

# Europe's neural network

*“What I especially like is the enthusiasm with which the partners develop instruments and strategies to improve the conditions for European neuroscience research and thus for people suffering from brain diseases.”*

Please note that this fact sheet replaces the previous one, known as NEURON and included in Series 1 of this publication.

Neurodegenerative conditions have a profound effect on the quality of life of patients and their family and friends — society pays a heavy emotional and economic price. These diseases affect all European countries, so cooperation between the national neuroscience research programmes is imperative. Thus the aim of the Network of European Funding for Neuroscience Research (NEURON) project, is to link 11 European national research funding programmes and funding activities in the field of disease-related neurosciences. The project is based on the activities of SSA NEURON. The CA NEURON will begin with neurodegenerative conditions, which are among the most pressing problems in the ageing population, and expand its activities into more diverse areas in the field of disease-related neuroscience research.

The dramatic increase in life expectancy in Europe over the past century is arguably one of modern medicine's greatest achievements. Yet, alongside the obvious benefits of longevity, society must now deal with the consequences and costs of people living well into their 70s and 80s. One noticeable trend has been the increasing incidence of neurodegenerative conditions like Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease, which have a major impact on the quality of life of sufferers, friends and families. The World Health Organisation estimates that over 1 billion people suffer from disorders of the central nervous system. The toll taken by these diseases on society is staggering, both emotionally and financially.

## Combined potential

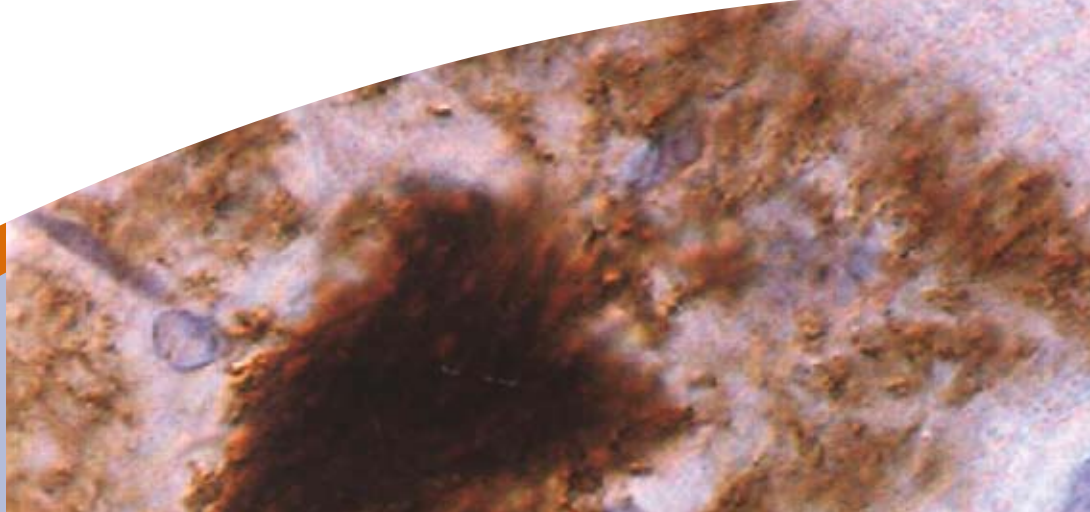
Fundamental research into disease-related neuroscience, and its translation into diagnostic technologies and therapies, are of high priority. Given that these diseases are found throughout Europe, and that each country faces the same impact from their growth, coordination of the European research base offers obvious synergies. All European national neuroscience societies, and most other related societies, are members of the Federation of European Neuroscience Societies. However, although research communities

already recognise that large international research consortia provide a better infrastructure for health research, there is still too little cooperation among the national and regional authorities that fund their work.

The NEURON project has initiated the integration of neuroscience research policies and programmes across Europe. It has created a network of all the major funding bodies in this research area, and provided a structure through which they can coordinate their existing programmes and develop a joint strategy for future research.

The project started as a small group of highly motivated partners who are key actors in their respective research funding systems. It is coordinated by Germany's Projektträger im Deutschen Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt (PT-DLR) on behalf of the German Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), which has bilateral cooperative agreements in this field with relevant organisations in Poland and Israel. The experience gained from these partnerships is the foundation for ERA-NET.

NEURON also benefits from a previous support action (SSA) involving 4 funding bodies or project management organisations. The CA will network across 11 funding organisations, 4 of which are ministries.



“ *I am certain that in the long term, both researchers and patients will greatly benefit from the ERA-NET.* ”

**Full title:**

Network of European Funding for Neuroscience Research

**Research field:**

Neuroscience

**Coordinator:**

Germany: Projektträger im Deutschen Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt

**Partners:**

- Germany: Project Management Agency in the German Aerospace Center for the Federal Ministry of Education and Research BMBF
- Luxembourg: National Research Fund
- Poland: Ministry of Science and Higher Education
- Israel: Chief Scientist Office, Israel Ministry of Health
- Austria: Austrian Science Fund
- France: National Institute of Health and Medical Research
- Finland: Academy of Science
- Sweden: Swedish Research Council
- Romania: Ministry of Education and Research
- France: French National Centre for Scientific Research
- Italy: Ministry of Health

**Further information:**

Priv. Doz. Dr Marlies Dorlöchter,  
Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt eV  
Heinrich-Konen-Straße 1,  
53227 Bonn – Germany

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4 years

**EC funding:**

€2 700 000

**Project reference:**

036213 NEURON

Directorate-General for Research:  
Coordination of Research Activities  
<http://www.cordis.lu/coordination/home.html>

## Project toolkit

The NEURON consortium has created a detailed programme to reach its goals, including the following: workshops to exchange information on the topics specified in the work programme; a work exchange of programme managers; the development of standards in specific areas of programme management; as well as agreements on joint programme management procedures.

Another objective is to prepare and implement joint or common calls for project and fellowship proposals. The topic for the first common call for project proposals will be jointly selected from specific fields, either ‘neurodegenerative conditions’ or ‘innovative technologies in neuroscience’.

## Long-term perspective

There is still a lack of programme coordination in the area of brain disorder research that prevents interactive effects and optimal utilisation of available resources. The consortium will overcome such fragmentation by creating an ERA-NET scheme for joint activities, and a platform for the integration of research policies and research programmes. Partners will share information on existing national programmes and best management practices. This will induce a mutual learning process and will, ultimately, lead to improved standards in research policy and funding activities.

Coordination of national funding programmes will improve the coherence of research and innovation activities in the participating countries, while bearing

in mind the different research and political situations in each partner country and organisation. The planned information exchange on the existing national funding programmes and best practices will provide the prerequisites for coordinated multilateral activities. Common transnational actions and mutual opening initiatives are planned, which will have an impact extending far beyond the lifetime of the CA. This, as well as the developing mutual understanding and trust among the partner organisations, will ensure durable international cooperation, as a long-term effect of NEURON.

NEURON will create a joint long-term perspective for health research policy in the area of brain disease research and strengthen the foundations of the European Research Area. The activities of NEURON will also serve to stimulate the translation of research findings into clinical application and health care. Citizens from all participating countries will benefit from these developments since they will eventually lead to new innovative treatments for patients suffering from brain disorders.