

EU Joint Programme - Neurodegenerative Disease Research (JPND)

Procedures document

“Use of digital technologies in neurodegenerative disease research and clinical practice”

1. SCOPE

This document is for use by the funding organisations and for information to the applicants that apply to this call. It complements the call text by providing information on the evaluation and decision making process. The funding organisations will make every reasonable effort to implement the call as described below with the aim to fund as many high-ranked proposals as possible.

2. MANAGEMENT OF THE CALL

The following bodies are responsible for operating the call and the evaluation process. Members of these bodies are not allowed to participate in proposals to this call.

- The Call Steering Committee is composed of representatives from the participating funding organisations. It takes all decisions regarding the call procedures, operations and funding.
- The Joint Call Secretariat is led by the German Aerospace Center, Project Management Agency. It manages the call and is a contact point for applicants and funding organisations.
- The JPND communications officer disseminates the call, hosts the call website and publishes the call results and reports from the Working Groups.
- The Peer Review Panel is composed of internationally recognised scientists related to the call topic. It evaluates the proposals based on defined criteria and provides recommendation.

3. PEER REVIEW

The Call Steering Committee suggests and nominates reviewers for the evaluation of proposals. When establishing the Peer Review Panel, international membership and a balance of gender and national representation is sought. Reviewers are not allowed to apply for this call. They are appointed for their scientific expertise and do not represent funding organisations. Their evaluations must be based on the evaluation criteria of the call. Peer Review Panel members will not be remunerated for their efforts.

The electronic submission and evaluation system (“PT Outline”, provided by the German JPND partner DLR Project Management Agency) will be used to provide access to proposals and to col-

lect written statements from the reviewers. It will also be used to declare adherence to regulations with regard to conflicts of interests and confidentiality. Each reviewer will be registered and informed by the Joint Call Secretariat and will be able to access and evaluate only those proposals assigned to them. Call Steering Committee Members will be registered by the Joint Call Secretariat and the respective account will allow them to access all proposals. The evaluation criteria and the scoring system will be explained while using the system.

4. CONFIDENTIALITY AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Any written or oral information from the evaluation process (except what is specified in sections 7) as well as the identity of the reviewers will remain confidential. The reviewers must confirm their compliance with confidentiality agreements and declare that no conflicts of interest exist before undertaking the evaluation process. A conflicted reviewer must not review a proposal. A disqualifying conflict of interest exists if a reviewer:

- was involved in the preparation of the proposal,
- benefits professionally, financially or personally from approval or rejection of the proposal,
- has a close family or other personal or professional relationship with an applicant,
- is currently working in an applicant's department or laboratory unit.

In addition, a disqualifying conflict of interest may exist in the cases specified below. A case by case decision by the Call Steering Committee is needed in those cases.

- is a director, employee or trustee of an applicant's institution,
- is or was employed by an applicant's institution within the past three years,
- published together with an applicant in the past three years,
- joined a research collaboration together with an applicant in the past three years,
- is in any situation that would influence his or her ability to evaluate the proposal impartially, independently and objectively.

5. FORMAL AND ELIGIBILITY CHECK

After the expiry of the submission deadline, the Joint Call Secretariat will check all proposals regarding their adherence to the joint criteria of the call and adherence to the proposal template. The proposal document submitted by the coordinator is the relevant source for all decisions. Proposals not meeting the joint criteria will be rejected without any revision and review. Joint criteria are:

- Date of submission (deadline)
- Number of JPND countries involved (at least 50 percent)
- Participating groups (at least 6) and eligible coordinator

However, for proposals failing to adhere to the proposal template, the coordinator and all participants will be informed about the shortcomings by the Joint Call Secretariat. They will be allowed to revise the proposal within 24 hours, following instructions from the Joint Call Secretariat. After passing the re-submission deadline, the Joint Call Secretariat will provide all information on the revisions to the Call Steering Committee, including a suggestion on which of the revised proposals should be accepted and which should be rejected. The Call Steering Committee will take a majority decision by email and on an individual basis for each proposal according to the eligibility conditions. In addition, the funding organisations check and confirm the eligibility of the respective Working Group coordinators and whether any other participant of the Working Group could potentially receive funding instead of the coordinator, if needed.

6. REVIEWER ASSIGNMENT AND REMOTE EVALUATION

The Joint Call Secretariat will contact the reviewers to request and coordinate their participation. It will assign each proposal to three reviewers, thereby matching their specific expertise and the submitted abstract or keywords while preserving gender and geographical balance. The list of participating reviewers and their assignment to individual proposals will be approved by the Call Steering Committee. Evaluation of the proposals is conducted according to the following criteria, which are scored individually. Scores may be given in the range of 0 (minimum) to 10 (maximum).

- Scientific fit to the topic of the call
- Relevance and likely impact of the activity
- Involved expertise and their appropriate mix, including diversity in gender, geographic and seniority
- Potential outcomes and plans for dissemination, including a focus on open science and open access

Reviewers will be asked to provide written statements and scoring until a given deadline. One week ahead and shortly after the deadline, the Joint Call Secretariat reminds those reviewers that have not yet delivered their evaluations. Where needed, respective proposals may be sent to a substitute reviewer. The Joint Call Secretariat will keep on collecting evaluations until the day of the decision, if needed. All available evaluations will be considered for the final decision.

As soon as the remote evaluation is finished, a consolidation will follow. It aims to align disparate evaluations by allowing the reviewers to consider their peers point of view and thus harmonise the outcome of the remote evaluation. The assigned reviewers will gain access to all available evaluations and may revise their own evaluation in the light of the other evaluations. Any revision of their own evaluation must be justified and will be tracked by the Joint Call Secretariat and communicated to the Call Steering Committee. However, if no revisions are made by the reviewers, strongly divergent evaluations will be accepted and no further attempts of harmonisation will be done.

7. DECISION AND COMMUNICATION

The Joint Call Secretariat will provide the individual written statements, the scores, the ranking list based on the total score as well as a draft assignment of proposals to individual funding organizations. The Call Steering Committee decides by E-Mail on the Working Groups to be funded according to their rank order, the available budget and the distribution of Working Groups to respective funding organizations. In case of ties between two or more proposals at the same rank position, the Call Steering Committee may decide on the proposals to be funded according to the available budgets and with the aim to maximise the number of funded high quality Working Groups.

Each Working Group selected for funding will receive a grant from one funding organization. Awards are made according to the funding organisations' specific terms and conditions, thereby taking all applicable regulations and legal frameworks into account. Consequently, details of what may or may not be funded are subject to the specific regulations of the respective funding organisation and may therefore vary. Additional deliverables (such as a Data Management Plan or Consortium Agreement) may be requested subject to the funding organisations Terms and Conditions. Preferentially the coordinator will be granted and the budget must be used to compensate for the expenses of the entire group. However, the Call Steering Committee may envisage other funding mechanisms where funding of the coordinator is not possible or where it helps to increase the number of funded high-quality Working Groups. In this case any other eligible participant of a

Working Group may be awarded. However, the coordinator will remain in its function, i.e. the coordination will not change due to matters of funding.

When the decisions are validated by all funding organisations, the Joint Call Secretariat will inform all coordinators about the outcome of the proposal evaluation, thereby providing the written statements from the remote evaluation and information on the assigned funding organization. Subsequently, the coordinator and, where relevant, the participant selected for granting are contacted by the respective funding organisation in order to initiate the granting process. The Joint Call Secretariat notifies the chair of JPND, the relevant Steering Committees and the JPND communication manager. The awarded Working Groups are published on the JPND website in alphabetical order of the project titles. The publication date is decided by the Call Steering Committee.