

## 2015 JPco-fuND Joint Transnational Call

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

#### General framework

##### **How does JPND funding work?**

Amongst those countries that are part of JPND, respective national funding organisations agree to fund a joint transnational call for proposals. Funders are free to choose which calls they wish to support and this decision is often dependent on their own priorities and focus areas. The current JPND call features a central application procedure for proposals, and is coordinated centrally by a Joint Call Secretariat.

JPND funding is based on the “virtual common pot” model. This virtual common pot of money is a total of the individual budgetary commitments of all funding organisations that participate in the call. These budget commitments of the funding organisations are made in advance of the call publication and are based on several factors, including budget availability and the anticipated response from their respective national scientific communities.

Funding organisations only pay for their own participants - each funding organisation will fund its own project participants of successful proposals and covers its own administrative effort. Therefore, researchers are not funded by JPND directly, but exclusively by their respective funding organisations, taking into account the individual budgetary limits.

For this specific call, the European Commission (EC) provides additional top-up funding from Horizon 2020. This top-up funding from the EC will further increase the budget that has already been allocated by the individual funding organisations. EC top-up funding will be used to fund additional proposals after the individual budgets from the funding organisations will have been spent.

##### **Are there preferred topics or diseases that JPND would like to fund?**

No, there are no “preferred” topics or diseases that should be addressed. Scientists are free to develop their own ideas, as long as they fit into the general framework of the call. However, the topic of the project, the scientific approach and the methodology should be well justified in the proposal.

Please note that you can only apply for a specific topic if it is supported by your respective funding organisation. If there is more than one JPND funding organisation in your country, please make sure that you select the appropriate organisation. Some funding organisations may also have specific regulations or restrictions with regard to the topic or the type of work they support. Information on the participating funding organisations in each topic and on regulations and restrictions is given in annex I of the [call text](#) and in the [specific information sheets](#).

### **What about rare diseases?**

A pre-proposal on a rare disease will have the same chance in the evaluation process as compared to a proposal on, for example, Alzheimer's Disease – as long as the clinical relevance is convincingly shown.

### **Who is eligible to apply for a JPND call?**

This call is being conducted by a number of JPND countries, represented by their respective funding organisations. In fact, only those researchers that are eligible according to the rules of their relevant national funding organisation may apply for funding. The [call text](#) provides all information on the participating funding organisations and eligibility criteria. This information is complimented by the [specific information sheets](#), which provide additional information on national eligibility criteria for each participating funding organisation. If, after reading these documents, you are still uncertain about your eligibility to apply to this call, we strongly recommend consulting the respective national contact point (contact information is given in the call text as well as in the specific information sheets).

Meeting the eligibility criteria is absolutely mandatory! If partners of a consortium are not eligible, the whole proposal may be rejected without further review. Therefore, we strongly recommend checking the eligibility of all partners very carefully and consult with your national contact point if in doubt.

Please note that some countries demand additional forms to be completed by the applicants (this information is provided in the [specific information sheets](#)).

### **If there are uncertainties, whom can I contact to get further information?**

If you have questions regarding this call, you should either contact the JPND Joint Call Secretariat or your respective national contact point. Contact information for both is given in the [call text](#).

The JPND Joint Call Secretariat may help you with regard to general aspects of the call (e.g., if you have questions on the call topic, the proposal template or the evaluation process). The JPND Joint Call Secretariat will be able to communicate in English language by email or phone. In contrast, the national contact points will be able to advise you on all aspects of national regulations or restrictions, e. g., budgetary issues, eligibility aspects or additional requirements for potential applicants.

### **When shall I contact my national contact point?**

The national contact point can provide information on specific national regulations, restrictions and on the available budget to its researchers. Please keep in mind that failing to fulfil these specific regulations/restrictions may result in a rejection of the entire proposal. Therefore, it is helpful for each member of a consortium to contact its national contact point personally. Contact details are provided in the [call text](#) and in the [specific information sheets](#), which can be downloaded from the JPND website.

## **Building a consortium**

### **What must be considered regarding the composition of a consortium?**

The composition of a consortium is part of the evaluation criteria for reviewers. All information about requirements and restrictions regarding consortia are specified in the [call text](#). Within these framework conditions, applicants are free to compose their consortium according to scientific needs. It is possible to include a maximum of two groups from the same country. At the same time, the added value of transnational collaboration may be higher with diverse research groups from different countries.

#### **Can I include external collaborators in a proposal?**

Yes, it is possible to include external collaborators in a consortium (e.g. for co-working on specific aspects or for including patients, cohorts, biomaterial samples or data). An external collaborator is a research group that is part of a proposal, but does not apply for funding. In principle, this could be a research group from either

- a non-JPND member country (e.g., the United States)
- a JPND member country that is not participating in the specific call
- a JPND member country that is participating in the call, but the research group is not requesting funding.

External collaborators must be able to secure their own funding. It must be stated clearly in the proposal if these funds are already secured or, if not, how the external collaborators plan to obtain funding in advance of the project start.

The number of external collaborators should be well justified. Please take into account that the majority of research groups in a consortium and the co-ordinator must be from countries of the partner organisations that conduct the call.

#### **How do I find partners for a joint research project?**

For this call, JPND is recommending use of the [JPND Partnering Tool](#). The JPND Partnering Tool is free of charge and can be used by anyone. The tool allows researchers to present their research group and expertise in a closed forum, tailored for JPND, thus making it easier for research partners to locate each other and collaborate on a proposal. Researchers can also register a new idea and receive comments from expert scientists and researchers who signed up within the tool. Consortia can then be built around this idea and a proposal can be drafted directly within the Partnering Tool. We believe that this tool will especially support early-career researchers and research groups not yet included in established consortia. Experienced researchers may use the tool to find specific expertise which may be missing from their pre-existing consortia.

The JPND partnering tool can be directly accessed here: <https://jpnd.induct.no/login/>

#### **How much money can I apply for and which costs are eligible?**

Successful applicants are funded by the respective national funding organisation(s) participating in the call. As a consequence, funding rules depend on the relevant national regulations and restrictions, which differ between the funding organisations. Each funding organisation provides detailed budgetary information as part of the [specific information sheet](#). This information sheet includes important information on the maximum budget available, eligible and non-eligible costs, overhead costs and specific regulations and restrictions. In addition, applicants should also consult their national contact point. Contact information is provided in the specific information sheet as well.

#### **Are there limitations with regard to the size of a consortium?**

Yes, each proposal must involve a minimum of three and a maximum of eight (3-8) research groups from at least three different countries applying for funding. Within these limitations, there is some flexibility to apply with a bigger or smaller consortium. Although the size of a consortium - within the permitted range - is not a direct

review criterion, the reviewers will evaluate whether the size of a consortium is in-line with the indicated aims and the work plan. Therefore, the number of research groups participating in a consortium should be well-justified.

### **May I join or even coordinate more than one proposal?**

Joining more than one proposal as an applicant may be possible, depending on the specific regulations of the respective funding organisations. Please make sure to check the [specific information sheets](#) with regard to this issue. Applicants who wish to join more than one proposed consortium must be able to demonstrate that they have the capacity to fulfil their work in case that several proposals they are participating in are suggested for funding.

However, this policy is different with regard to the co-ordinator of a proposal. Being a co-ordinator is a high responsibility, very time consuming and demanding. Therefore, although there may be no formal restriction set forth by your respective funding organisation, it is not a good idea to act as a co-ordinator in more than one proposal.

## **Writing a proposal**

### **When preparing a proposal, which documents do I need?**

At the very least, you need the following documents, which are provided at the JPND website:

- [Call text](#)
- [Specific information sheets](#) (for all partners)
- [Additional specific forms](#) (only if appropriate)
- [Pre-proposal template](#)

The call text provides you with all information concerning the topic and the general framework that applies for the call. This information is complemented by the specific information sheets of the funding organisations participating in the call, which provide you with additional information on specific regulations and restrictions for each organisation. Please keep in mind that JPND applications are multinational collaboration projects where each country and funding organisation has its own specific regulations (for example, some organisations request additional forms from their researchers before submitting a proposal).

Use of the pre-proposal template is absolutely mandatory for preparing your pre-proposal!

### **How precise must a pre-proposal be?**

As you can see from the [pre-proposal template](#), pre-proposals are rather short and space is limited. As a consequence, you should place emphasis on transmitting your general idea (e. g., your aims, research questions and the work plan) to the reviewers who will evaluate the pre-proposals. The aim of a pre-proposal is to convince the reviewers, who are all scientists from the respective field(s) of research, that your proposal should be considered for the full proposal stage.

### **How do I submit a proposal?**

If you plan to submit a pre-proposal for this call, please make sure that you are using the [pre-proposal template](#). Sticking to this template when preparing your pre-proposal is absolutely mandatory!

Your application to the call is completed by uploading a PDF version of your pre-proposal via the [electronic submission system](#). No other means of pre-proposal submission will be accepted. A user registration is needed

to use the electronic submission system. However, only the co-ordinator of a consortium needs to register. Once registered, the co-ordinator may directly enter into the system, which will provide guidance for the rest of the submission process. No further action is needed after uploading your pre-proposal file. We strongly encourage you to upload your pre-proposal well in advance of the deadline to avoid the call closure rush.

**Is it possible to submit attachments (references, CVs, letters of intent.)?**

No, it is not permitted to submit any attachments or annexes. All information has to be included in the main document, adhering to the structure and the page limits of the [pre-proposal template](#). Any attachment or annex will be deleted automatically. Information that is not requested in the pre-proposal template is not relevant for the evaluation process (e. g., letters of intent).

**Can I submit a pre-proposal shortly after the deadline if this is well justified?**

No, this is not possible. The [electronic submission system](#) will close at 23:59 C.E.T. on the day of the submission deadline. No pre-proposal submission is possible thereafter and no other means of submission will be accepted. We recommend finalising your pre-proposal well in advance of the deadline.

## Evaluation and decision making

**Who will evaluate the submitted proposals?**

Evaluation of proposals for this call is undertaken by a separate expert panel composed of internationally-renowned scientists. These experts (reviewers) are chosen for their expertise in the field of the topics of the call, their thematic orientation, their overall expertise in brain research and neurodegenerative diseases and their complementary expertise with regard to these fields. Reviewers are appointed based on their scientific expertise and their selection is not restricted to countries participating in JPND. Insofar as possible, JPND will strive to ensure a balance of gender and country representation of the review panel members. The reviewers will not adopt national considerations nor will they represent any of the JPND joint call partner organisations.

**Who decides which proposals receive funding?**

The final decision on which proposals receive funding is taken by the JPND funding organisations. However, this decision does, of course, depend on the results of the scientific evaluation, which is done by an independent peer review panel. This panel of experts decides whether a proposal receives a funding recommendation or not. Proposals with no funding recommendation cannot be funded. Proposals that are recommended for funding will be ranked by the peer review panel according to their quality, based on the evaluation criteria described in the [call text](#). Funding will be given to the very best proposals of this ranking list, taking into account the available national budgets and the top-up funding of the European Commission.

**On which criteria will proposals be selected for funding?**

All proposals will undergo a scientific peer review evaluation, which will result in a funding recommendation for each proposal. The evaluation criteria are specified in detail in the [call text](#). Please note that criterion “excellence” will be double weighted in the evaluation, (i.e., scientific excellence of the proposal will count for 50% of the final evaluation score).

All proposals submitted under this call will be evaluated collectively and compared against each other. This will result in one final ranking list (i.e. no separate ranking list for the three topics of the call). The balance of awards between the three topics will be suggested by the Peer Review Panel and will depend on the quality of the proposals.

**How many stages of decision making will be applied to a proposal?**

For this call, there will be two steps of decision-making: A pre-proposal and a full proposal decision.

Firstly, the submitted pre-proposals are evaluated based on international scientific peer review, and a decision is made on which proposals to invite for the full proposal stage. Co-ordinators who submitted a pre-proposal will be informed by the JPND Joint Call Secretariat about the outcome of the pre-proposal evaluation by mid of May.

Secondly, co-ordinators of successful pre-proposals will be offered to submit a full proposal within a time-frame of six weeks. All information on the full proposal stage will automatically be sent by the JPND Joint Call Secretariat. Full proposals are evaluated by international scientific peer review. Following the peer review process, the JPND funding organisations finally decide on which proposals will receive funding. Again, co-ordinators who submitted a full proposal will be informed by the JPND Joint Call Secretariat on the final funding decision by end of October.

#### **How long does it take until a funding decision is made?**

The decision on all submitted pre-proposals will be communicated approximately two months after the original submission deadline (mid of May). Co-ordinators of successful pre-proposals will then be offered to submit a full proposal within a time-frame of six weeks. The separate decision on full proposals will be communicated approximately four months after the full proposal submission deadline (end of October).

Please note that the indicated time points of decision communication are based on former experience and may vary. However, in all cases, co-ordinators of all submitted pre- and full proposals will automatically be contacted by the JPND Joint Call Secretariat as soon as a decision can be communicated.

#### **What happens to a consortium if one or several partner(s) cannot be funded?**

It should be noted that research groups are not funded by JPND directly but by the participating national/regional funding organisations of their country. Each organisation has its own individual budget allocation for the call. In addition, the European Commission (EC) is providing top-up funding for this call, which will be used to “top-up” the respective budgets of the funding organisations to fund additional proposals.

It can happen that a consortium recommended for funding contains one or more research groups from an organisation that has already spent its budget completely (for example, because the respective budget had already been allocated to research groups from other consortia which were ranked higher). In this scenario, the JPND funding organisations will attempt to find a solution to secure funding of that consortium. This means that the respective organisation may either increase its individual budget or the top-up budget provided by the EC can be used. However, in the case where no solution can be found (i.e., individual and EC budget spent completely), the proposal will be rejected and the entire consortium will not be funded.

#### **What happens to proposals of very similar scope?**

In principle, proposals of similar scope are welcome. It is up to the scientific Peer Review Panel to suggest whether both (or several) proposals should receive a funding recommendation and be ranked equally. In that case, and taken into account that enough remaining budget is available, both (or several) proposals can be funded.

#### **Can I revise my proposal at any stage?**

Yes. A revision is included after the pre-proposal evaluation. In this revision phase it will be possible to modify the proposal, e.g. changing partners, budgets or the work plan. Please note that all changes need a scientific justification. Details on the revision phase are given in the [call text](#). Applicants are responsible for ensuring that

any changes are in line with the eligibility criteria of the call. Changes that exceed the conditions for revision or result in full proposals not meeting the eligibility criteria may be rejected without further review.

A revision of the proposal is restricted to pre-proposals that are selected for the full proposal stage (i.e., pre-proposals rejected after the pre-proposal evaluation must not be revised). Full proposals will be accepted only from those applicants explicitly invited by the JCS to submit them.