This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 964264

TRANSCAN
Sustained collaboration of national and regional programmes in cancer research

Joint Transnational Call for Proposals 2024 (JTC 2024)

"Combination therapies against cancer: new opportunities for translational research"

Call Text

This call text was last updated on 17 May 2024.

Submission deadlines

Pre-proposals: 05 July 2024 at 12:00 CEST

Full proposals: 29 November 2024 at 12:00 CET

Electronic proposal submission system: https://ptoutline.eu/app/transcan2024
(Online submission will be possible from 26 April 2024)

For further information, please visit https://www.transcan.eu/
or

contact the **Joint Call Secretariat (JCS)** at:

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1. MOTIVATION

Over the years, the discovery of new-targeted drugs has helped to improve the lives of cancer patients, however the emergence of drug resistance in cancer requires the exploration of strategies to improve their efficacy. Cancer can be a highly complex disease in which cellular and molecular patterns as well as environmental features generate heterogeneous sensitivity to the different therapeutic modalities. In this scenario, there are three key reasons to develop combination therapies: to make treatment more effective by targeting several weaknesses together, to reduce side effects of individual drugs, and to reduce the risk of drug resistance emergence. Such combination strategies can associate two or more drugs or different types of therapy such as targeted therapies, immunotherapy, chemotherapy and radiotherapy. Given the number of currently developed anticancer therapies, there is a huge number of potential combinations, indicating a crucial need for a medical and biological rationale that dictates a proposed association and preclinical assays to explore various ways of combining two or more therapeutic approaches. In addition to low and high throughput drug screening approaches using cell lines or patient cells, several patient-derived tests have been developed along the years, initially involving immunocompromised animals (patient-derived xenografts) and secondarily reproducing tumours *ex vivo* (organoids, organ-in-chips), to be used as patient avatars to test the efficacy of developed combinations in an appropriate time frame and detect their ability to escape therapeutic resistance. There is a need to further introduce therapy combination in clinical practice, based on carefully conducted preclinical studies. The goal of this call is precisely to fill this gap by funding research projects with high translational relevance. Against this background, the TRANSCAN-3 partners have agreed to focus their Joint Transnational Call for proposals (JTC 2024) on:

"Translational research for new combination therapies against cancer: new opportunities for translational research"

with the aim of promoting highly innovative and ambitious collaborative projects in translational cancer research at European and international level.

The expected impact of the call is to improve the efficacy of personalized treatment of cancer patients through the development of new combinatorial treatment strategies, based on a better understanding of drug mechanistic functions and of their impact on the disease course.

The following national/regional funding organisations have agreed to participate in the JTC 2024:

- Austrian Science Fund (FWF), Austria.
- Fund for Scientific Research - FNRS (F.R.S.-FNRS), Belgium, French speaking community.
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), Canada.
- ARC French Foundation for Cancer Research (ARC Foundation), France.
- French National Cancer Institute (INCa), France.
- Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), Germany.
- National Research, Development and Innovation Office (NKFIH), Hungary.
- Ministry of Health (IT-MOH), Italy.
- Tuscany Region (TuscReg), Tuscany, Italy.

- Fondazione Regionale per la Ricerca Biomedica (FRRB), Lombardy, Italy
- Latvian Council of Science (LCS), Latvia.
- National Research Fund (FNR), Luxembourg.
- Norwegian Cancer Society (NCS), Norway.
- Research Council of Norway (RCN), Norway.
- National Centre for Research and Development (NCBR), Poland.
- Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI), Romania.
- Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS), Slovakia.
- National Institute of Health Carlos III (ISCIII), Spain.
- The Scientific Foundation of the Spanish Association Against Cancer (FCAECC), Spain.
- National Science and Technology Council (NSTC), Taiwan.
- The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye (TÜBITAK), Türkiye.

2. AIM OF THE CALL

Based on the considerations mentioned in the previous section, the call of TRANSCAN-3 (JTC 2024) focuses on: **"Translational research for new combination therapies against cancer: new opportunities for translational research".**

Despite advances in targeted therapies, immunotherapies, or radiotherapy, different obstacles, and challenges remain to be solved. Current limitations of in vitro personalized systems allowing a fast and reliable testing, new platforms to achieve combination therapy screening, new methods to achieve synergism in combination therapy and new combinations of radiotherapy with drugs or immunotherapy, remain, slowing down further applications of combination therapy in the clinic. Thus, there is a need for the identification of new and fast strategies to assay for individualized combination therapies that may help in the clinic to overcome tumour resistance and improve clinical outcomes avoiding undesired side effects. This topic should evolve from the laboratory to favour the clinical implementation of the strategies from the bench to the bedside.

The main purpose of this call will be design of patient preclinical models for combination therapies. Translational research using tumour samples collected from retrospective and/or prospective cohorts of patients.

Proposals will have to cover only one of the three specific aims listed below. Approaches should be directed to obtain a portfolio of renewed methods for new efficacious combination therapy strategies. Projects should be built from a solid and established hypothesis and should be relevant regarding the potential improvements in clinical practice.

Aim 1. Development of new tumour derived models to test new drug combination therapies.

Isolation and characterization of tumour cells/tumour-infiltrating immune/stromal cells for in vitro studies (3D culture systems; patient-derived organoids; PDX-derived primary cultures). These models should be a suitable

tool to test new drug combinations or genetic perturbations to demonstrate the feasibility and applicability in terms of reproducibility and testing time (the faster the better) to this aim.

Aim 2. Design and development of high-throughput drug combination screening platforms to test new combination therapies.

This aim should include and comprise in the platform design to test combination therapies: primary cell cultures derived from patients, should be able to give rapid assessment of novel drugs, drug combinations or with radiotherapy combination at the individual patient level, combine genomic information, computational tools to predict drug responses for individual cancer patients. Protocols for dose response matrix drug combination assays, as well as computational tools to facilitate the plate design and synergy modelling, development of tailored software tools for high-throughput drug combination scoring.

Aim 3. Use of immunotherapy and radiotherapy combinations strategies to overcome drug resistance.

Radiotherapy can provoke a systemic immune response (due to abscopal effect) which gives a strong rationale for the combination of radio and immunotherapy. This aim should explore synergistic effect of radiation (including hypofractionated RT, multi-site radiation, low-dose radiation, new radiation technologies such as FLASH RT, proton RT), with checkpoint inhibitors, characterize the effect on the immune cells including the molecular mechanism and possible immune response biomarkers.

The following type of research projects is excluded from the call:

-Phase II clinical trials.

Capacity and capability building activities

Translational research has the ambition to remove barriers to multidisciplinary and multi-professional collaboration. It is envisioned that clinicians, researchers and the operational staff from various sectors (academia, industry, regulatory bodies) will effectively work together to expedite the translation of scientific discoveries to clinical application and to more rapidly fuel research directions with observational or clinical findings. In fact, the complexity of the process requires, at the individual and collective levels, the creation of translational medicine research interfaces/infrastructures. To reach that goal, TRANSCAN-3 supports capacity building activities to promote the formation and upgrading of multidisciplinary teams in an integrated process: i) exchange/mobility of individual researchers/professionals in order to bring new expertise to an existing multidisciplinary translational team; and/or ii) recruitment of individual researchers/professionals by a translational research team in order to cover expertise and "know-how" unavailable in the existing team. These types of activities, when present, will be supported within the projects, which will be selected for funding under TRANSCAN-3 JTC 2024.

Thus, applicants may add an additional part to cover these activities (eventually with an associated separate budget, in compliance with the rules of the respective national/regional funding organisations). Capacity building activities have to be fully coherent with the objectives of the research project, and aimed at strengthening the ability of participating team(s) to perform the work detailed in the project plan as well as to improve, in the long term, the quality and potential of the translational research performed by the team(s).

Depending on the project these activities could be (the following examples are indicative only, and neither exhaustive nor prescriptive): 1) exchanges/mobility of investigators (especially young investigators) between teams and countries participating in the project, 2) short term training of scientists, operational staff, etc., 3) training through technical workshops dedicated to relevant aspects of the scientific work planned in the project, 4) short training (one or few weeks) of several partner teams by one expert, etc. Activities related to the dissemination of results such as hosting a symposium, conferences etc. are out of the scope of this capacity building activities component.

3. APPLICATION: Eligibility criteria

Joint transnational research proposals may be submitted by applicants belonging to one of the following categories depending on national/regional eligibility rules as specified in Annex 3:

- Academic research groups (from universities or other higher education or research institutions).
- Clinical/public health sector research groups (from hospitals/public health and/or other health care settings and health organisations).
- Enterprise's research groups (depending on national/regional eligibility rules), with particular emphasis on small and medium-sized enterprises.

The applicants are subject to eligibility criteria of national/regional funding organisations (see "Guidelines for applicants") and are advised to contact their respective national/regional contact points (see Annex 1).

Please note that non-compliance with the eligibility rules detailed below will lead to the rejection of the entire proposal without further review.

- Only transnational projects will be funded.
- Applications will be submitted by the coordinator. The coordinator and each of the individual project partners (representing research groups) will be funded by the funding organisation from their country/region that is participating in the TRANSCAN-3 JTC 2024, and are therefore subject to national/regional eligibility rules.
- Each research consortium must involve a **minimum of three (3) and a maximum of six (6) partners (comprising the project coordinator) eligible for funding**, coming **from at least three (3) different countries whose funders participate in the call**.
- Consortium must **not involve more than two (2) research groups from the same country.**
- In order to strengthen the European translational cancer research area, a wide inclusion of research teams from all the countries/regions participating in the call is encouraged, therefore **the maximum number of partners can be increased up to seven (7) if they include one partner from the following participating countries: Hungary, Latvia, Slovakia and Türkiye.**
- **It is mandatory to integrate at least one early-career researcher (ECR) as principal investigator in a consortium and this has to be clearly indicated in the proposal**. For the TRANSCAN-3 definition of ECR, please consult Section 3.1. Individual regional/national funding regulations might apply (see also

ANNEX 1 of the "Guidelines for Applicants").

- The maximum number of partners may also be increased to seven (7) in the full proposal stage as a consequence of the widening process aimed at including one team from underrepresented countries/regions, as detailed in Section 10.
- Each consortium is represented by a coordinator responsible for the scientific management (such as controlling, reporting, intellectual property rights issues, etc.) and for all the communications with the JCS.
- Partners not eligible for funding by one of the organisations participating in the JTC2024 (e.g. from non-funding countries or not fundable according to the regional/national regulations of the participating funding organisations) may participate in projects provided that they demonstrate, with the full-proposal submission (written confirmation), that their economic and human resources have already been secured and will be available at the start of the project. No more than one partner with its own funding is allowed in consortia with at least three partners eligible for funding. Partners with their own funding must be comprised in the maximum number of six partners.
- Applicants should refer to the annexes of the document "Guidelines for Applicants" containing all the specific national/regional eligibility criteria and should contact their respective national/regional funding organisation contact points for additional clarification (see Annex 1. Contact information of the national/regional funding organisations).
- Please note that an eligibility check before the pre-proposal submission is mandatory for:
    - Ministry of Health (IT-MOH), Italy;
    - Fondazione Regionale per la Ricerca Biomedica (FRRB), Lombardy, Italy;
    - Tuscany Region (TuscReg), Italy;
    - National Institute of Health Carlos III (ISCIII) and The Scientific Foundation of the Spanish Association Against Cancer (FCAECC), Spain;
    - The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye (TÜBITAK), Türkiye (Applicants from Türkiye should apply to the TÜBITAK 1071 Programme via https://uidb-pbs.tubitak.gov.tr/ in parallel to the 1st stage submission).

Each consortium must involve at least one basic or pre-clinical research team and one clinical team. It is also recommended to include an expert team in methodology, biostatistics or bioinformatics, depending on the type of work planned. The consortium may also involve other teams with specialised skills and know-how (biobanks, model systems, technological platforms, etc.) or expertise (epidemiology and molecular epidemiology, early phase clinical trials, public health, ELSI, etc.). The consortium should have sufficient critical mass to achieve ambitious scientific, technological and medical goals and, along with the particular contribution of each research team, should clearly demonstrate its transnational added value. The translational nature of the research results is the key goal of TRANSCAN-3, therefore the consortium should also clearly demonstrate a knowledge transfer towards clinical, public health and/or industrial applications.

The duration of the projects shall not exceed three (3) years.

In case of interest in finding partners to the consortium, it is recommended to use the Partner Search Tool - Partfinder, provided by the National Centre for Research and Development (NCBR) on the website https://partfinder.ncbr.gov.pl. The usage of the aforementioned tool is voluntary and free of charge.[1]

3.1 DEFINITION OF EARLY CAREER RESEARCHER/SCIENTIST

Early career researchers/scientists must have been awarded their first PhD/MD or equivalent doctoral degree, at least 2 and up to 10 years prior to the proposal submission deadline (5 July 2024) of the TRANSCAN-3 JTC2024. Extensions to this period may be allowed in the event of eligible career breaks, which must be properly documented and could be subject of verification by the respective regional/national funding organisation. However, there is **no need** to attach additional documentation when submitting the project proposal. Eligible career breaks are:

- For maternity: the eligible cumulative period since the award of the first PhD/MD will be extended by 18 months for each child born after the PhD/MD award;
- For paternity: the eligible cumulative period since the award of the first PhD/MD will be extended by the actual amount of paternity leave taken for each child born after the PhD/MD award;
- For long-term illness (over ninety days), clinical qualification or national service, the eligible cumulative period since the award of the first PhD/MD will be extended by the documented amount of leave taken for each event, which occurred after the PhD/MD award.

Eligible events that take place within the extension of the eligibility window may lead to further extensions. However, the cumulative eligibility period should not, under any circumstances, exceed 11 years and 6 months following the award of the first PhD/MD. No allowance will be made for principal investigators working part-time.

Please refer to the regional/national guidelines for details and eligibility criteria (see Annex 1 in "Guidelines for Applicants").

Please note that, in some countries, MD may not be equivalent to a PhD but equivalent to Bachelor of Medicine or Bachelor of Surgery. Hence, TRANSCAN will only accept those ECRs with a Doctoral or equivalent level, which is designed primarily to lead to an **advanced research qualification**. For further details, see the UNESCO International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) (page 59): https://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/international-standard-classification-of-education-isced-2011-en.pdf

4. TIMELINE of the CALL

27 March 2024	**Publication of the call pre-announcement**
26 April 2024 at 16:00 (CEST)	**Opening of the on-line submission system for pre-**

[1] All terms and conditions related to Partfinder are available here: https://partfinder.ncbr.gov.pl/portal/regulations.html

	proposals
05 July 2024 at 12:00 (CEST)	**Deadline for pre-proposal submission**
18 October 2024	**Communication of the results of the pre-proposal assessment and invitation for full-proposal stage**
18 November 2024	**Opening of the submission system for full proposals**
29 November 2024 at 12:00 (CET)	**Deadline for full-proposal submission**
Expected for May 2025	**Communication of the funding decisions to the applicants**
September 2025	**Expected project start (also subject to regional/national procedures)**

5. SUBMISSION OF JOINT PROPOSALS

TRANSCAN-3 JTC 2024 will be implemented through a two-stage submission procedure: pre-proposals and full proposals. Both pre- and full proposals must be written in English and submitted to the JCS by the coordinator through the PT-Outline Electronic Submission System exclusively.

In preparing the proposals, applicants must strictly follow the rules described in this call text and in the document entitled "Guidelines for Applicants", and use the application forms available on the TRANSCAN website (https://www.transcan.eu/) and on the electronic submission system. Applicants should take note of individual national/regional rules, and contact their national/regional contact points for specific questions.

The pre-proposals must be submitted to the electronic submission system no later than the **05th July 2024, at 12:00 (Central European Summer Time, CEST)**. Please note that in addition the submission of the proposal via the central online submission system, a submission of documents on the national level might be necessary. Please refer to the respective section in the "Guidelines for Applicants". The information relating to the selected pre-proposal will be communicated to the coordinators around the 18th October 2024.

The information provided in the pre-proposal application is binding for the entire application process. Thus, any substantial changes between the pre-proposal and the full proposal (e.g. composition of the consortia, objectives of the project, etc.) must be communicated in advance to the JCS with detailed justification and will only be allowed by the CSC under exceptional circumstances.

The invited full proposals will have to be submitted to the electronic submission system not later than the **29th November 2024 at 12:00 (Central European Time, CET)**. Please note that full proposals will only be accepted from applicants explicitly invited by the JCS to submit.

The decision on the results of the full proposal evaluation meeting will be communicated to all (successful and unsuccessful) coordinators by May 2025. Coordinators will receive a summary of the full proposal evaluation conclusions in due time.

6. CALL IMPLEMENTATION BOARDS

The Call Steering Committee (CSC) and the Scientific Evaluation Committee (SEC) will manage the evaluation procedure of pre-proposals and full proposals and the final selection of research projects, with the support of the Joint Call Secretariat (JCS).

The CSC is composed of one single representative from each national/regional funding organisation participating in TRANSCAN-3 JTC 2024. The CSC will supervise the preparation and the implementation of the call and will take all decisions concerning the call. Based on the ranking list established by the SEC, the CSC will take the final decision on the proposals to be funded. Members of the CSC are not allowed to submit proposals to this call.

The SEC is a panel of internationally recognised scientific experts in charge of the evaluation of submitted pre- and full proposals. In the second step of evaluation, additional experts chosen for their knowledge in specific fields covered by the proposals may also be invited to join the SEC. The selection of reviewers will not be restricted to countries participating in TRANSCAN-3, on the contrary international membership will be actively sought. A balance of gender and national representation will also be sought. Reviewers do not represent the funding organisations and are appointed for their own scientific expertise; their evaluations must be based on the evaluation criteria for this call. Reviewers are not allowed to submit or participate in proposals within this call and must sign declarations on conflict of interest and confidentiality.

7. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Pre-proposals and full proposals will be assessed according to following criteria.

1. Excellence

a. Scientific quality of the proposal: soundness of the rationale including transdisciplinary considerations, clarity of the objectives, expected progress beyond the state-of-the-art, international competitiveness.

b. Relevance of the project regarding the topic and the overall objective (translational cancer research) of the call; availability and quality of preliminary data.

2. Impact

a. Potential impact with reference to the development, dissemination and use of project results: potential impact of the expected results on cancer control, in terms of translation into public health or clinical practices (enhancing innovation capacity and integration of new knowledge) and/or into pharmaceutical/industrial applications; appropriateness of measures for the dissemination and/or exploitation of project results including socio-economic aspects and anticipation of intellectual property issues (patenting, industrial exploitation, marketing, etc.).

b. Impact with reference to strengthening the translational capacity building activities:
This sub-criterion will be assessed at the level of the full proposal only and solely for the scientific proposals recommended for funding.

The assessment of the capacity building component and associated budget will be performed under this sub-criterion after the scientific assessment of the proposal: hence, a proposal could be recommended for funding without the part related to capacity building activities if this part is evaluated as "poor".

The assessment under this sub-criterion will be performed independently using the following:
- Content: relevance and coherence of the capacity building activities with the proposal objectives.
- Candidate: background (scientific, medical, etc.), coherence with the CV, scientific production.
- Host team: expertise of the host team in the field, research qualification of the responsible person.

3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation

a. Coherence and effectiveness of the work plan: appropriateness and feasibility of the methodology (including clinical trials if applicable) and associated technologies used, with particular regard to the study design, the study population(s), study endpoints.

b. Statistical/bio-statistical aspects and power calculation (including clinical trials if applicable): study design; sampling calculations; appropriateness and robustness of statistical analyses: adequateness of endpoints.

c. Quality of the transnational research consortium: experience of the research partners in the field(s) of the proposal (for young teams: appropriateness of their current work and training of their members); quality of the collaboration between the research teams and added value of the research consortium as a whole.

d. Appropriateness of the management structures and procedures, including risk and innovation management.

e. Appropriateness of the allocation of tasks and resources to be committed (personnel, equipment, etc.) and of the estimated budget.

f. Compliance with ethical rules and regulatory aspects.

8. SCORING

Range and interpretation of the scores

A scoring system from 0 to 5 will be used to evaluate the proposal performance with respect to each evaluation criteria, as follows:

0 – Failure. Proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.

1 – Poor. The criterion is inadequately addressed or there are serious inherent weaknesses.

2 – Fair. The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.

3 – Good. The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.

4 – Very good. The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.

5 – Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings

are minor.

The maximum total score for the three evaluation criteria is 15.

Thresholds and weighting

The threshold for individual criteria is 3. The overall threshold, applying to the sum of the individual scores, is 10.

To determine the ranking, in case of equal score, the "impact" score will be considered first, then the score for "excellence" and finally that for "quality and efficiency of the implementation".

9. ELIGIBILITY CHECK OF PRE-PROPOSALS AND FIRST STEP OF EVALUATION

Eligibility check

The JCS will examine all pre-proposals to ensure that they meet the call's formal criteria (date of submission, number of participating countries/regions and groups, inclusion of all necessary information in English, adherence to the application forms, document length). The JCS will forward the pre-proposals to the national/regional funding organisations, which will perform a formal check of compliance with their respective regulations.

After completion of the eligibility check, the CSC will make the final decision; pre-proposals that are not considered eligible will be rejected without further review. Coordinators of non-eligible pre-proposals will be informed by the JCS accordingly.

Evaluation of pre-proposals

Eligible pre-proposals will be reviewed by the SEC panel.

All necessary steps will be taken by the JCS and the CSC to ensure that SEC members have no conflict of interest for those proposals that they are asked to review. SEC members will be required to formally declare that no conflict of interest exists at any time of their evaluation duty and will sign a confidentiality agreement concerning all documents and the entire process.

Each pre-proposal will be allocated to at least two (2) SEC members (one of whom will act as rapporteur). The SEC will meet, discuss the pre-proposals and establish a ranking list in accordance with each pre-proposal respective merit. Then, the CSC will decide, based on SEC recommendations and budget considerations, how many pre-proposals will be invited to the full proposal stage. The JCS will communicate to each project coordinator the final decision with respect to their own application. Successful applicants will be invited by the JCS to submit a full proposal.

Coordinators of successful pre-proposals might also receive information related to a widening process for the involvement of researchers from underrepresented countries in their own proposal, according to the procedure described below.

10. PROCESS FOR THE INVOLVEMENT OF UNDERREPRESENTED COUNTRIES

For pre-proposals invited to the full proposal stage, a widening process might be implemented to maximise the involvement of underrepresented countries (i.e. countries that will likely not spend their earmarked budget), by providing the opportunity to add a partner from one of those countries to the consortium. Any new inclusion must bring added value and expertise to the project, which overall should not change significantly.

The widening process will be subject to the following conditions:

- Only one team from an underrepresented country may join a consortium;
- Funding of the new partner must be provided by the respective funding organisation (i.e. the new partner must be able to independently finance their own work package/tasks);
- The work plan of proposals which have already been evaluated must not be changed (i.e. new work packages or tasks should be added and existing work packages must not be modified);
- The addition of partners must be in compliance with the respective national funding rules of involved funding organisations;
- The maximum number of participating partners can increase to seven, in the case that one team from an underrepresented country/region joins a consortium composed of six members.

After pre-proposal evaluation, the CSC will decide on the final list of underrepresented countries for this step, which will be published in the TRANSCAN-3 website. To support the process, coordinators of successful pre-proposals will be informed about the possibility to benefit from inclusion of one team from an underrepresented country in their consortium and will receive the list of the funding organisations that adhere to the process. Coordinators willing to incorporate a new partner in their consortium will get in contact with the national contact person of the funding organisation concerned in order to:

1. share a summary of their project to disseminate it to the most suitable research groups in the concerned country/region;
2. receive contacts and details of expertise of research groups that are interested in participating.

Inclusion of a new partner must be justified on a scientific basis and must provide added value for the consortium as a whole. The widening process will occur on a voluntary basis: inclusion of a research group from an underrepresented country is not mandatory and has no influence on the final assessment, which will be on the basis of pure scientific merit.

11. ELIGIBILITY CHECK OF FULL PROPOSALS AND SECOND STEP OF EVALUATION

An eligibility check of full proposals will be performed by the JCS to ensure that they meet formal criteria and have not changed substantially from the respective pre-proposals. A full proposal may be excluded from further review, if criteria are not met or if proposal objectives or composition of the consortium deviate substantially from the previously submitted pre-proposal. In any case, major changes must be communicated in advance to

the JCS, which will contact the concerned national/regional funding organisation to discuss the issue; a formal decision on whether such an exceptional change may be justified will be taken by the CSC.

Each full proposal will be allocated to at least three reviewers, possibly including those who had reviewed the corresponding pre-proposal. If necessary, in consideration of the number of proposals and/or the specific scientific field, additional experts will be invited to join the SEC panel. One of the reviewers will be appointed as rapporteur. The reviewers will independently assess full proposals according to the evaluation criteria mentioned above and will deliver their evaluation reports to the JCS (via an electronic evaluation system). All reviewers will be invited to the second SEC meeting and will have access to evaluation reports. During the meeting, each full proposal will be presented by the rapporteur and discussed on the basis of individual evaluation reports so as to reach consensus scoring. As a result of these discussions and as an outcome of the SEC meeting a ranking list of the full proposals recommended for funding will be established.

12. FUNDING DECISION

At the end of the evaluation process, based on the ranking list established by the SEC and on the commitment of available funds, the CSC will establish a final list of the projects to be funded. The JCS will communicate to all project coordinators the final decision along with an evaluation summary report. The final funding decisions are taken by the national funding organisations.

13. FINANCIAL AND LEGAL ISSUES

Funding model and funding details

The TRANSCAN-3 JTC 2024 uses the "virtual common pot" funding model. This means that funding will be made available by each national/regional funding organisation according to their specific regulations, for research groups in their country/region.

The funding rate will vary up according to national/regional rules to a maximum of 100% of the funds requested. Funding is granted for a maximum of three years according to national regulations.

Each project partner (including the project coordinator) will get a separate funding contract/letter of grant according to national/regional regulations from his/her national/regional funding institutions.

As a general rule, no changes to the composition of research consortia or in budget may occur during the contract/letter of grant. Any minor changes will have to be well justified and the relevant funding organisations will decide upon the proper action to be taken. However, in case of major changes, an independent expert may be consulted to help with the final decision of the funding organisations. The research partners shall inform the JCS and the funding bodies of that project of any event that might affect the implementation of the project.

Depending on the time needed for the administration of granting funds to the respective national/regional research groups, individual projects of a research consortium **are expected to start by September 2025.** The official start date shall be communicated by the project coordinator to the JCS and shall appear in the fully signed consortium agreement established in accordance to section below.

Research consortium agreement, ownership of intellectual property rights, ethical issues

It is mandatory for a funded research project consortium to sign a Consortium Agreement (CA), addressing the issues indicated in the document "Guidelines for Applicants", including Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) issues. The research consortium is strongly encouraged to sign this CA before the official project start date. In any case the CA must be signed no later than six (6) months after the official project start date. Upon request, the CA must be made available to the concerned TRANSCAN-3 JTC 2024 funding organisations.

Results and new IPR resulting from projects funded through the TRANSCAN-3 JTC 2024 will be owned by the relevant organisations according to international/national/regional rules on IPR. If several participants have jointly carried out work generating new IPR, they shall agree amongst themselves (CA) as to the allocation of ownership of IPR, taking into account their contributions to the creation of those IPR as well as the European Commission´s guidelines on IPR issues.

The results of the research project and IPR created should be disseminated and made available for use, whether for commercial purposes or not, in order to maximise public benefit.

The TRANSCAN-3 JTC 2024 funding organisations shall have the right to use documents, information and results submitted by the research partners and/or to use the information and results for their own purposes, provided that the owners´ rights are kept.

Any ethical issues, arising for instance if a research project includes a study on patients, should be addressed at the proposal submission stage, and subsequent authorisation presented at the latest, upon request by the national/regional funding organisations, before the process of grant negotiation.

Confidentiality of proposals

Proposals and any relating information shall be kept confidential by the SEC members, the external reviewers and the CSC members. Proposals shall not be used for any purpose other than the evaluation and subsequent monitoring of the funded projects.

Full proposals will be required to include a publishable summary, which will clearly identify the main goals of the project. If a proposal is funded, this information will be published on the TRANSCAN website. All other project details shall remain strictly confidential.

14. REPORTING AND DISSEMINATION

Each coordinator of a funded project, on behalf of all the project partners, must submit annual scientific progress reports (within 2 months after the end of a calendar year), and a final scientific report (within 3 months after the end of the project) to the JCS.

In addition to these centrally-administered TRANSCAN-3 reports, principal investigators may be asked to submit financial and/or scientific reports to their national/regional funding organisations. Each individual contract/letter of grant will be monitored by the respective national/regional funding organisations.

In case of serious difficulties in the conduct of the research project, the coordinator shall promptly inform the

JCS and the relevant funding organisations. These funding organisations will decide upon the proper actions to be taken.

Funding recipients must ensure that all results (publications, etc.) arising from the project include a proper acknowledgement that the project is collectively supported by the national funding organisations under the framework of the ERA-NET TRANSCAN-3 initiative. The coordinators and/or principal investigators may be asked to present the results of their projects at a TRANSCAN-3 symposium. Travel expenses to attend this event should be included in the budget.

15. GENDER EQUALITY

TRANSCAN-3 strives to promote gender equality in scientific research, by facilitating the participation of women scientists and integrating the gender dimension into the research design of the projects.

Integrating the gender dimension in research and innovation is an added value in terms of excellence, creativity, and business opportunities. It helps researchers improve the overall quality of research design, hypotheses, protocols and outputs in an ample variety of fields. It does not only allow to address gender bias and to build more evidence-based and robust research, but also contributes to pluri-disciplinarity. As science and innovation are increasingly framed as working for/with society, reflecting the diversity of final users from the early research stage has become a must.

TRANSCAN-3 encourages applicants to explore whether and how the gender dimension is relevant to their research.

When drafting the proposal, applicants will need to pay attention to gender equality from different angles, in terms of:

1. Human resources: balance between women and men in the research teams who will implement the project

2. Content: analysing and taking into account the possible differences between men and women, boys and girls, or males and females, in the research design of the project.

16. CONTACT AND FURTHER INFORMATION

The JCS is set up at the **National Institute of Health Carlos III (ISCIII), Spain.** The JCS will assist the CSC during the implementation of the JTC2024 as well as during the monitoring phase (until 3 months after the funded research projects have ended). The JCS will be responsible for the central management of the evaluation procedure. The JCS will be the primary contact referring to the TRANSCAN-3 JTC2024 procedures between the project coordinators, the funding organisations (CSC) and the peer reviewers (SEC members).

Before submitting a proposal, it is strongly advised to contact the national/regional funding organisations for any questions regarding the JTC2024 (see Annex 1).

ANNEX 1. CONTACT INFORMATION OF THE NATIONAL/REGIONAL FUNDING ORGANISATIONS

Country/Region	Funding Organisation	Contact
Austria	Austrian Science Fund (FWF)	Herbert Mayer Herbert.Mayer@fwf.ac.at Kathrina Proschinger Kathrina.Proschinger@fwf.ac.at
Belgium, French speaking community	Fund for Scientific Research - FNRS (F.R.S.-FNRS)	Joël Groeneveld joel.groeneveld@frs-fnrs.be Tel : +32 2504 9270 international@frs-fnrs.be
Canada	Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)	Emma Ito cihr.icr@uhn.ca CIHR Contact Centre support-soutien@cihr-irsc.gc.ca
France	ARC French Foundation for Cancer Research (ARC Foundation)	Charlotte Audoynaud Tel: +33 (0)1 45 59 58 45 preti@fondation-arc.org
France	French National Cancer Institute (INCa)	Charlotte Gudewicz cgudewicz@institutcancer.fr
Germany	Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)	Sebastian Hückesfeld Sebastian.hueckesfeld@dlr.de
Hungary	National Research, Development and Innovation Office (NKFIH)	Klára Horváth klara.horvath@nkfih.gov.hu
Italy	Ministry of Health (IT-MOH)	Chiara Ciccarelli c.ciccarelli@sanita.it Francesca TURCO f.turco@sanita.it
Italy, Tuscany	Tuscany Region (TuscReg)	Donatella Tanini Tel: +39 055 4383256

		Teresa Vieri Tel. +39 055 4383289 transcan3@regione.toscana.it
Italy, Lombardy	Fondazione Regionale per la Ricerca Biomedica (FRRB)	Giulia Rossignolo, Tel.: +39 0267650159 Erica Torti, Tel.: +39 0267650174 progetti@frrb.it
Latvia	Latvian Council of Science (LCS)	Maija BUNDULE maija.bundule@lzp.gov.lv Tel: +371 26514481 Uldis BERKIS uldis.berkis@lzp.gov.lv Tel: +371 29472349
Luxembourg	National Research Found (FNR)	Sean Sapcariu sean.sapcariu@fnr.lu Gideon Giesselmann gideon.giesselmann@fnr.lu
Norway	Norwegian Cancer Society (NCS) Research Council of Norway (RCN)	Tine Thorbjørnsen tth@rcn.no
Poland	National Centre for Research and Development (NCBR)	Paulina Puchalska paulina.puchalska@ncbr.gov.pl Hanna Sroczyńska hanna.sroczynska@ncbr.gov.pl
Romania	Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI)	Mihaela Manole mihaela.manole@uefiscdi.ro Tel: +4 021 30 23 863
Slovakia	Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS)	Katarina Bibova bibova@up.upsav.sk Martin Novak mnovak@up.upsav.sk
Spain	National Institute of	Mauricio Garcia Franco

	Health Carlos III (ISCIII)	mauriciog@isciii.es Tel: +34 918222885 Cándida Sánchez-Barco cbarco@isciii.es Tel: +34 918222063
Spain	The Scientific Foundation of the Spanish Association Against Cancer (FCAECC)	Estela Cepeda estela.cepeda@contraelcancer.es
Taiwan	National Science and Technology Council (NSTC)	Ching-Mei Tang cmtom@nstc.gov.tw Tel: +886-2-2737-7557
Türkiye	The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye (TÜBITAK)	Selcan TÜRKER selcan.turker@tubitak.gov.tr

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ANNEX 2. INDICATIVE FUNDING COMMITMENT OF THE FUNDING ORGANISATIONS PARTICIPATING IN TRANSCAN-3 JTC2024

Country/Region	Funding Organisation	Envisioned amount of funding (M€ for 3 years)	Anticipated number of fundable research groups
Austria	Austrian Science Fund (FWF)	1.2	4 projects (research groups)
Belgium, French speaking community	Fund for Scientific Research - FNRS (F.R.S.-FNRS)	0.2	1
Canada	Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)	$900,000 CAD	Support Canadian component of 2 research groups
France	ARC French Foundation for Cancer Research (ARC Foundation)	0.7	1-3
France	French National Cancer Institute (INCa)	1.5	5-10
Germany	Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)	3	10-12 (max. 300.000 € / project)
Hungary	National Research, Development and Innovation Office (NKFIH)	0.3	1-2
Italy	Ministry of Health (IT-MOH)	2.4	6 (max. 400.000 € / project)
Italy, Tuscany	Tuscany Region (TuscReg)	0.3	1-2
Italy, Lombardy	Fondazione Regionale per la Ricerca Biomedica (FRRB)	2.0	4-5
Latvia	Latvian Council of Science (LCS)	0.6	2
Luxembourg	National Research Fund (FNR)	0.3	1

Norway	Norwegian Cancer Society (NCS)	0.5	2-4
	Research Council of Norway (RCN)	0.5	
Poland	National Centre for Research and Development (NCBR)	0.9	3-4
Romania	Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI)	0.3	1-2
Slovakia	Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS)	0.12	1
Spain	National Institute of Health Carlos III (ISCIII)	2	4-6
Spain	The Scientific Foundation of the Spanish Association Against Cancer (FCAECC)	1	4-6
Taiwan	National Science and Technology Council (NSTC)	0.81	2-3
Türkiye	The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye (TÜBITAK)	0.5	3

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ANNEX 3. ELIGIBILITY OF BENEFICIARY INSTITUTIONS FOR THE FUNDING ORGANISATIONS PARTICIPATING IN TRANSCAN-3 JTC2024

Country/ Region	**Funding Organisation**	**Eligible beneficiary institution** [1]		
		Academia	**Clinical/ Public Health**	**Enterprise**
Austria	Austrian Science Fund (FWF)	Yes [2]	Yes [2]	Yes [2]
Belgium, French speaking community	Fund for Scientific Research - FNRS (F.R.S.-FNRS)	Yes	No (except Sciensano)	No
Canada	Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)	Yes (according to national eligibility criteria)	Yes (according to national eligibility criteria)	No
France	ARC French Foundation for Cancer Research (ARC Foundation)	Yes	Yes	No
France	French National Cancer Institute (INCa)	Yes	Yes	No
Germany	Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hungary	National Research, Development and Innovation Office (NKFIH)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Italy	Ministry of Health (IT-MOH)	No	Yes	No
Italy, Tuscany	Tuscany Region (TuscReg)	Yes (in partnership with Authorities of the Tuscany Health Service SST)	Yes	No

Italy, Lombardy	Fondazione Regionale per la Ricerca Biomedica (FRRB)	Yes (in partnership with IRCCS/ASST/ARE U/ATS), as Partners, not as Coordinators of a Consortium.	Yes	No
Latvia	Latvian Council of Science (LCS)	Yes (must be listed in the Latvian Registry of Scientific Institutions)	Only if listed in the Latvian Registry of Scientific Institutions	Must be listed in the Latvian Commercial Registry, have main activity in Latvia, two-year statements provided, other conditions fulfilled
Luxembourg	National Research Fund (FNR)	Yes	Only if an eligible beneficiary of FNR funding	No
Norway	Norwegian Cancer Society (NCS)	Yes	Yes	Yes (max. 50% of the total budget)
	Research Council of Norway (RCN)	Yes	Yes	Yes (max. 50% of the total budget)
Poland	National Centre for Research and Development (NCBR)	Yes, according to national rules	Yes, according to national rules	Yes, according to national rules
Romania	Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI)	Yes, according to national rules	Yes, according to national rules	Yes, according to national rules
Slovakia	Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS)	Yes	No	No
Spain	National Institute of Health Carlos III (ISCIII)	Yes, only under the conditions	Yes	No

		specified in national rules		
Spain	The Scientific Foundation of the Spanish Association Against Cancer (FCAECC)	Yes, if they are endorsed to Spanish Act 49/2002, of 23rd December	Yes, if they are endorsed to Spanish Act 49/2002, of 23rd December	No
Taiwan	National Science and Technology Council (NSTC)	Yes	Yes	No
Türkiye	The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye (TÜBITAK)	Yes (under the conditions specified in the national rules)	Yes (under the conditions specified in the national rules)	Yes (only research SMEs under the conditions specified in the national rules)

Please note that the information on this table is only indicative. Applicants are strongly advised to contact their national/regional contact points (see Annex 1) for further information.

(1) The eligibility of companies and institutions is subject to different regulations in the participating country/region. **Further details regarding the eligible beneficiaries and other national eligibility criteria and requirements are available on the "Guidelines for Applicants"**

(2) Only beneficiary institutions registered with the FWF are eligible for funding.