

ERACoSysMed 1st Joint Transnational Call for Proposals for
“European Research Projects to demonstrate the feasibility and
benefits of systems medicine”

Guidelines for applicants

Submission deadline for pre-proposals: 30 March 2015

Online access: <https://www.eracosysmed.eu/index.php?index=27>

For further information please visit www.eracosysmed.eu

or contact

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1. Background

The call text of the ERACoSysMed 1st Joint Transnational Call (JTC-1) provides the essential information about the evaluation procedure, eligibility and evaluation criteria. These guidelines briefly explain the whole evaluation procedure and some technical issues related to the proposal submission.

2. General information

Under the umbrella of ERACoSysMed (www.eracosysmed.eu), 14 funding organisations launch the 1st Joint Transnational Call for transnational research projects to fund effective multidisciplinary collaboration in the field of systems medicine. The participating funding organisations and the aim of the call are described in more detail in the call text (see section 1 and section 2 of the call text).

2.1 Definitions used in this call

Systems biology

Systems biology is a scientific approach in life sciences which aims to reach an comprehensive understanding of the quantitative behaviour of biological systems that arises from the dynamic interplay of the various components thereof. As a basic prerequisite, systems biology research projects integrate mathematical models that simulate in silico the system's properties and predict its quantitative response to internal or external perturbations. Frequently, biological systems are represented as networks of interacting elements in which the phenotypic traits are determined by the structure and the dynamic behaviour of the network itself. The study of biological systems in this framework requires interdisciplinary cooperation and a division of labour between e.g., biologists, medical scientists, mathematicians, physicists, computer scientists, chemists and engineers. In systems biology, the biological questions are addressed by integrating experiments in iterative cycles with the aid of computational mechanistic modelling, simulation and predictive theory. Modelling is not the ultimate goal, but rather a tool to increase the understanding of the processes of biological systems, to develop more pertinent experiments, and finally to allow predictions. Existing and/or newly generated datasets are used to develop mathematical models of biological processes. Simulations from these models provide input for experiments in the wet lab, leading to new and better datasets. Repetition of this cycle will increase the knowledge of biological processes.

Systems Medicine

Systems Medicine involves the implementation of Systems Biology approaches into medical concepts, research and practice, through iterative and reciprocal feedbacks between data-driven (including the integration of multi-layered, network-based –omics data) computational and mathematical models as well as model-driven translational and clinical investigations and practice.

Systems Medicine offers a novel and innovative concept that integrate diagnosis, therapy and prevention measures and requires multidisciplinary thinking with different educational

backgrounds. Systems Medicine integrates a whole range of different patient relevant information and knowledge and demands a proper technological infrastructure and a robust management of information. Systems Medicine has the potential to evolve into a pro-active P4 medicine where information is put into context of each individual patient and doctors are properly supported to make sense of the data; for routine diagnosis, treatment of disease and proper prevention measures.

2.2 Evaluation

The evaluation of proposals will be carried out with the assistance of independent experts. Experts are selected based on their scientific expertise by the funding organisations. They act on their personal capacity and do not represent any organization. ERACoSysMed ensures confidentiality during and after the procedures by requesting the experts to sign a declaration of confidentiality before giving them access to proposals. ERACoSysMed will take all necessary steps to avoid conflict of interest.

Applicants may recommend names of experts to evaluate their proposals as well as ask for exclusion of up to 3 particular experts from the evaluation of their proposals in order to avoid conflict of interest. These recommendations must reach the Joint Call Secretariat (JCS) by 30 March 2015 at the latest and will be treated confidentially.

In addition, an independent expert will be appointed by the funding organisations to verify that the selection procedure (and, in particular, the peer review evaluation and the ranking) meets the requirements for ERA-NET Cofund actions.

The project coordinator (see eligibility criteria in the call text) will represent the consortium externally and towards the JCS, and will be responsible for its internal scientific management (such as consortium agreement including intellectual property rights, monitoring, reporting). Each project partner will be represented by one principal investigator. Within a joint proposal, each project partner (principal investigator) will be the contact point for the relevant country/regional funding organisation.

Applicants must refer and comply with regulations of the national funding organisations (see Annex II of the call text) and therefore should contact the respective contact person for any queries related to these regulations.

3. Process overview

The procedure is divided into two steps: submission and evaluation of pre-proposals followed by invited submission and evaluation of full proposals. In both cases, one joint proposal should be prepared by the consortium members. The proposals must be electronically submitted by the project coordinator via the online submission tool available at <https://www.eracosysmed.eu/index.php?index=27>.

Step 1

3.1 Submission of a pre-proposal

First, the coordinator has to register in the submission tool.

A user can be registered several times in the submission tool with the same e-mail account but different usernames, one for each proposal. In this way, a correct assignment to proposals is ensured in the submission tool.

After registration a link will be sent to the registered e-mail account to activate the registration.

The coordinator can enter, edit and save the electronic forms, add partners to the consortium, upload the project description and submit the proposal. Partners can enter and edit their own data only.

In addition, the coordinator may reedit and resubmit the proposal before the submission deadline. In this case, only the latest submitted version will be used for evaluation. Proposals can only be submitted and/or modified prior to 17:00 CET on 30 March 2015.

After successful submission the coordinator will receive an automatically generated confirmation of receipt.

Each project coordinator should make sure to register early enough. After the deadline, the website will neither accept modification nor submission of any proposal. The project coordinator should also not underestimate the effort needed to collect the required information from their project partners or fill in the online forms. Therefore it is strongly recommended to submit the first version of proposals well before the deadline.

The pre-proposal consists of two parts: an online form and a project description.

- The online form consists of the following information: consortium composition, project abstract, keywords and budget issues. The budget overview table serves as information source for the funding organisations to estimate the requested funding per funding organization. Budget issues will not be evaluated in this step of the evaluation.

The information given in the pre-proposal is binding in terms of consortium composition and maximum requested budget.

- The project description presents the scientific part. Please keep in mind that the project description should allow experts to evaluate its relevance to the aim of the call and its excellence despite the limited space for details. The project description should not exceed 12000 characters. References can be added in the annex (max. one page).

The limits in the template are given in maximum number of characters (4000 characters are approximately one A4 page of text).

Up to two figures can be embedded in the text through place markers. The figures should be uploaded as .jpeg, .gif or .png files and should have a maximum size of 600 pixels.

Only the newest uploaded file will be saved. If the project description is not uploaded to the proposal, that particular proposal will be considered ineligible.

The pre-proposal must be filled out online in the submission tool <https://www.eracosysmed.eu/index.php?index=27>, a template you find in Annex I.

If consortium partners are requested to submit separate or different proposal documents towards their national funding organization (see Annex II of the call text), the consortium partner(s) concerned shall submit these documents directly to the respective national / regional funding organization.

3.2 Eligibility check and evaluation of pre-proposals

The pre-proposals will be checked whether they can be considered eligible regarding to

- ERACoSysMed eligibility criteria as laid down in the call text (section 3.1)
- national or regional criteria (defined by the respective funding organization)

Please note: If one partner of a consortium does not fulfil their national/regional eligibility criteria, the whole consortium will be deemed ineligible.

It is the responsibility of the consortium coordinator to verify that the consortium fulfils the ERACoSysMed Joint Call eligibility criteria and that all partners fulfil their national/regional eligibility criteria. In case of uncertainty regarding eligibility criteria, please contact the local contact point or the JCS.

If a pre-proposal is ineligible, the JCS will inform the coordinator.

Each pre-proposal will be evaluated remotely by three evaluators and ranked accordingly. The number of proposals that are invited to submit full proposals may be limited to a funding total of 2 or 3 times that of the available call budget of the individual partner. The JCS will inform the coordinators about the evaluation results of the pre-proposals.

Step 2

3.3 Submission of full proposals

Full proposals will be accepted only from applicants explicitly invited by the JCS.

The coordinator cannot add or edit any partner in the submission tool in this step.

A full proposal consists of two parts: an online form and a project description.

- Fields containing data already entered in the pre-proposal online forms like proposal title, proposal acronym, project duration, project abstract, keywords and profiles of the partners will be pre-filled in the online form for full proposals and cannot be edited.

In this step, the allocation of resources will be evaluated. Therefore, detailed budget

estimation is needed. The budget overview tables in the full proposal online form are accordingly adapted and need to be filled with the requested information.

- The project description contains the scientific part. It should not exceed a total of **22 pages**. The full proposal template indicates the particular parts of the project description with character limitations.

Up to five figures can be embedded in the text through place markers. The same technical conditions apply as in the pre-proposals, namely the figures should be uploaded as .jpeg, .gif or .png files and should have a maximum size of 600 pixels.

Only the newest uploaded file will be saved. If the project description is not uploaded to the proposal, that particular proposal will be considered ineligible.

The full proposal must be filled out online in the submission tool <https://www.eracosysmed.eu/index.php?index=27>, a template you find in Annex II.

3.4 Eligibility check, evaluation of full-proposals including rebuttal step

Eligibility and evaluation (ERACoSysMed)

Full proposals will be checked whether they contain any fundamental changes between the pre- and full proposals in terms of objectives and budget. **Any major change will lead to the ineligibility of the proposal.**

Each full proposal will be remotely evaluated by at least three evaluators according to the evaluation criteria.

Rebuttal (project coordinator)

The individual evaluation reports will be made available through the submission system for the corresponding project coordinator. They will be informed by Email. Project coordinators may comment on possible factual errors or misunderstandings and reply to the evaluators' questions by submitting their explanations in the submission tool. The project coordinator may consult the project partners, but only one response per evaluation report may be submitted. Coordinators' comments may not exceed 4000 characters per evaluation report. Issues which are not related to the comments cannot be addressed and the work plan cannot be modified at this stage.

The deadline for submission of the comments is 7 calendar days after getting access to the evaluation reports. This step is optional. The evaluators will have access to the submitted comments.

Final evaluation and decision (ERACoSysMed)

A consensus meeting will be held in which the evaluators will discuss each proposal and determine the final scores. Based on these scores a ranking list will be established as the outcome of the evaluation. Subsequently, the funding organisations will issue a selection list of projects to be funded following the order of the ranking list.

The JSC will inform the coordinators about the evaluation results of the full proposals.

4. Data management issues

Data management deals with all kinds of data used or generated in the course of a project, such as raw data, models, standard operation protocols, workflows, etc. The usage of relevant and agreed standards describing the nature of the data in question should be fostered; this refers to any stage of data treatment (standard operation protocols, meta-data-standards, ontologies, etc). Compliance with a data sharing policy should guarantee the re-usability and accessibility (e.g. for verification) of data. Such a data-sharing-policy needs to define duties and rights of every user within research consortia, such as regulations on how and when data is stored, described and shared with other collaborators or the public. Early data sharing and citation of data is encouraged.

Several initiatives at national and international level deal with issues concerning data management issues such as the usage of standardized data and SOPs. ERACoSysMed is aware of the “Principles of data management and sharing at European Research Infrastructures” paper which is a document jointly developed by different research infrastructures (BioMedBridge). Projects funded by ERACoSysMed shall use existing data management systems whenever possible.

In cases that involve the sharing of clinical data, consortia applying will have to provide a data management concept that (i) makes clear that the legal and ethical issues of data management are addressed, i.e. that entities slated to send/receive privacy-sensitive clinical data are (or will be) legally allowed to exchange data and (ii) describes the management and handling of clinical data, pseudonymized & anonymized clinical data, as well of non-clinical data.

5. Consortium agreement

A Consortium Agreement (CA) must be signed by all consortium partners of funded projects specifying the following points as minimal requirements:

- expected start date and duration of the research project
- organisation and management of the project
- role and responsibilities of each partner resources and funding
- confidentiality and publishing
- Intellectual Property Rights
- decision making within the consortium
- handling of internal disputes
- the liabilities of the research partners towards one another (including the handling of default of contract).

Support for the preparation of a consortium agreement can be found on the DESCA webpage (<http://www.desca-2020.eu/>).

Annex I

A. Template pre-proposal

Please note that you can save your text only if it does not contain more characters than pre-defined.

Proposal title Please choose a meaningful title

Proposal acronym

Project duration

Project abstract max 2000 characters. Please note that this abstract will be published on the ERACoSysMed website if your project is selected for funding.

Keywords:

Keywords enable effective expert selection to evaluate your proposal

Consortium

- Coordinator=Partner 1
 - Salutation
 - Family Name:
 - First Name:
 - Male/Female:
 - Affiliation:
 - Institution's legal status: (pre-defined categories like academia/university; clinic/hospital; SME/industry)
 - Department and position:
 - Address:
 - Postal Code:
 - City:
 - Country:
 - Phone:
 - Fax:
 - E-mail:
 - CV: (max. 4000 characters): Brief CV for each group leader and a list of the 5 most relevant peer-reviewed publications.
- Partner 2
 - Salutation
 - Family Name:
 - First Name:
 - Male/Female

- Affiliation:
 - Institution's legal status: (pre-defined categories like academia/university; clinic/hospital; SME/industry)
 - Department and position:
 - Address:
 - Postal Code:
 - City:
 - Country:
 - Phone:
 - Fax:
 - E-mail:
 - CV: (max. 4000 characters): Brief CV for each group leader a list of the 5 most relevant peer-reviewed publications.
- Partner x
 -

Budget estimation

Institution	Funding organisation	Direct cost	Indirect cost (overhead)	Total cost	Requested funding	Own contribution
Partner 1						
Partner 2						
Partner x						
Total						

Some types of costs may not be fundable by all funding organisations. For overhead costs national regulations apply. If you have other costs please specify.

B. Project description (pre-proposal)

Please note that you can save your text only if it does not contain more character than pre-defined.

Project description (max. 12000 characters): Description of the working programme including the objectives, the rationale, the methodology highlighting the novelty, originality and feasibility as well as the added value of the collaboration. The description should allow the estimation of expected progress beyond the state-of-the-art. The proposal will be assessed also for its relevance to the aim of the call. Up to two figures can be embedded into the text in addition.

Annex II

A. Template full proposal

Proposal title Pre-filled

Proposal acronym Pre-filled

Project duration Pre-filled

Project abstract Pre-filled

Keywords Pre-filled

Consortium

- Coordinator=Partner 1

- Salutation Pre-filled
- Family Name: Pre-filled
- First Name: Pre-filled
- Sex: Male/Female
- Affiliation: Pre-filled
- Institution's legal status Pre-filled
- Department and position: Pre-filled
- Address: Pre-filled
- Postal Code: Pre-filled
- City: Pre-filled
- Country: Pre-filled
- Phone: Pre-filled
- Fax: Pre-filled
- E-mail: Pre-filled
- CV: (max. 4000 characters): Brief CV for each group leader including a description of the main task in the project. In addition, please provide your 5 most relevant peer-reviewed publications.

- Partner 2

- Salutation Pre-filled
- Family Name: Pre-filled
- First Name: Pre-filled
- Sex: Male/Female
- Affiliation: Pre-filled
- Institution's legal status Pre-filled
- Department and position: Pre-filled
- Address: Pre-filled
- Postal Code: Pre-filled
- City: Pre-filled
- Country: Pre-filled

- Phone: Pre-filled
 - Fax: Pre-filled
 - E-mail: Pre-filled
 - CV: (max. 4000 characters): Brief CV for each group leader including a description of the main task in the project. In addition, please provide your 5 most relevant peer-reviewed publications.
- Partner x
 -

Budget overview

Partner	Personnel: scientists in person month (incl. PhD students)	Consumables & Equipment	Data management	Travel	Subcontracting	Other direct costs	Total	
							Total cost	Requested
Partner 1								
Partner 2								
Partner 3								
Partner 4								
Partner 5								
Partner 6								
Partner 7								
Partner 8								
Total								

B. Project description (full proposal)

Please note that you can save your text only if it does not contain more character than pre-defined.

Concept (max. 8000 characters)

Describe and explain the research hypothesis and define the scientific and technological objectives of the project. The objectives of the project should be achievable within the project duration.

Background and state of the art in the research field (max. 8000 characters)

Describe the scientific basis for your project and describe the state-of-the-art of your project research topic. Highlight the novelty, originality and feasibility of your project. Identify important gaps of the current knowledge. Describe how the proposed project is embedded within the currently existing research.

Impact (max. 12000 characters)

Explain the impact of the expected results, including the potential for social and/or economic benefits of systems medicine. Define the contribution of the project to the advancement, implementation and consolidation of systems medicine. Describe the dissemination, publication, and especially intellectual property rights measures.

Work plan (max. 40000 characters)

Provide a work plan description broken down into individual work packages and tasks including timelines. Provide a list of deliverables and milestones. Justify the chosen methodology and define the responsibilities. Inclusion of a PERT chart explaining the partners' contribution to each work package and depicting the interactions among the work packages is recommended.

Gantt chart

Data management (max. 8000 characters)

Explain how data management will be performed and what the data sharing policy is.

Consortium and project management (max. 12000 characters)

Describe the overall collaborative structure of the consortium in terms of expertise and interdisciplinary approach. Explain the added value of the transnational collaboration.

Describe the overall coordination of the project. Explain how information flow and communication will be organized within the project.

Budget justification

Provide concise justification for the personnel requested and for non-personnel costs (equipment, material, travel and other costs).

Ethical and legal aspects relevant to the project

Proposals need to be in compliance with the legal and ethical International/EU and National and Institutional (i.e. ERACoSysMed participant) standards. Regarding the selection and monitoring of the projects the Scientific Advisory board will ensure that the usual Horizon 2020 ethics obligations are implemented in the projects.