have to declare on putative conflicts of interest for each proposal they are evaluating.

4. FORMAL AND ELIGIBILITY CHECK

After the expiry of the submission deadline, the Joint Call Secretariat checks all proposals regarding their adherence to the general eligibility criteria and the proposal template. For proposals not adhering to the proposal template, the coordinator may be allowed to revise the proposal within a time frame of 24 hours, following instructions from the Joint Call Secretariat. The Call Steering Committee finally decides which proposals are accepted and submitted to peer review. In addition, the funding organisations check and confirm the specific eligibility of the respective Working Group coordinators. They also check whether any other participant of the Working Group could potentially receive funding instead of the coordinator, if needed (section 10).

5. ESTABLISHING THE PEER REVIEW PANEL

The Call Steering Committee makes suggestions on potential reviewers and nominates a Peer Review Panel for the evaluation of proposals. International membership and a balance of gender and national representation is sought. Reviewers are not allowed to apply for this call and do not represent the funding organisations or their respective countries. They are appointed for their own scientific expertise and their evaluations must be based on the evaluation criteria for this call (section 7). Each reviewer must sign an agreement regarding confidentiality and declaration of no conflict of interest before undertaking the evaluation process. A conflicted reviewer must not review the proposal. A disqualifying conflict of interest exists if a reviewer:

- was involved in the preparation of the proposal,
- benefits professionally, financially or personally from approval or rejection of the proposal,
- has a close family or other personal or professional relationship with the coordinator,
- is currently working in the coordinators department or laboratory unit,
- is in any other situation influencing his or her ability to evaluate the proposal impartially.

In case of doubt in a situation not considered in the list above the reviewer should communicate and discuss with the Call Secretariat.

6. REVIEWER ASSIGNMENT

The Joint Call Secretariat prepares a list of potential reviewers and their assignment to specific proposals. Each proposal is assigned to three reviewers. After approval by the Call Steering Committee, the Joint Call Secretariat provides the reviewers with access to the proposals via the electronic submission and evaluation system and manages the entire evaluation process, including communication to the reviewers and the coordinators of the Working Groups.

7. REMOTE EVALUATION

Evaluation of the proposals are conducted according to the following criteria:

- Scientific fit to topic of the call
- Relevance and likely impact of the activity in the context of the aims of the call

- Involved expertise and their appropriate mix
- Potential outcomes and plans for dissemination

Each evaluation criterion is scored individually by each reviewer. In addition, reviewers must provide a written justification of their overall evaluation. Credits may be given in the range of 0 (minimum) to 10 (maximum) points for each criterion. Thus, the top score of a proposal given by one reviewer is 40 points. A deadline for providing the remote evaluations is given to the reviewers. One week ahead of the deadline, the Joint Call Secretariat reminds those reviewers that have not yet delivered their evaluations. A notification is given to communicate within 24 hours if they are not able to submit the evaluations on time.

8. ALIGNMENT PHASE

After the submission deadline the subsequent alignment phase envisages that all proposals receive at least three independent evaluations. In addition, the discrepancy among the individual assessments may be reduced. The following actions are taken:

- One substitute reviewer is assigned for each non-responsive reviewer directly after the deadline. The substitute reviewer(s) fully evaluates the proposal within ten days.
- Where the individual total scoring of a proposal exceeds a discrepancy of 10 points, a consolidation is done. The involved reviewers gain access to all available evaluations and consider revising their own evaluation, if justified, in the light of the other evaluations within one week.

9. FUNDING DECISIONS

After finishing the remote evaluation and alignment phase, the Joint Call Secretariat provides the individual written statements and scores to the Call Steering Committee. Should the involvement of one or several substitute reviewer(s) result in more than three evaluations for specific proposals, all available evaluations are considered. The mean total score is calculated and proposals are ranked accordingly. The members of the Call Steering Committee meet in person to decide on the number of Working Groups to be funded. Proposals are selected for funding according to their rank order, starting with the highest ranked. In case of ties between two or more proposals at the same ranking position, the Call Steering Committee may decide on the proposals to be funded according to the available budgets and with the aim to maximise the number of high quality Working Groups to be funded.

10. FUNDING PROCEDURE

Each funded Working Group receives a grant of up to 50.000€ which must be used to compensate for the expenses of the entire group. Normally the grant is given to the coordinator by the respective funding organisation according to its specific rules and legal framework. Where appropriate, an overhead according to the funding organisations' regulations is added to the granted budget. However, the Call Steering Committee may also envisage other funding mechanisms where funding of the coordinator is not possible (e.g. because the budget of the respective country is already spent) or where it helps to increase the number of awarded high-quality Working Groups. In this case any other eligible participant of a Working Group may be awarded instead of the coordinator, upon approval by the coordinator and the respective funding organisation.

11. COMMUNICATION OF RESULTS

When the decisions are validated by all funding organisations, the Joint Call Secretariat provides each coordinator with information about the outcome of the evaluation and the funding decision as well as the individual statements from the remote evaluation. Subsequently, the coordinator and, if appropriate, the participant selected for granting is contacted by the respective funding organisation in order to initiate the granting process. The Joint Call Secretariat notifies the chair of JPND as well as relevant JPND Steering Committees of the final funding decisions. The final list of awarded Working Groups is published on the JPND website in alphabetical order of the project titles. The publication date will be decided by the Call Steering Committee

12. REPORTING AND DISSEMINATION

Working Groups are required to produce a report at the end of the funding period that will be published on the JPND website. The Joint Call Secretariat collects the reports from the coordinators and subsequently circulate them to the funding organizations as well as the JPND communications officer for publication on the website. Nevertheless, funding organisations may request additional reports from the related funding recipient based on their individual requirements.