



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

**Submission deadline for pre-proposals: March 09, 2015, 14:00 CET**

**Electronic proposal submission**

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, neuroscientific research has implications for the understanding, and thus potentially also the control, of human decision-making, behaviour, emotions, and social interactions. Findings from neuroscientific research 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 neuroscientific research and recent advances in the field. 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 neuroscientific research is underlined by continuously high public interest and ongoing public discourse on this topic.

The 'Network of European Funding for Neuroscience Research' (NEURON) was established under the ERA-NET scheme of the European Commission (<http://www.neuron-eranet.eu>). The aim of ERA-NET NEURON is to co-ordinate research efforts and funding programmes of European and partner countries in the field of disease-related neuroscience. Under the umbrella of NEURON, seven joint transnational calls (JTCs) have been launched on different neuroscientific topics from 2008 to 2014. In acknowledgement of the high societal relevance of neuroscientific research, this year, a separate and additional JTC on “European Research Projects on Ethical, Legal, and Social Aspects (ELSA) of Neuroscience” will be launched in parallel with the regular NEURON JTC, which focusses on “European Research Projects on Neurodevelopmental Disorders” (JTC-8).

The following funding organizations have agreed to support 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 co-ordinated centrally by the ELSA Neuroscience Joint Call Secretariat.

- Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique (FNRS), Belgium
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research – Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction (CIHR-INMHA), Canada
- Academy of Finland (AKA), Finland
- Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), Germany
- Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT), Portugal
- National Institute of Health Carlos III (ISCIII), Spain

## 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 neuroscientific research and recent advances in the field.

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) abnormal behaviour reduced to deviant brain states (e.g., expansion of the concept of illness; seeing psychiatric symptoms merely as specific neurochemical imbalances) use of brain data and brain interventions in legal contexts (e.g., “brain reading” for the detection of deception; brain intervention of offenders; psychosurgery; insurance law)
- c) 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
- d) intelligent technologies and close human-machine interactions (e.g., Ambient Assisted Living, Brain-Computer Interfaces)
- e) personality changes as side effects of neurological or psychiatric therapies (e.g., Deep Brain Stimulation; brain implants)
- 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) bio-banking of neural tissue (e.g., tissue donation, deceased donor tissues, data protection, possible consequences for relatives)
- h) clinical research with patients suffering from neurological or psychiatric diseases (e.g., developing tools to improve the assessment of decision-making capacity of the patients, analysis of legal measures to protect those who do not have the capacity to consent)
- 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 proposed 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, psychology, 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 industry (e.g., pharmaceutical, medical instrumentation, etc.), health insurance companies, 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 presence. 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.

***With this funding measure no empirical neuroscientific or biomedical research can be funded.***

### **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).

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). Involvement of more than two countries is, however, preferred. 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 by 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 of a secured budget for their part in the project. 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 co-ordinator who represents the consortium externally and who is responsible for its internal management (e.g., application, Consortium Agreement, reporting, etc.). It is obligatory that the co-ordinator of a consortium be eligible to be funded by one of the organizations listed in this call text.

*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.*

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

### **3.2 Financial and legal modalities**

Projects may be funded for a period of up to three years and according to individual funding organizations' regulations. Eligible costs may vary according to the corresponding funding organizations' regulations. Each group will be subject to the rules and regulations of its respective national/regional funding organization.

### **3.3 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 ELSA Neuroscience Joint Call Secretariat by one spokesperson, the project co-ordinator.

Pre-proposals must be submitted in electronic format no later than **March 09, 2015** (14:00:00 CET) via the [electronic submission](#) system.

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

### **3.4 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 ELSA Neuroscience Joint Call Secretariat, or your funding organization representative (see Annex for contact data).

## **4. Evaluation and decision**

The review process will be in two stages.

### **4.1 Formal check of proposals**

The ELSA Neuroscience Joint Call Secretariat will assess 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 Neuroscience 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:

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

## 4.3 Decision

### 4.3.1 Pre-proposals

Eligible pre-proposals will be reviewed via a written (remote) peer review process. Based on the scores in the written reviews a ranking list will be set up. By mid May 2015, the co-ordinators of the top proposals will be invited by the ELSA Neuroscience Joint Call Secretariat to submit a full proposal **no later than June 24, 2015, 14:00 CET**.

### 4.3.2 Full proposals

An international Peer Review Panel will 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. 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

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 2016.

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 co-ordinators 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. The CA will agree 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 the first six months after the project start date, the project co-ordinator must confirm towards the ELSA Neuroscience Joint Call Secretariat that the CA has been signed.

### **5.3 Reporting Requirements**

On behalf of the research consortium, the project co-ordinator will be required to submit a brief annual scientific progress report on the project and one final report in the end, to the ELSA Neuroscience Joint Call Secretariat. Group leaders may be required to submit reports separately to their national funding organization; reporting guidance will be forwarded by the relevant funding organization, as applicable.

Annual reports should 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 (i.e. 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 co-ordinators to determine a formal end date for project completion. This is required, as partners may be granted extensions of differing duration. Co-ordinators will be informed about this procedure by the ELSA Neuroscience Joint Call Secretariat and will receive the report template in due course.

The co-ordinator will be asked to present two progress reports during the intermediate and the final status symposium respectively. Group leaders will be asked to participate in the final status symposium. Travel budgets should be planned and managed accordingly.

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

Please note that country specific requirements might apply to this call. We strongly advise you to contact your national/regional representative prior to submitting a pre-proposal:

Country (Region)	Contact person(s)	Links to national/regional calls mentioning particular requirements
Belgium	Dr Arnaud Goolaerts	Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique (FNRS) rue d'Egmont 5 1000 Bruxelles Tél. +32 (0)2 504 93 28 <a href="mailto:arnaud.goolaerts@frs-fnrs.be">arnaud.goolaerts@frs-fnrs.be</a>
Canada	Dr Elizabeth Theriault  Christine Charette Linda McKenzie	Canadian Institutes of Health Research - Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction (CIHR-INMHA) Elizabeth.Theriault@ubc.ca 604 827-4744 <a href="http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/8602.html">http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/8602.html</a>  Strategic Program Design and Analytics Research and Knowledge Translation Portfolio, CIHR <a href="mailto:Christine.Charette@cihr-irsc.gc.ca">Christine.Charette@cihr-irsc.gc.ca</a> <a href="mailto:Linda.McKenzie@cihr-irsc.gc.ca">Linda.McKenzie@cihr-irsc.gc.ca</a>
Finland	Hannele Lahtinen  Raija Matikainen	Academy of Finland (AKA) <a href="mailto:hannele.lahtinen@aka.fi">hannele.lahtinen@aka.fi</a> tel: +358 29 533 5055 <a href="mailto:raija.matikainen@aka.fi">raija.matikainen@aka.fi</a> tel: +358 29 533 5072 <a href="http://www.aka.fi">www.aka.fi</a>
Germany	Dr Svenja Krebs  Dr Matthias von Witsch	Project Management Agency (PT-DLR) – Health Research, on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) <a href="mailto:Svenja.Krebs@dlr.de">Svenja.Krebs@dlr.de</a> +49 228 3821-1866 <a href="mailto:Matthias.VonWitsch@dlr.de">Matthias.VonWitsch@dlr.de</a> +49 228 3821-1209 <a href="http://www.gesundheitsforschung-bmbf.de">www.gesundheitsforschung-bmbf.de</a>
Portugal	Dr Anabela Isidro  Dr Carlos Pereira	Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (FCT) Departamento das Relações Internacionais Anabela.Isidro@fct.pt phone: Tel:+351 21 391 15 52 <a href="mailto:Carlos.Pereira@fct.pt">Carlos.Pereira@fct.pt</a> phone: Tel:+351 21 392 4397 <a href="http://www.fct.pt">www.fct.pt</a>
Spain	Irene Sánchez	National Institute of Health Carlos III (ISCIII) SG de Programas Internacionales de Investigación y Relaciones Institucionales phone: +34 91 822 24 88 <a href="mailto:isanchezgarcia@isciii.es">isanchezgarcia@isciii.es</a>