



Call for Proposals for **TRANSNATIONAL RESEARCH PROJECTS ON MENTAL DISORDERS**

Submission deadline for pre-proposals: 8 March 2018, 14:00 CET

Electronic proposal submission



For further information, please visit us on the web

<http://www.neuron-eranet.eu>

or contact

NEURON Joint Call Secretariat:
Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness
State Research Agency (MINECO)
Phone: +34 916 03 83 98
E-Mail: neuron@aei.gob.es

1. Purpose

Maintenance, improvement and restoration of human health are of fundamental importance and worldwide priority. Biomedical and health research provide an important basis for the improvement of healthy living. Disorders of the brain are major causes of morbidity, mortality and impaired quality of life. Around one billion people suffer from disorders of the central nervous system. In Europe, disorders of the brain account for approximately one-third of the burden of all diseases. Therefore, neuroscience research and its translation into diagnostic and therapeutic outcomes are fundamental.

To address this, the 'Network of European Funding for Neuroscience Research' (NEURON) has been established under the ERA-NET scheme of the European Commission (www.neuron-eranet.eu). The aim of the ERA-NET NEURON is to coordinate research efforts and funding programmes of its partner countries in the field of disease related neuroscience.

Under the umbrella of NEURON, a joint transnational call (JTC-2018) is now launched in the field of mental health and mental disorders. The following funding organizations have agreed to fund the joint call for multinational research projects in this scientific area. The call will be conducted simultaneously by the funding organizations in their respective countries and coordinated centrally by the Joint Call Secretariat.

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|--|------------------|
| • Austrian Science Fund (FWF) | Austria |
| • Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique (FNRS) | Belgium |
| • Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO) | Belgium |
| • Fonds de recherche du Québec - Santé (FRQS) (Québec) | Canada |
| • Canadian Institutes of Health Research – Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction (CIHR-INMHA) | Canada |
| • Ontario Brain Institute (OBI) | Canada* |
| • French National Research Agency (ANR) | France |
| • Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) | Germany |
| • Chief Scientist Office, Ministry of Health (CSO-MOH) | Israel |
| • Ministry of Health (MOH) | Italy |
| • State Education Development Agency (VIAA) | Latvia |
| • The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) | The Netherlands* |
| • The Research Council of Norway (RCN) | Norway |
| • National Centre for Research and Development (NCBR) | Poland |
| • Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development & Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI) | Romania |
| • Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS) | Slovakia |
| • National Institute of Health Carlos III (ISCIII) | Spain |
| • Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness (MINECO)/ State Research Agency (AEI) | Spain* |
| • Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) | Switzerland |
| • The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK) | Turkey |

**Pending on decision*

2. Aim of the call

The aim of the call is to facilitate multinational, collaborative research projects that will address important questions related to mental health and mental disorders. These may include research on mood disorders (major depression, bipolar disorders), anxiety disorders, psychotic disorders, autism spectrum disorders, substance use disorders, and other mental disorders.

Research questions may encompass the entire lifespan. Since many mental disorders develop during childhood, adolescence and early adulthood (< 25 years), it is a clear interest for society to find pharmacological, psychological therapies and brain stimulation therapies, besides new diagnostic strategies, to promote mental health in this focus group.

Research on dementia is excluded from the present call.

The call will accept novel and original research proposals within the breadth of research understanding basic mechanisms of disease to proof-of-concept clinical studies in humans.

The NEURON funding organizations particularly wish to promote multi-disciplinary work and translational research proposals that combine basic and clinical approaches. For many research questions, collaboration within a consortium of psychiatrists and neurologists is important and therefore encouraged, where appropriate, along with fundamental neuroscientists, and disciplines with specific expertise such as e.g. neuro-pediatricians.

Research proposals should cover at least one of the following areas:

- a) Fundamental research on the pathogenesis, aetiology and resilience mechanisms of mental disorders. This may include the development of innovative or shared resources and technologies. The relevance of the research to disease must be clearly indicated.
- b) Clinical research to develop novel strategies for prevention, (early) diagnosis, patient stratification, therapy, and/or rehabilitation procedures for mental disorders.

Proposals may include, among others, immuno-psychiatric approaches, studies on (epi)genetic causes of mental disorders, studies on social, environmental and biological risk and resilience factors. Innovative treatment approaches may include e.g. brain stimulation, use of mobile health applications, and combinations of cognitive and physical or psychosocial and pharmacological interventions.

The individual components of joint applications should be complementary and contain novel, ambitious ideas. There should be clear added value in funding the collaboration over the individual projects.

Clinical studies are eligible up to the point of proof of concept¹. Exploitation of existing clinical data sets is encouraged. Appropriate access to relevant, well-characterized patient 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. Animal models or cell models used in the project should already be established and validated. The development of new animal or cell models is excluded from the scope of the call unless it is a marginal part of the proposal (i.e. as a strategy to strengthen the results or hypothesis in a project).

Research consortia are encouraged to meaningfully involve patients and carers. Applicants are expected to make every effort to include patient approaches, where appropriate, at each stage of the research process and/or specify plans for future involvement.

3. Application

3.1 Eligibility

Joint transnational research proposals may be submitted by research teams working in universities (or other higher education institutions), non-university public research institutes, hospitals, as well as in commercial companies, particularly small and medium-size enterprises. The eligibility of the afore-mentioned institutions, together with details of eligible costs (e.g. personnel, material, consumables, travel money, investments), are subject to the administrative requirements of individual funding organizations and will therefore differ. Please note that, for some funding organizations, commercial companies are not eligible or are only eligible under certain conditions (e.g. only in partnership with academic institutions in the consortium). Clarification should be obtained from the individual funding agencies (see contact details below). It is advised to read carefully all national annexes regarding eligibility and funding by the respective funding agencies.

Only transnational projects will be funded. Each consortium submitting a proposal must be comprised of a minimum of three research groups eligible for funding by organizations listed in this call text (see above). The eligible research groups must be from at least three different countries. The total number of research groups in a consortium is limited to five, including partners participating by own expenses. No more than two research groups can be from the same country.

The ERA-NET NEURON strives to strengthen the European Research Area by including as many partner countries as possible in its funding scheme. Therefore, consortia including partners from countries that are to date underrepresented in this funding scheme (Latvia, Romania and Slovakia) may increase the total number of partners to six.

¹ Eligibility and funding requirements for clinical trials vary between the partner countries. Clarification may be obtained from the individual funding agencies.

Research groups not eligible to their national funding organizations or from countries which are not involved in this call may participate in projects only if their participation clearly provides an added value to the consortium and if they present evidence on secured budget for their part in the project. Such research groups are not considered in the minimum number of three research groups mentioned above. In any case, the total number of research groups in one consortium must not exceed five, or six if one of the underrepresented countries listed above is comprised.

Each consortium should have the critical mass to achieve ambitious scientific goals and **should clearly demonstrate added value** from working together. Each project must nominate a project coordinator who represents the consortium externally and is responsible for its internal management (e.g. the application procedure, the consortium agreement, reporting). The consortium coordinator must be eligible to be funded by one of the organizations listed in this call text.

Only projects that fulfil the legal and ethical international/EU (including ethical standards and guidelines in Horizon 2020) as well as national and institutional standards will be funded. Ethical approval and/or a positive vote must be obtained from the relevant national or local ethics committee(s) prior to the start of the project. All procedures involving human beings will conform to the Helsinki Declaration. Additional national regulations and requirements may apply.

Although applications must be submitted jointly by groups from several countries, the individual research groups will be funded by the individual NEURON funding organization(s) of their respective countries. Eligibility criteria are the matter of individual partner funding organizations.

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.

Therefore, applicants are strongly advised to follow the instructions contained in the country-specific eligibility tables which are published on the NEURON website and to contact their national/regional funding organization to confirm eligibility before submitting an application.

3.2 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 one spokesperson, the coordinator.

Pre-proposals must be submitted in electronic format no later than **8 March, 2018** (14:00:00 CET) via the **electronic submission** system. All fields must be completed using **DIN-A4; font: Arial, 10pt; single-spaced, page limits.**

The information given in the pre-proposal is binding. Thus, any fundamental changes between the pre- and full proposals stages concerning the composition of the consortia, objectives of the project

or requested budget must be communicated to the Joint Call Secretariat and their respective funding agencies with detailed justifications and will only be allowed in exceptional cases by the Call Steering Committee, before passing to evaluation stage.

NOTE: Full proposals will be accepted only from those applicants **explicitly invited** by the Joint Call Secretariat to submit them.

3.3 Further information

For further details, please refer to the respective submission forms available through the NEURON web site. If you need additional information, please contact the Joint Call Secretariat, or the representative of your funding organization (see Annex for contact data).

4. Evaluation and decision

The review process will be in two stages.

4.1 Formal check of pre- and full proposals

The Joint Call Secretariat will check the proposals to ensure that they meet the call's formal criteria (e.g. date of submission; number of participating countries; inclusion of all necessary information in English). The Joint Call Secretariat will also forward the proposals to the national/regional funding organizations, which will perform a formal and eligibility check of compliance with their respective regulations.

The Joint Call Secretariat and national/regional funding organisations will perform cross-checks in parallel submissions to other joint transnational calls (e.g., E-RARE, JPND, EuroNanoMed, ERA-PerMed and others) and national calls. Applicants shall avoid applying for same research activities to different calls. Double funding is not allowed.

Proposals not meeting the formal criteria will be rejected at this stage. Proposals passing these check points will be forwarded to the joint Peer Review Panel for evaluation.

4.2 Peer-review of pre- and full proposals

The reviewers will assess if the projects are within the scope of the call and carry out the evaluation according to specific evaluation criteria:

1. Excellence

- Scientific quality of the approach and methodology
- Quality of the experimental design and data analysis
- Novelty of the scientific concept/hypotheses

- Competence and experience of participating research partners in the field(s) of the proposal (previous work in the field, specific technical expertise)

2. Impact

- Potential impact of the expected results on clinical and other health related applications
- Added-value of transnational collaboration

3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation

- Feasibility of the project
- Coherence and effectiveness of the work plan, including appropriateness of the allocation of tasks, resources, time-frame and related risk analysis
- Quality and added-value of collaborative and multi-disciplinary interactions within the consortium
- Appropriateness of the management structures and procedures

4.3 Decision

4.3.1 Pre-proposals

Eligible pre-proposals will be reviewed using the above mentioned evaluation criteria via a written (remote) peer review process. Based on the scores in the written reviews a ranking list will be set up. Preferably, each pre-proposal will be reviewed by at least three reviewers. By mid-May 2018, the coordinators of the selected proposals will be invited by the Joint Call Secretariat to submit a full proposal **no later than 26th June 2018, 14:00 CET**.

4.3.2 Full proposals

The international Peer Review Panel will evaluate the full proposals based on the above mentioned evaluation criteria and establish a ranking list of the fundable proposals by scientific assessment. Based on this ranking list the Call Steering Committee will determine the projects to be funded, taking into account the national budgets available. Based on these recommendations, final decisions will be made by the funding organizations and will be subject to budgetary considerations.

Proper research designs and analyses are essential to ensure the scientific soundness and robustness of the research. For this reason, NEURON has joined numerous international initiatives to strengthen the adequate communication of research designs to promote the robustness and the reproducibility of scientific results. The full proposal form will require applicants to provide comprehensive and detailed descriptions of the planned study design and data analyses. The review panel will scrutinize this information as part of the formal evaluation criteria (excellence) at the stage of full proposals

5. Funding procedure / Responsibilities / Reporting requirements

5.1 Funding procedure

Projects can be funded for a period of up to three years and according to funding organizations' regulations. Funding is expected to start **early in 2019**.

Successful research groups will be funded directly by the respective funding organizations.

Funding will be administered according to the terms and conditions of the responsible funding organizations, taking into account all other applicable regulations and legal requirements.

5.2 Responsibilities

Within a joint proposal, each group leader will be the contact person for the relevant national/regional funding organization. The coordinators of funded projects together with the respective funding organizations shall make every effort to seek a common start date for all research groups in the consortium.

After the evaluation and selection procedures are completed, each consortium selected to be funded is required to draft and sign a Consortium Agreement (CA) suitable to their own team. The CA will determine a common project start date, manage the delivery of project activities, finances and intellectual property rights (IPR), and avoid disputes which might be detrimental to the completion of the project. All consortia are strongly encouraged to sign the CA before the official project start date; the CA must be signed within the first six months after the project start date.

5.3 Reporting Requirements

On behalf of the research consortium, the project coordinator will be required to submit to the Joint Call Secretariat a brief annual scientific progress report on the project, as well as, a more extensive final report at the end of the project. Additionally, group leaders may be required to submit reports separately to their national funding organization. In that case, reporting guidance will be forwarded by the relevant funding organization, as applicable.

Annual reports must be submitted by April, 30, the following year. Annual reports do not need to be submitted if the project ends in the first three months of the following year (e.g. between January and March). In this case, the submission of a final report will suffice. However, instead of submitting the final report within the usual six month period (see below), the final report will be required within four months of project completion.

The deadline for submitting final reports is six months after the end of the project. It is the task of the coordinators to determine a formal end date for project completion. This is required, as part-

ners may be granted extensions of different duration. Coordinators will be informed about this procedure by the Joint Call Secretariat and will receive the report template in due course.

The coordinators will be asked to present a progress report during an intermediate status symposium. The attendance is obligatory for all coordinators and Principal Investigators (PIs). Early-career scientists working on the projects are welcome to join the status symposium together with the PIs. Accordingly, travel expenses to attend the symposium should be encumbered in the proposal budget plans. Failure to comply with this requirement may make to administrative and/or financial sanctions according to the rules of each funding agency.

Funding recipients must ensure that all outcomes (publications, etc.) of transnational NEURON projects include a proper acknowledgement of ERA-NET NEURON and the respective funding partner organizations, and are in line with the relevant publication requirements.

Annex I. Contact details

Please note that country specific requirements might apply to this call. **Compliance with the national/regional regulations specified in the country specific information is mandatory. We strongly advise you to contact your national/regional representative prior to submitting a pre-proposal:**

| Country (Region) | Contact person(s) | Funding organizations contact Details |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| Austria | Dr Herbert Mayer | Austrian Science Fund (FWF) herbert.mayer@fwf.ac.at Tel. +43-1-5056740-8212 |
| Belgium (French Speaking Community) | Dr Arnaud Goolaerts Dr Florence Quist | Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique (FNRS) rue d'Egmont 5 1000 Bruxelles Tél. +32 (0)2 504 93 28 arnaud.goolaerts@frs-fnrs.be florence.quist@frs-fnrs.be +32(0)2 504 9351 |
| Belgium (Flanders) | Dr Alain Deleener Toon Monbaliu | Research Foundation Flanders (FWO) Egmontstraat 5 1000 Brussel www.fwo.be eranet@fwo.be +32 2 550 15 70 |
| Canada | Ms. Melody Sajedi | Canadian Institutes of Health Research Melody.sajedi@cihr-irsc.gc.ca 613-960-9475 www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca |
| Canada (Québec) | Dr Anne-Cécile Desfaits Maxime Beaudoin | Fonds de recherche du Québec-Santé (FRQS) AnneCecile.Desfaits@frq.gouv.qc.ca 514-873-0463 Maxime.Beaudoin@frq.gouv.qc.ca 514-873-2114 #1369 www.frqs.gouv.qc.ca |
| France | Dr Sheyla Mejia-Gervacio | French National Research Agency (ANR) Health & Biology Department NeuronCalls@agencerecherche.fr +33 178 09 80 14 |
| Germany | Dr Sascha Helduser | Project Management Agency (DLR-PT) – Health, on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) Sascha.Helduser@dlr.de +49 228 3821 1116 www.gesundheitsforschung-bmbf.de |
| Israel | Dr Ayelet Zamir | Chief Scientist Office - Ministry of Health (CSO-MOH) http://www.health.gov.il/Subjects/research/International_cooperations/Pages/default.aspx ayelet.zamir@moh.gov.il +972-2-508-2168 |
| Italy | Dr Gaetano Guglielmi | Ministero della Salute g.guglielmi@sanita.it www.ministerosalute.it/ |

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| Latvia | Dr Uldis Berkis | State Education Development Agency www.viaa.gov.lv Uldis.Berkis@viaa.gov.lv Office: +371-67785406 Mobile: +371-29472349 |
| Netherlands | Dr Melanie Neijts | Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) www.nwo.nl Dr. Melanie Neijts m.neijts@nwo.nl Tel: +31 70 3494033 |
| Norway | Dr Alexandra Bjørk-Skaflestad | The Research Council of Norway (RCN) alb@rcn.no Tel.: +47 22 03 72 24 |
| Poland | Dr Marcin Chmielewski | National Centre for Research and Development (NCBR) Section for International Programmes marcin.chmielewski@ncbr.gov.pl phone: + 48 22 39 07 109 fax.: +48 22 20 13 408 www.ncbir.pl |
| Romania | Mrs. Mihaela Manole | Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI) Mihaela.manole@uefiscdi.ro Tel: +4 021 30 23 863 |
| Slovakia | Dr Jan Barancik Mrs. Katarina Bibova | Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS) Department for International Cooperation barancik@up.upsav.sk +421 2 5751 0137 bibova@up.upsav.sk +421 2 5751 0136 www.sav.sk |
| Spain | Mrs. Maria Druet | National Institute of Health Carlos III (ISCIII) SG de Programas Internacionales de Investigación y Relaciones Institucionales phone: +34 91 822 2530 mdruet@isciii.es |
| Spain | Dr Esther Chacón (representative) Dr Juan José Garrido (scientific issues) Mrs. Ana Barbra (administrative and technical issues) | Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness (MINECO) State Research Agency (AEI) neuron@aei.gob.es phone: +34 91 603 83 98 |
| Switzerland | Dr Claudia Ellenrieder | Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) Division Biology and Medicine claudia.ellenrieder@snf.ch Tel: +41 31 308 22 22 |
| Turkey | Dr Recep Emrah Çevik | The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) www.tubitak.gov.tr emrah.cevik@tubitak.gov.tr |

Annex II. Anticipated amount of funding provided by each partner

The intended contribution by each participating funding organization to be used for the joint trans-national call for research projects is listed below.

| Partner Country | Funding organization | Anticipated amount of funding (for 3 years) | Anticipated number of fundable research groups |
|-----------------|--|--|--|
| Austria | Austrian Science Fund (FWF) | €400.000 | 1 |
| Belgium | Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique (FNRS) | €200.000 | 1 |
| Belgium | Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO) | €200.000 | 1 |
| Canada | Canadian Institutes of Health Research | \$450,000 CAD (€320,000) | 2 |
| Canada (Québec) | Fonds de recherche du Québec - Santé (FRQS) | \$CAD450,000 (€320,000) | 2 |
| France | French National Research Agency (ANR) | €1 500 000 | ~6-7 |
| Germany | Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) | 3.000.000 € | About 10 |
| Israel | Ministry of Health (CSO-MOH) | Up to 300,000€ Up to 140,000€ per project (up to 600,000 NIS), for maximum two projects. An additional 20,000€ (up to 100,000 NIS) will be granted if the Israeli researcher is the coordinator. | Up to 2 projects |
| Italy | Ministry of Health (MOH) | €1.500.000 | - |
| Latvia | State Education Development Agency (VIAA) | €420.000 | 2 |
| The Netherlands | The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) | tbc | - |
| Norway | The Research Council of Norway (RCN) | €500.000 | |
| Poland | National Centre for Research and Development (NCBR) | 600 000€ Up to 200 000€ per project, regardless of the number of Polish research groups in the project consortium. | 1-3 |
| Romania | Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development & Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI) | €400.000 | 1-2 |
| Slovakia | Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS) | €120.000 | 1 |

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|-------------|---|----------|-----|
| Spain | National Institute of Health Carlos III (ISCIII) | €250.000 | ~2 |
| Spain | Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness (MINECO)/ State Research Agency (AEI) | tbc | tbc |
| Switzerland | Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) | €860.000 | 3-4 |
| Turkey | The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK) | €300.000 | 1-2 |

Annex III. Call Timetable

Pre-proposal stage (I)

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|-------------------------|---|
| December 4, 2017 | Preliminary Announcement of the Joint Transnational Call |
| January 8, 2018 | Publication of the Joint Transnational Call |
| March 8, 2018 | Deadline (submission of pre-proposals) 14:00 CET |
| March 9-13 2018 | Formal check of pre-proposals by JCS |
| May 21, 2018 | Formal invitation to submit a full proposal |

Full proposal stage (II)

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| June 26, 2018 | Deadline (submission of full proposals) 14:00 CET |
| July 3, 2018 | Formal/Eligibility check of full proposals |
| October-November, 2018 | Final funding decision by the CSC and start of national administrative procedures |
| Early in 2019 | Start of funding |