

Call for Proposals for
**‘Research Projects on
Ethical, Legal, and Social Aspects (ELSA)
of Neuroscience’**

Submission deadline for proposals: April 28 2020, 14:00 CET

Electronic proposal submission

Proposal template

For further information, please visit us on the web

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

or contact

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1. Purpose

Neuroscientific research yields constant progress regarding our basic understanding of the structure and function of the human brain under healthy and pathological conditions. This knowledge is fundamental for the development of new diagnostics and treatments for patients suffering from neurological or psychiatric diseases. At the same time, the neurosciences have implications for the understanding, and thus potentially also the control, of human decision-making, behaviour, emotions, and social interactions. Findings of the neurosciences can furthermore deeply affect human self-understanding and conscience as such. Therefore, it is of major importance to investigate the ethical, legal, and social aspects (ELSA) of the neurosciences and their recent advances. This knowledge helps to ensure that neuroscientific methods and findings are utilized in ways which are of the best possible benefit for our society. The high societal relevance of the neurosciences is underlined by continuously high public interest and ongoing public discourse on this topic.

The 'Network of European Funding for Neuroscience Research' (NEURON) has been established under the ERA-NET scheme of the European Commission (<http://www.neuron-eranet.eu>). The aim of the ERA-NET NEURON is to coordinate research efforts and funding programmes of European countries in the field of disease related neuroscience. Under the umbrella of NEURON, several joint transnational calls (JTCs) have been launched on different neuroscientific topics from 2008 to 2019. In acknowledgement of the high societal relevance of the neurosciences, this year, the third separate and additional JTC on “Research Projects on Ethical, Legal, and Social Aspects (ELSA) of Neuroscience” will be launched in parallel to the regular NEURON JTC, which focusses on “Research Projects on Sensory Disorders”.

The following funding organizations have agreed to fund the joint call for multinational research projects on ELSA of Neuroscience. The call will be conducted simultaneously by the funding organizations in their respective countries and coordinated centrally by the ELSA Neurosciences Joint Call Secretariat.

- Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique -FNRS (F.R.S.-FNRS), Belgium
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research – Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction (CIHR-INMHA), Canada
- Fonds de Recherche du Quebec – Sante (FRQS), Canada
- Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), Germany
- State Education Development Agency (VIAA), Latvia
- National Institute of Health Carlos III (ISCIII), Spain
- Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), Switzerland

2. Aim of the call

The aim of the call is to facilitate multinational, collaborative research projects that will address important questions regarding ethical, philosophical, legal and socio-cultural aspects related to the neurosciences and their recent advances.

Subjects under this general heading include but are not limited to:

- a) the consequences of the development of neuroscientific diagnostic methods (e.g. handling of incidental findings; the “right not to know”; very early disease prediction before symptoms occur; diagnosis in absence of treatment options; interactions between socio-culturally diverse patients and health personnel; availability of novel expensive methods)
- b) clinical research with patients suffering from neurological or psychiatric diseases (e.g. developing tools to improve the assessment of decision-making capacity of patients, analysis of legal measures to protect those who do not have the capacity to consent)
- c) intelligent technologies and close human-machine interaction (e.g. Ambient Assisted Living, Brain-Computer Interfaces, machine learning); personality changes as side effects of neurological or psychiatric therapies (e.g. Deep Brain Stimulation; brain implants)
- d) use of brain data; biobanking of neural tissue (e.g. tissue donation, deceased donor, data protection, possible consequences for relatives)
- e) brain interventions in legal contexts (e.g. “brain reading” for the detection of deception; brain intervention of offenders; psychosurgery; insurance law)
- f) the impact of modern neuroscience on traditional philosophical questions, concepts and theories regarding fundamental aspects of human nature (e.g. the relationship between mind and brain, the nature of consciousness, self- and personal identity, free will)
- g) neuroenhancement such as alteration of mental states (cognitive, affective) and abilities (e.g. cognition, sleep, appetite, sexual behaviour) in healthy subjects by pharmacological or by electrical/magnetic brain stimulation
- h) abnormal behaviour reduced to deviant brain states (e.g. expansion of the concept of neurotypical brain and illness; seeing psychiatric symptoms merely as specific neurochemical imbalances)
- i) societal and cultural changes induced by neuroscientific knowledge and its application

The individual components of joint applications should be complementary and should contain novel, ambitious ideas to answer key questions or lead to a step-wise change in understanding. There should be clear added value in funding the collaboration over the individual projects.

All scientific disciplines and stakeholders, which are relevant for the specific ELSA-research question, should be integrated. This could be for instance experts from the fields of neuroscience, psy-

chology, medicine, informatics, engineering, philosophy, theology, law, social sciences, cultural studies or healthcare economy. Depending on the research question, it may also be necessary to integrate (pharmaceutical) industry, health insurances, patients, relatives, patient representatives or other groups of persons who are directly affected.

Projects should go beyond purely analytical or descriptive levels related to the past or present. Based on their analyses, the applicants should aim at giving prospects for the future and developing proposals for socio-compatible use of neuroscientific advances. Additionally, the applicants should develop and implement concepts for effective public communication of their results. Communication of the results on an international level is desirable.

The ERA-NET NEURON seeks to strengthen public and patient engagement in research and thereby empowerment. Applicants are expected to engage citizens and/or patients, where appropriate, in their research process. Meaningful public and patient engagement can occur at the level of research planning, conducting research or research result dissemination.

No empirical neuroscientific or biomedical research can be funded in this call.

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 and other health care settings, 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. Compliance with the national/regional regulations specified in the country specific information is mandatory.**

Only transnational projects will be funded. Each consortium submitting a proposal must be comprised of a minimum of two research groups from two different countries eligible for funding by organizations listed in this call text (see above). The total number of research groups in a consortium must not exceed five. Not more than two research groups can be from the same country. Therefore, the maximum number of countries involved in one consortium is five.

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 potential partners are not considered in the minimum number of two research groups mentioned above. In any case, the total number of research groups in one consortium must not exceed five.

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. application, consortium agreement, reporting, etc.). The consortium coordinator must be eligible for funding by one of the organizations listed in this call text.

A single application must be submitted by the consortium coordinator to ELSA Neurosciences Joint Call Secretariat. The individual research groups will be funded by the 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 organisation 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 **one-stage procedure** for joint applications. One joint **proposal document** (in English, see [template here](#)) shall be prepared by the partners of a joint transnational proposal, and must be submitted to the ELSA Joint Call Secretariat by one spokesperson, the coordinator.

Proposals must be submitted in electronic format no later than **April 28, 2020** (14:00:00 CET) via the **electronic submission** system. All fields must be completed using **DIN-A4; font: Arial, 10pt; single-spaced, page limits.**

Proposals that do not meet the formal criteria will be rejected from the call process without any further review.

3.3 Further information

For further details, please refer to the respective submission forms available through the NEURON website <https://www.neuron-eranet.eu/en/918.php> . If you need additional information, please con-

tact the ELSA Neurosciences Joint Call Secretariat, or your funding organization representative (see Annex for contact data).

4. Evaluation and decision

The review process will be in one stage.

4.1 Eligibility check of proposals

The ELSA Neurosciences 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 ELSA Neurosciences Joint Call Secretariat will also forward the proposals to the national/regional funding organisations, which will perform a formal check of compliance with their respective regulations. Proposals not meeting the formal criteria will be rejected at this stage.

The Call Steering Committee may reject proposals if they are clearly outside the scope of the call.

Proposals passing these check points will be forwarded to the joint Peer Review Panel for evaluation.

4.2 Peer-review of proposals

The reviewers will carry out the evaluation according to the following specific evaluation criteria:

- Relevance of the research question to the aim(s) of the call
- Scientific quality of the proposal (originality, methodology)
- Feasibility of the project (adequacy of project work plan and related risk analysis, budgetary and other resources, time schedule)
- Qualification and expertise of participating institutions and research groups in the field(s) of the proposal
- Quality of collaborative interaction between participating groups, and added value of the network, from both scientific and transnational perspectives, of the research consortium.
- Impact of the expected results on society and future scientific applications.

4.3 Decision

An international Peer Review Panel will evaluate the 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, tak-

ing into account the national budgets available. These recommendations will inform the final decisions which will be made by the funding agencies and will be subject to budgetary considerations.

5. Funding procedure / Responsibilities / Reporting requirements

5.1 Funding procedure

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

Funding is expected to start early in 2021. Projects can be funded for a period of three years. Neutral-cost extensions can be granted for individual research groups according to respective funding organizations' regulations and in agreement with the coordinator.

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 consortium coordinator will be the contact person for the relevant national/regional funding organization. The coordinators of funded projects together with the respective funding agencies 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 and a data management plan (DMP). The CA will agree on 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; within six months after the start of the project the DMP must be sent to the Joint Call Secretariat NEURON and the CA must be signed.

5.3 Reporting Requirements

On behalf of the research consortium, the project coordinator will be required to submit annual scientific progress reports on the project and one final report in the end, to the ELSA Neurosciences Joint Call Secretariat. 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, starting in 2022. Final reports must be submitted six months after the end of the project at the latest. Annual reports do not need to be submitted if the

project ends between January and March on the last year. In the latter case, the submission of a final report will suffice. However, instead of submitting the final report within the usual six month period, the final report will be required within four months of project completion.

It is the task of the coordinators to determine a formal end date for project completion. This is required, as partners may be granted extensions of differing duration. Coordinators will be informed about this procedure by the ELSA Neurosciences Joint Call Secretariat and will receive the report template in due course.

The coordinator 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 researchers 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.

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

Please note that country specific requirements 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 proposal:**

| Country (Region) | Contact person(s) | Links to national/regional calls mentioning particular requirements |
|------------------|------------------------|---|
| Belgium | Dr Florence Quist | Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique-FNRS (F.R.S.-FNRS) florence.quist@frs-fnrs.be Phone: +32 (0)2 504 93 51 |
| | Mr. Joël Groeneveld | joel.groeneveld@frs-fnrs.be Phone: +32 (0)2 504 92 70 |
| Canada | Dr Eric Marcotte | Canadian Institutes of Health Research - Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction (CIHR-IRSC) Phone: 905-467-1822 eric.marcotte@cihr-irsc.gc.ca |
| | Dr Christian Brochu | christian.brochu@cihr-irsc.gc.ca Phone: 613-948-4878 |
| Canada (Quebec) | Mr Maxime Beaudoin | Fonds de recherche du Québec-Santé (FRQS) Maxime.Beaudoin@frq.gouv.qc.ca 1+ 514-873-2114 #1369 www.frqs.gouv.qc.ca |
| Germany | Dr Anna Gossen | Project Management Agency (PT-DLR) – Health Research, on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) Anna.Gossen@dlr.de Phone: +49 228 3821 1684 Katja Hüttner Phone: +49 228 3821 2177 www.gesundheitsforschung-bmbf.de |
| | Dr Katja Hüttner | |
| Latvia | Dr Uldis Berķis | State Education Development Agency www.viaa.gov.lv Uldis.Berkis@viaa.gov.lv Phone: +371-67785406 +371-29472349 Maija.Bundule@viaa.gov.lv Phone: +371 – 67785423 |
| | Dr Maija Bundule | |
| Spain | Maria Druet Ampuero | Institute of Health Carlos III (ISCIII) mdruet@isciii.es Phone: +34 91 822 2530 |
| Switzerland | Dr Claudia Ellenrieder | Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) www.snsf.ch Phone: +41 31 308 22 22 claudia.ellenrieder@snf.ch |

Annex II. Anticipated amount of funding provided by each partner

| Partner Country | Funding organization | Anticipated amount of funding (for 3 years) | Anticipated number of fundable research groups |
|-----------------|--|---|--|
| Belgium | Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique-FNRS (F.R.S.-FNRS) | € 50.000 | 1 |
| Canada | Canadian Institutes of Health Research | \$450.000 CAD (~€ 300.000) | 2 |
| Canada (Québec) | Fonds de recherche du Québec - Santé (FRQS) | \$ 100.000CAD (~€ 65.000) | 1 |
| Germany | Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) | € 1.500.000 | 5-9 |
| Latvia | State Education Development Agency (VIAA) | € 210.000 | 1 |
| Spain | National Institute of Health Carlos III (ISCIII) | € 100.000 | 2 |
| Switzerland | Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) | CHF 900'000 (~ € 820'000) | 3 |

Annex III. Call Timetable

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|------------------------|--|
| December 3, 2019 | Preliminary Announcement of the Joint Transnational Call |
| January 8, 2020 | Launch of the Joint Transnational Call |
| 28 April, 2020 | Deadline (submission of proposals) 14:00 CET |
| Mid-September, 2020 | Peer Review Panel meeting to assess the full proposals |
| Early in 2021 | Start of funding |