

DEADLINE: APRIL 15TH, 2014

BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH ON AGEING-RELATED DISEASES

BACKGROUND

Estimates about the growth of EU population over the next 50 years indicate a slight increase in terms of quantity, but also a population that becomes much older. It is expected that by 2060, 30% Europeans will be over 65 years old. This context of demographical change is going to be accompanied by a transition in the epidemiological landscape. Population ageing goes hand in hand with the prevalence of chronic degenerative diseases including cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, neurodegenerative diseases, cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases and musculoskeletal disorders. Because of their long term nature, these diseases go beyond the physical conditions entering other spheres including the quality of life. Notably, among the elderly, in Italy, there are over 4 million people affected by high blood pressure and/or heart diseases, and more than 1 million people suffering of some form of dementia (WHO, 2010 data).

AIMS

In line with its strategic orientations, Fondazione Cariplo has decided to address the issues discussed above also within the biomedical research field, by devoting this call to basic research projects that focus on disorders typical of the elderly and exclusively study neurodegenerative¹ and cardiovascular diseases². The latter include a number of different conditions that are often accompanied by other morbidities or might represent a side effect of targeted treatment for other diseases.

Applicants under this call are requested to specify the disease and the molecular mechanism they intend to address.

The originality of the research project, its methodological approach, and the expected concrete results in the medium term will be key elements in the selection process.

Applications should be supported by a clear rationale that lies on research hypotheses resting on valid preliminary data. In addition, it should be noted that the proposed experimental plan needs to present a multidisciplinary approach that effectively integrates the different operational units of the various institutions participating in the project. The added value of each partner as well as the contribution made to the project should be clearly specified. Thus, it should be clarified how different competencies conflate within a common experimental design.

The Foundation will support experimental laboratory research based on sound clinical data, where appropriate. This is in order to achieve a more tangible valorization of the knowledge arising from the research project through improvements in the prevention practices, diagnoses and treatments. It should be noted that the involvement of clinical partners does not represent a binding requirement.

Through this call the Foundation intends also to encourage initiatives that foster dialogue with civil society under the Responsible Research and Innovation³ framework.

GUIDELINES

Eligible applicants

Beyond the general requirements set out in the *"Guidelines for Presentation"*, this call for proposals is intended to scientific research institutions engaged with the issues debated above which have at their disposal staff and research facilities.

With regards to the eligibility, it is mandatory for the lead organization to base the project's operational headquarters within Fondazione Cariplo's geographical area of interest (Lombardia and Novara and Verbano Cusio Ossola districts). The latter is not requested to the partners.

With regards to the Principal Investigators (PIs) both in the

1 Neurodegenerative diseases include a range of conditions affecting the central nervous system that are characterized by a chronic selective process of neuron cell death. Typical examples are Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, frontotemporal dementia. In the current absence of a specific categorization for these conditions, they have been included in Chapters V and VI of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems 10th Revision (ICD-10) Version for 2010 <http://apps.who.int/classifications/icd10/browse/2010/en>.

2 Cardiovascular diseases include a range of disorders affecting the heart and blood vessels. These conditions are included in Chapter IX of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems 10th Revision (ICD-10) Version for 2010 <http://apps.who.int/classifications/icd10/browse/2010/en>.

3 Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) refers to ways of proceeding in Research and Innovation that allow those who initiate and are involved in the processes of research and innovation at an early stage (a) to obtain relevant knowledge on the consequences of the outcomes of their actions and on the range of options open to them and (b) to effectively evaluate both outcomes and options in terms of social needs and moral values and (c) to use these considerations (under a and b) as functional requirements for design and development of new research, products and services (DG for Research and Innovation Science in Society, "Options for Strengthening Responsible Research and Innovation", Luxembourg, 2013, ISBN 978-92-79-28233-1).

lead organization and partners, this call is meant for senior researchers with at least 12 years' experience after the PhD⁴. Retired researchers involved in the research project (e.g. as contractors) are not considered eligible PI.

Proposals presented by a PI of any unfinished project funded by the Foundation within the Scientific Research Area is not eligible for funding under this call. By PI we mean a project leader of any operational unit of a funded project regardless whether this is the lead organization or a partner. Furthermore, by unfinished project we mean a project that still has to submit the final scientific and/or financial report (final scientific report and expense report). Submissions to the Foundation have to be carried out through the online system by uploading the requested documentations in the dedicated web platform. To be eligible it is mandatory to complete this operation by the deadline of this call for proposals.

Eligible projects

The Foundation will select a limited number of projects that:

- are submitted by a partnership made up of at least two different eligible institutions. One of the latter needs to act as the lead organization;
- study a neurodegenerative or cardiovascular disease typical of the elderly.

In order to guarantee transparency and objectivity during the selection process, the Foundation will enforce a peer review process relaying on a panel of external, independent and international reviewers. At the end of this process, feedback on the projects will be sent to all applicants.

The Foundation foresees exclusively the costs related to the research activities that satisfy the following eligibility criteria and caps:

- A3 - "Equipment and software"
this entry cannot exceed 20% of the total additional costs⁵ and can exclusively include costs related to newly acquired software programs or equipment. It is expected that applicants ascribe only amortizable costs.

- A4 - "Other amortizable costs"
this entry can include only patent costs.
- A6 - "Temporary staff"
this entry must include only research personnel costs. The cost for administrative staff is not allowed.
- A7 - "Subcontractors and consultants"
auditor costs should be included in this entry.
- A8 - "Materials and supplies"
stationery and photocopy costs cannot be included in this entry.
- A9 - "Overheads"
this entry cannot exceed 5% of the total additional costs⁶.
- A10 - "Others"
this entry cannot exceed 10% of the total additional costs⁷ and must include only travel expenses and conference fees for the research personnel involved in the project, meeting costs, and finally scientific and public dissemination costs.

The grant will cover 100% of project costs. Requested funding should range from 100,000 to 350,000 euros.

Review criteria

Besides the quality of the research proposal, other elements will be considered during the evaluation process. These include:

- the level of analysis of the state of the art;
- the solidity of preliminary data;
- the clarity of the project aims and strategies;
- the nature of expected biomedical results as well as their impact;
- potential benefits of the research in terms of human health;
- the originality and innovation of the project;
- the adoption of multidisciplinary approaches;
- leadership of the principal investigators;
- track record of the principal investigators and the research team;
- engagement of young researchers⁸ and their involvement in positions of responsibility;
- the level of collaboration with national or international research centres and the ability to build partnerships and networks;
- the nature and strength of the partnership and value added by each partner in the implementation of the project;

⁴ Senior researcher is a term that does not include the categories of researchers eligible for an ERC starting grant or consolidator grant. Principal Investigators who completed their medical specialty at least 12 years ago are also eligible. For candidates with both PhD and medical specialty, eligibility will be determined based on the degree they earned first.

⁵ Sum of: A3, A4, A6, A7, A8, A10.

⁶ See footnote 5.

⁷ See footnote 5.

⁸ In this call for proposals the term 'young researchers' means scientists who earned their PhD or medical specialty no more than 7 years ago.

- a clearly motivated budget and reasonable duration of the project;
- the plan to disseminate results within and outside the research community, in accordance with the Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) framework.

Ineligible projects

It will be considered ineligible any proposal that:

- is purely descriptive;
- represents clinical studies on drugs;
- fails to document the existence of a partnership made up of at least two different eligible institutions;
- requests funding to set up new research centres/labs and/or animal facilities.

- *Dati Complementari* (in English);
- *Piano economico*.

- Upload all the requested documents according to the *Guidelines for Presentation*:
 - Detailed Project ;
 - Detailed Budget ;
 - Letter of support from the legal representative of the lead organization;
 - Partnership agreement and letters of support from the partners;
 - Documentation of the organizations applying for the grant.

AVAILABLE BUDGET

The total budget allocated to this call for proposals consists of 5 million euros.

Before submitting their proposals, applicants are kindly invited to carefully read the documents listed below that can be easily found in Fondazione Cariplo's website at www.fondazione cariplo.it and include:

- *Guidelines for Presentation*;
- *Grant management and reporting guide*;
- *Intellectual property rights policy*;
- *Open access policy*.

By submitting their proposals, applicants acknowledge, agree and accept that the award of the grant requires the acceptance of the Foundation policies.

In order to apply for a grant under this call for proposals, it is strongly recommended to:

- Carefully fill in the online forms that specifically include:
 - *Anagrafica dell'organizzazione capofila* (new applicants should fill the form ex novo, while organizations already registered should check and update, when necessary, their detail);
 - *Modulo progetto* (in Italian);

9 The detailed project shall be prepared in accordance with the template relating to the call that can be downloaded from the online section *Dati Complementari*.

10 The detailed project plan shall be prepared in accordance with the template relating to the call that can be downloaded from the online section *Dati Complementari*.