



Call for Proposals for

**NETWORKING GROUPS ON
CHRONIC PAIN**

August 2022

Submission deadline for proposals: 8th of November 2022, 14:00 C.E.T.

Electronic proposal submission

For further information, visit our website:

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

or contact the

Networking Groups Call 2022 - Joint Call Secretariat:

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1. Background

Chronic pain imposes a massive burden to the individual, the health system, and the economy worldwide. It leads to a severe reduction in the quality of life of those affected and their families. Patients' daily activities such as work and social interactions are heavily impaired. As a consequence, chronic pain can lead to sleep problems, depression and anxiety. The underlying mechanisms are often not understood. Thus, joined efforts of basic scientist, clinicians, lay organisations, and policymakers are needed to understand the pathophysiology, improve diagnosis and therapy, increase awareness, and improve the every-day life of the patients. The success of biomedical research however, is hampered by the lack of harmonization of procedures, experimental methodologies, and data management. For the translation and implementation of future research outcomes into clinical practice, as well as for shaping future research priorities, it is essential to form synergies in the research community, to overcome gaps and hurdles, to build overarching networks, and to generate harmonizing concepts and ideas. Thus, a networking call in the field of chronic pain is now launched under the umbrella of the ERA-NET NEURON.

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 call will be conducted simultaneously by the participating funding organisations (see Annex I) in their respective countries and coordinated centrally by the Joint Call Secretariat (neuron@aei.gob.es).

2. Aim and scope of the call

The aim of the call is to support ambitious, innovative, multidisciplinary and multinational initiatives of leading scientific experts and is aimed to enhance resource alignment and to maximize existing and future efforts in the field of **Chronic Pain. The networking call does not fund experimental research activities or scientific staff salaries.**

Networking groups should address cross-cutting challenges in the research field of chronic pain, to build knowledge on specific aspects, identify gaps, and find solutions for urgent issues such as interoperability of data and method harmonization. Proposals addressing hurdles and potential solutions to ensure the fruitful, homogeneous and inclusive translation of basic science into clinical practice are also within the scope of this call.

Applicants should clearly define the expected outcome, including the specific questions that will be addressed and answered. It should be clarified how the proposed outcome is potentially useful to the relevant community, and demonstrate that the consortium includes the key actors (researchers, clinicians, patient representatives, etc.) with respect to the addressed question. A clear scientific benefit from working across national borders should be demonstrated. The **elaboration of white papers, prospective views, recommendations, guidelines or best practice frameworks** of value to the wider research community and with societal impact, among others, will be considered possible outcomes of this call. Key opinion leaders with an internationally competitive track record in the field of chronic pain should be involved.

The resulting recommendations should help to answer important conceptual questions to delineate future ERA-NET NEURON joint activities on this subject. The outcomes provided by the Networking Groups may be (amongst others):

- Conceptualisation of new ideas,
- Provision of white papers,
- Prospective analysis in expert centres to unveil problems or gaps in protocols,
- Harmonization and standardization of methods, protocols and/or techniques,
- Guidelines for patient stratification based on analysis of available resources,
- Best practices concerning data access, handling and/or sharing,
- Roadmaps for implementation of techniques or protocols related with chronic pain
- Guidelines for best practices in the treatment of chronic pain.

Note that acute pain is excluded from this call as well as proposals focussing on psychological and social consequences of pain conditions.

Experimental research activities are also excluded.

The ERA-NET NEURON seeks to strengthen patient engagement in research. All applications should include a description of the expected outcomes with potential relevance for patients. If appropriate, applicants are expected to engage patients and to disseminate the results to the patient community.

Meaningful involvement of **early career researchers (ECRs) is highly encouraged.**

3. Eligibility

3.1. Networking group composition

A Networking Group must consist of a minimum of 10, and should not exceed 25 participant institutions. At least half of the institutions participating to a Networking Group must be established in a member country of the ERA-NET NEURON COFUND 2 (Annex II). To ensure the general eligibility for funding a networking group, a minimum of three participant institutions must be established in at least **three different funding countries** (see List in Annex I). The inclusion of experts from non-NEURON regions is encouraged.

It is strongly recommended to contact the respective funding organisations to ensure the eligibility of those participants before submission. Industrial partners can only be included as external collaborators, not being able to receive or provide any funding.

3.2. Coordination of the networking group/responsibilities

The networking group will be led by a **Scientific Coordinator** from any of the ERA-NET NEURON COFUND 2 member countries (see list Annex II). The Scientific Coordinator will assemble the Networking Group, act as first point of contact and be responsible for the internal supervision of activities, such as monitoring, reporting, management of intellectual property rights issues and sharing of data. The Scientific Coordinator **cannot act as the coordinator of another Networking Group.**

Funds will only be received and managed by the **Budget Recipient**, who should belong to one of the **funding organisations listed in Annex I**. The Budget Recipient will centralize the budget for the entire Networking Group and directly cover the consortium activities (travels, meetings, catering services, etc.). **No funds transfer between countries is possible.**

To facilitate the management of the consortium, it is **highly recommended** that the **Scientific Coordinator also assumes the role of Budget Recipient**. In any other case (e.g. the Scientific Coordinator's funding agency is not eligible - see Annex I - or has not enough funds available), the Budget Recipient will be appointed upon joint agreement between the consortium and the Joint Call Secretariat after projects selection.

3.3. Funding

The networks will be selected through a competitive Joint Transnational Call (JTC). Each network can receive up to **50.000 €** (+ overheads, depending on the national rules) for support of its activities for a maximum duration of **1 year**.

Funding will cover activities such as the organization of face-to-face and/or virtual meetings, workshops and travel costs, which are required to attain the objectives. It may also be used for remote working costs (e.g. audio and video conferencing licences), as well as data exchange, long-term storage, and harmonisation. Part of the budget must be reserved for attending the final symposium of the Networking Call. **No experimental research activities will be funded** (e.g. costs for research equipment or consumables). Salaries of investigators or **scientific staff or student** stipends are neither eligible but salaries dedicated to administrative or technical staff supporting for example for analysis or data handling is allowed.

4. Call procedure

There will be a **one-stage application procedure** for joined applications. **One joint proposal document** (in English) shall be prepared by the partners and must be submitted by the Scientific Coordinator in electronic format no later than 14:00 C.E.T. on **8th of November 2022** via the [DLR Electronic Submission system](#). No other means of submission will be accepted.

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 according to the respective templates in English). Proposals that do not meet the formal criteria may be rejected without further review.

The Joint Call Secretariat will also forward the proposals to the national/regional funding organisations, so they can verify the eligible institutions that could in principle receive funding (if awarding the Scientific Coordinator may not be possible for any reason) according to their **respective national regulations**.

The Joint Call Secretariat and national/regional funding organisations will perform cross-checks in parallel submissions to other calls. Applicants shall avoid applying for the same activities to different calls. Double funding is not allowed.

For further details, please refer to the respective submission forms available through the NEURON website. If you need additional information, please contact the Joint Call Secretariat. Since national organisations may set special requirements for their applicants, applicants are therefore strongly advised to review the instructions contained in the **country-specific information** that are published on the NEURON website contact their national/regional funding organisation for further information (see Annex III for contact details).

5. Evaluation procedure

The Call Steering Committee (CSC) will nominate remote evaluators for the proposals considering their scientific expertise on the topic.

The Joint Call Secretariat will work on the assignment of proposals to reviewers, ensuring at least three experts per proposal. After approval by CSC, the evaluation will start remotely.

These experts will assess if the projects are within the scope of the call and then carry out the evaluation according to the following evaluation criteria:

a) Excellence

- Quality, importance and originality of the concept/idea/question
- Clear definition of the expected outcome
- Competence of the partners in regard to the question and appropriate mix of expertise

b) Impact

- Potential outcome for the community
- Added-value of the multidisciplinary and transnational collaboration

c) Quality of the implementation

- Appropriateness of the proposed procedures
- Outcome dissemination

6. Funding decision

The remote evaluators will evaluate the proposals based on the above-mentioned evaluation criteria and will rank the proposals according to their average score.

Proposals will be selected for funding by the CSC according to their position in the ranking list and the available budget, with the aim of maximising the number of networking groups with high quality to be funded.

For transparency, the written evaluations will be forwarded to the applicants after the funding decision.

To prevent fragmentation, the CSC might propose merging proposals working on similar topics. Advice of the reviewers might be sought for these decisions and merging will only occur upon agreement of all the Networking Group participants implicated.

7. Funding procedure

Each successful Networking Group will be selected through a competitive Joint Transnational Call(JTC). Each network created can receive up to 50.000 € (+ overheads, depending on the national rules) for support of its activities for a maximum duration of 1 year.

Funding is expected to start April -June 2023. Projects should be designed to be achievable during a maximum funding period of one year.

Funding will be administered according to the terms and conditions of the responsible funding organisations, considering all other applicable regulations and legal requirements. Funding will be granted to and coordinated by the Budget Recipient (see section 3.2. in the MoU).

8. Reporting and Dissemination

The Scientific Coordinator is the contact person to the national funding organisation and the Joint Call Secretariat (JCS) and is in charge of its internal management (e.g., reporting, intellectual property rights issues). The JCS will request a report at the end of the funding period that will be published, among other media, on the ERANET NEURON website.

Funding organisations may request additional reports from their respective Budget recipient based on their individual requirements. The outcomes from the networks will be presented in a final symposium, back to back with one of the ERA-NET NEURON regular symposia.

9. General data protection regulation

Applicants are informed that the personal data (name, email address, phone number, funding institution, or any other information needed for participating to this call) submitted in their application to the co-funded call are processed in accordance with article 6.1 (e) and (c) of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (2016/679), and for the purposes of processing and evaluating the application where processing shall be lawful only if and to the extent that

- processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the controller;
- administering any subsequent funding award;
- managing the funding organisations relationship with them;
- analysing and evaluating the call;
- providing aggregate data to national and European surveys and analyses on the funded projects; and

- complying with audits that may be initiated by the funding organisations and the European Commission (or its agencies).

The Call Steering Committee may share applicants' data with third parties (some of which may be based outside the European Economic Area) in relation to the above activities including evaluators, auditors and the European Commission (or its agencies).

Annex I: Anticipated amount of funding provided by each participating partner in the call

The participating countries, respective funding organisations and their contributions to this networking call are listed in the Table 1

Partner Country	Funding organisation	Anticipated amount of funding excluding overheads (for 1 year)	Anticipated number of fundable research groups
Estonia	Estonian Research Council (ETAg)	50.000€	1
France*	French National Research Agency (ANR)	100. 000€	2
Germany	Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)	100.000€	2
Italy	Ministry of Health (MOH)	50.000€	1
Ireland	Health Research Body (HRB)	50.000€	1
UK	Medical Research Council (MRC)	50.000€	1

** final confirmation still pending*

Annex II: List of member countries in NEURON ERANET COFUND 2

Belgium	Israel	Taiwan
Canada	Italy	Turkey
Croatia	Latvia	United Kingdom
Estonia	Norway	
Finland	Poland	
France	Portugal	
Germany	Romania	
Greece	Slovakia	
Hungary	Spain	
Ireland	Switzerland	

Annex III: List of contact details

Country	Acronym	Contact person name(s)	Contact person mail(s)
Italy	IT-MoH	Chiara Ciccarelli	c.ciccarelli@sanita.it
Germany	BMBF	Sophia Schach, Dr. Christina Müller	sophia.schach@dlr.de Chr.Mueller@dlr.de
France	ANR	Sheyla Mejia Rajaa Aouache	neuroncalls@anr.fr
Estonia	ETAg	Argo Soon	argo.soon@etagee.ee
Ireland	HRB	Amanda Daly	Amanda.Daly@hrb.ie
UK	MRC	Dr. Siv Vingill	Siv.Vingill@mrc.ukri.org

Annex IV: Tentative Call Timeline

When	What
6 July 2022	Pre-announcement of the Networking call- JTC2022
6 September 2022	Publication of the call
8 November 2022	Proposal submission deadline
16 March 2023	Funding decision
20 March 2023	Communication of results by the JCS
April-June 2023	Start of selected projects