HRB Frequently Asked Questions ERA-NET NEURON Joint Transnational Call (2025)

Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Neuroscience of Pain

7 January 2025

HRB Frequently Asked Questions

This FAQ is specific to applicants based in Ireland and should be read in addition to the full call information: https://www.neuron-eranet.eu/joint-calls/bio-medical/2025-pain/

Scope and Eligibility

Q: Will HRB fund all research areas under this call?

A: Yes but note that Irish Partners are also not eligible for HRB funding for:

- Proposals involving basic biomedical/fundamental research.[1]
- Research intended to create human embryos solely for the purposes of research or for the purposes of stem cell procurement, including by means of somatic cell nuclear transfer.
- Applications from individuals applying for, holding, or employed under funding received from the tobacco industry.[2]
- Applications from individuals applying for, holding, or employed under funding received from the alcohol industry and related actors.[3]

See the full ERA-NET NEURON 2025 call text for full information on scope.

Q: Will pre-clinical studies be supported under this call?

A: The HRB will consider research projects that involve **pre-clinical studies**, on the understanding that pre-clinical studies represent an important stage of research that occurs before testing in humans to find out if a drug, treatment or procedure is likely to be useful.

However, appropriate evidence must be provided in the application setting out the case for the pre-clinical study, to justify the choice of species in a manner which resembles the human condition in aetiology, pathophysiology, symptomatology, and response to therapeutic intervention, and describing how the pre-clinical study correlates and aligns with the planned future stages of the research study in humans. In some pre-clinical studies, due to the species-specific nature of the clinical product (e.g., some vector-expressed human transgenes or human derived cellular products) testing in animals would not prove informative or appropriate so alternative in vitro pre-clinical studies models can be proposed, but again detailed justification must be provided.

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[1] Basic biomedical research refers to very early stage, fundamental research. HRB permits pre-clinical research within this call on the understanding that pre-clinical studies represent an important stage of research that occurs before testing in humans to find out if a drug, treatment or procedure is likely to be useful. Work with animal models and human samples is eligible under this call.

[2] Any company, entity, or organisation involved in the development, production, promotion, marketing, or sale of tobacco in any country of the world. The term also includes any companies that are a subsidiary or a holding company or affiliate of the above. This also includes e-cigarette companies and non-tobacco related companies which are fully or partially owned by the tobacco industry.

[3] Including social aspects/public relations organisations (SAPROs) funded by alcohol companies or trade associations in which such companies are members.

Q: Do Lead Applicants have to be permanent staff members?

A: No, contracted researchers and Adjunct Professors can apply. To be eligible, these applicants must provide a letter from the Host Institution (HI) as follows:

- **Contracted researchers:** letter to endorse their application, confirming they have the authority and resources allocated to hold and manage a grant under their particular status for the duration of the award. All **contracted researchers** must also have a contract with a HI for the duration of the grant award or assure the HRB that they will be offered a contract for the period of the award if successful and this must be stated in their letter of support
- **Adjunct Professors:** letter to confirm that the applicant has the authority and resources allocated to hold and manage a grant under their Adjunct status for at least the duration of the award.

This should be provided to HRB-JTCs@hrb.ie at time of submission.

Q: Can Early Career Researchers be Lead Applicants?

A: This call specifically encourages the inclusion of Early Career Researchers (ECRs) as Lead Applicants. There are different eligibility criteria for ECRs with respect to the nature of their employment contract, salary supports, qualifications and track record of the applicant. See the HRB call webpage for specific information for Independent and Early Career Researchers as Lead Applicant/Principal Investigator.

Q: Can multiple Lead Applicants from Ireland apply?

A: Yes. More than one applicant from Ireland can apply once the consortium eligibility criteria are met. If the two applicants are at separate Institutions, they must apply as separate partners.

Q: Are Host Institutions in Northern Ireland able to participate?

A: This call is not open for HRB Host Institutions in Northern Ireland. Applicants based in these institutions should instead apply for funding from the MRC (UK).

Q: What types of organisations can participate?

A: HRB can only fund approved Host Institutions (with the exception of Host Institutions based in Northern Ireland as noted above). Other organisations in Ireland can only be included as non-funded partners, not being able to receive any HRB funding.

HRB cannot provide funding to Enterprise organisations as partners or collaborators. Organisations providing specific services for the project can be paid by the Host Institution via sub-contracting costs. Any procurement activities should adhere to national and EC procurement guidelines.

Q: May project participants be included in more than one application to this call?

A: Each applicant can submit more than one proposal but can only one be a coordinator on one.

Budget preparation

Q: Does the contribution from HRB include pension costs and overheads?

A: The maximum HRB funding of €430,000, or €530,000 for coordinators, must include pension costs and overheads. Note that there is a maximum of €330,000 and €400,000 direct costs (excludes overheads) respectively.

Q: What is the overhead rate on an award successfully funded through this scheme?

A: The overhead payment is 25% of Total Direct Modified Costs (TDMC) for desk-based research and 30% for lab-based research. TDMC excludes student fees, equipment, sub-contracting and capital building costs. The rate (25% or 30%) should be selected based on the primary activity of the project and applied at a flat rate across the project. Please see HRB Policy Usage of Research Overheads.

Q: What does the additional funding for coordinators cover?

A: Consortium coordinators may request this funding. It will cover activities specifically incurred due to consortium coordination activity. This will not cover research-related costs (excludes equipment and consumables) but could cover costs such as salaries, travel and administration related to coordination, as well as associated overheads.

These costs should be clearly marked or explained in the budget submitted to HRB so that HRB staff can confirm that the additional funds are being attributed to coordination activities.

Q: Where two partners from different institutions in a single consortium are applying for HRB funds, is a separate budget required for each partner?

A: For the application form, each partner must enter their associated budget.

At full proposal stage HRB request a supplementary, detailed budget (see Submission FAQs below) – as HRB will contract with only one partner,[4] we will need a single combined budget from that partner. This should clearly delineate each partner's associated costs and must be reviewed and approved by the relevant Host Institutions. The combined budget total must be within the maximum amount (including overheads) of €430,000 or €530,000 where one of the partners is the coordinator.

Q: Can costs be divided across partners in different countries?

[4] This must be the coordinator if an Irish coordinator exists. For administrative purposes, the second partner will be recorded in HRB systems as a Co-Applicant.

A: If a particular cost is incurred at a consortium level – e.g., data management costs – HRB can cover a portion of these costs for the Irish partner(s). Please note that these costs should be divided proportionally across partners according to their relative need – i.e., the division should align with the proposed workplan and deliverables rather than being disproportionately allocated to the Irish partner if, for example, they have more available budget.

Submission

Q: Is additional documentation required by the HRB at application stage?

A: There are three cases where additional documentation is required:

- New applicants to HRB's Joint Transnational Calls must demonstrate that they meet the eligibility criteria by completing the Lead Applicant eligibility form by the submission deadline. This does not apply to previous applicants to JTCs.
- For researchers in Adjunct or contract positions, a letter must be provided from the HI which endorses the application. For details, please see the corresponding question relating to the Lead Applicant in the Eligibility section above.
- At full proposal submission participants from institutions in Ireland will be asked to submit supplementary budgetary information to the HRB, which will justify the HRB funds requested. In addition applicants will be requested to clarify the specific deliverables for the partner from Ireland, including their role in the development of a Data Management Plan.

  This will expedite contract negotiations with the HRB and monitoring of the award in the case of successful consortia with applicants from Ireland.

  A template requesting this further information will be provided by the HRB after invitation for submission of full proposals.

Assessment and Decision-making

Q: Since prioritisation will be assessed internationally and multiple funders are involved in each project, how are decisions made?

A: Projects are ranked by the peer review panel and placed in groups. The funders then use the ranking list to make decisions on funding as follows.

- The project must be considered of sufficient quality to be funded. This cut-off is set by the peer review panel and availability of funds is not considered in making this assessment. However, the panel endeavours to recommend a sufficient number projects so that funders can maximise the use of available funds and, therefore, the number of proposals funded – this means that more projects will be recommended than there will be funds available.
- Projects in the highest ranked group are prioritised for funding first and funders cannot move to a lower group until all projects in the group(s) above are funded.

- All relevant funders must have sufficient budget remaining to cover all consortium partners. Funders will seek to find mechanisms through which to fill gaps and maximise the number of projects funded.

  When funds are depleted, no further projects can be funded, irrespective of whether they have been deemed of sufficient quality to be funded.

Post-award

Q: Where will intellectual property generated by the project reside?

A: The management of Intellectual Property (IP) is the responsibility of the Host Institution in line with the National IP protocol. If more than one research body is involved, a joint IP agreement should be in place between the relevant institutions. In the absence of a joint agreement, the management of any IP remains the responsibility of the host institution.

Q: Do I have to submit a Data Management Plan to the HRB if I am not the coordinator?

A: As per the HRB policy on Management and Sharing of Research Data, the HRB requests a Data Management Plan (DMP) for all HRB awards. The DMP developed by the consortium can be used, once there is sufficient detail on how the data will be shared/managed etc. for the partner based in Ireland.

Q: What reports are required?

A: In addition to consortium reporting requirements (as stated in the main call text)**,** the HRB will request reports (e.g., annual reports) from Principle Investigators based in Ireland.