



European Brain Research Area

CALL FOR RESEARCH CLUSTERS

Opening Date: 14 March 2019, 09:00 CET

Deadline model: Multiple cut-off dates

Deadline (17:00 CET)	Call results
1 June 2019	Mid-September 2019
1 January 2020	Mid-April 2020
1 June 2020	Mid-September 2020
1 January 2021	Mid-April 2021

[Electronic submission](#)

For further information, please visit us on the EBRA website (<http://www.ebra.eu/call4clusters>) or contact:

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Table of Contents

1. Rationale.....	3
2. Aim of the call	3
2.1 Possible support actions for successful clusters.....	4
3. Scope of the Call.....	5
4. Application.....	6
4.1 Eligibility.....	6
4.2 Submission of application	6
4.3 Privacy.....	6
4.4 Further information	6
5. Evaluation and decision	7
5.1 Eligibility check.....	7
5.2 Evaluation	7
5.3 Decision.....	7
5.4 Conflict of interest.....	8
5.5 Appeal	8
5.6 Preparation of the activity plan.....	8
5.7 Duration of coordination actions.....	8
6. Support action procedure and responsibilities.....	8

1. Rationale

The EU and its Member States have made considerable investments in brain research. In addition, many large research initiatives, such as the Human Brain Project (HBP), the EU Joint Programme on Neurodegenerative Diseases (JPND), the ERA-Net NEURON and the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI), have been established in parallel. The numerous resulting research projects have generated considerable amounts of knowledge and innovative approaches. Consequently, there is a particular need for enhanced networking and coordination of efforts, in order to minimise fragmentation and duplication and to maximise impact.

The overall idea underpinning EBRA is to coordinate and synergise brain research projects and initiatives at both European and global level. EBRA brings together the brain research community at large, the major brain research initiatives, research funding networks and all relevant stakeholders at European level and beyond, to ensure the overall delivery of the research potential.

In this framework, one of the objectives of EBRA is to help research networks and projects across a range of critical areas and/or cross cutting issues to emerge as “active clusters” and possibly to initiate European and/or global initiatives.

2. Aim of the call

The EBRA consortium aims to promote coordination and collaboration among research networks and projects that share the common goal of understanding the brain and its disorders by:

- synergising brain related networks and projects at both European and global level,
- accelerating the information flow and exchange of experience of the ongoing and future projects.
- supporting data sharing and data access,
- enabling the translation of research breakthroughs into innovations and health interventions,

The aim of EBRA is to foster new, and also extend existing transnational research cooperation of European countries, and to support coordination of research efforts.

Therefore, the EBRA consortium is launching a Call for Clusters to promote co-operation and exchange between brain research projects and networks, and thus enable or enhance international collaboration and the emergence of development of clusters in all areas of brain research.

A cluster is understood as an association of research projects that can be directed towards basic research, clinical research and/or methodological approaches under a common topic and disease area ([cf. 4.1 Eligibility](#)).

The individual members of a cluster application should be complementary. The cluster formation should lead to a step-wise change in the landscape of that research area in that there should be a clear added-value in the collaboration/cooperation over individual

projects including, but not limited to, sharing of resources (models, databases, diagnostics, harmonisation of data, sharing of specific know-how and/or innovative technologies, etc.)

The cluster proposal should be built on an effective collaboration between the different research participants/groups and should represent the critical mass necessary to enable the cluster to achieve ambitious scientific goals.

This is an open call valid until January 2021 (cf. [4.2 Submission of application](#)) and proposals can be submitted at any time. However, there will be four cut-off dates, with reviews and selections soon after. Selected proposals will be supported through customised actions, among those listed below, that will be discussed and agreed between EBRA consortium and selected cluster.

Applicants should identify those coordination actions that they deem necessary for the advancement of the cluster that they are proposing. The proposed actions should contain measures to be implemented both during and after the end of the EBRA project. Additional actions suggested by the applicants and that are not included in the list below, can also be considered. (This excludes amongst others direct funding: for research, maintenance of databases, purchase of equipment, etc.)

The final plan of coordination activities will be developed in consultation with the successful clusters (cf. [5.6 Preparation of the activity plan](#)). EBRA though reserves the right to allocate actions to the clusters ultimately selected on the basis of the evaluation results and available resources.

Please note that EBRA support is of an operational nature and is limited to the actions listed below.

2.1 Possible support actions for successful clusters

1) **Networking.**

Leveraging the significant networking capacity of its consortium, EBRA will facilitate opportunities to interact with scientists from other initiatives, infrastructures and networks at European and global level and to link with other stakeholders, such as patient organisations and other relevant advocacy groups. The aim of this collaboration is to foster scientific advancement in the field, to building consensus on research priorities or to develop advocacy activities with research funders across the world.

This will be achieved through the organisation of thematic workshops and meetings. EBRA will support the clusters with the organization of events, including providing meeting facilities and catering.

2) **Expert Advice on Data related issues and Exploitation of results.**

EBRA will provide expert advice on how to enhance the exploitation scientific results, as well as on how to address data-related issues. This will be achieved by establishing Thematic Working Groups - expert groups formed by selected representatives from member of the EBRA consortium and/or invited experts

from other organisations. The working groups will help clusters to promote new collaborations and to identify new funding opportunities as well as to strengthen

the impact of their outcomes. Furthermore, working groups will also provide guidance to clusters on technical solutions and legal/ethical challenges with regards to use and reuse, access and sharing of data as well as data quality assurance and standards.

3) Research infrastructures

EBRA will promote links with existing research infrastructures. For that purpose, EBRA will take advantage of its collaboration with the Coordinated Research Infrastructures Building Enduring Life-science Services (CORBEL) project and Human Brain Project (HBP), to raise awareness and provide information on existing tools and services. This will be achieved through dedicated workshops to highlight tools and services available and to foster the development of use cases.

4) Communication and Dissemination

EBRA will help improve the visibility of cluster activities by highlighting their research results and/or activities on the EBRA website and social media channels and also by identifying common outreach and dissemination opportunities (e.g. joint sessions in specific conferences, multiplication of social media impacts, etc.).

5) Other possible actions

- **Participation in EBRA governance:** the selected clusters will be represented within the EBRA governance. A Cluster Committee formed by the coordinators of each cluster will be part of the Extended Advisory Board (EAB), the consultative body that provides advice to the management boards of the project.

- **Collaborative web space:** selected clusters will have access to the EBRA intranet, which will provide space to organize and collaborate on content, data, and news.

3. Scope of the Call

The call for clusters is open to research networks and/or projects from any brain research areas and/or topics, including methodological approaches. The research networks and projects applying to the call should propose clusters of research groups based on complementarities and sharing of expertise in the field. The proposal should clearly identify unmet needs and the potential benefits from enhanced coordination for the specific field addressed.

The application should include plans to further enrich the cluster with relevant research groups in order to achieve the critical mass to promote new collaborations and to identify priorities and new funding opportunities at both European and global levels, as well as to increase the impact of the research outcomes.

4. Application

4.1 Eligibility

Eligible participants are:

- European research networks or groups working in European universities (or other higher education institutions),
 - non-academic public research institutions and hospitals,
 - NGOs including patient or professional organizations ,
- as well as private sector actors that wish to create and propose a cluster.

Each cluster application must include at least one research network/consortia and/or project funded under FP7, Horizon 2020, the ERANET framework (i.e. NEURON, FLAGERA, etc.) as well as JPND, or in the framework of FET flagship Human Brain Project. In addition, the cluster must involve at least one additional partner/s not included in the pre-existing network/consortia and/or project.

Each applicant must nominate a cluster coordinator who serves as contact point, represents the cluster externally and is responsible for its internal management (e.g. application procedure, actions and reporting).

4.2 Submission of application

EBRA call for cluster is an open call until 1 January 2021. There will be four submission deadlines (table below), but proposals can be uploaded at any time in between. There will be a one-stage evaluation process for the submitted proposals shortly after the given submission deadline. Applications must be submitted in electronic format (in English) and must be submitted online via the [electronic submission system](#).

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1 June 2019	Mid-September 2019
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4.3 Privacy

By participating in the call, applicants agree that the information in the application as well as future reports on the activities carried by the successful clusters participating in EBRA will be shared among the members of the EBRA Consortium and with the European Commission according to the terms of an agreement that will be signed by the EBRA consortium and the selected clusters ([cf 6 Support action procedure and responsibilities](#)).

4.4 Further information

Guidance for applicants is provided via the [online submission system](#). If additional information is needed, please contact the EBRA Project Management Team at:

E-mail: ebra@braincouncil.eu Phone: +32 25132757

5. Evaluation and decision

The review process will consist in an initial formal eligibility check by the Project Management Team (PMT), followed by content evaluation by the Project Steering Committee (PSC).

5.1 Eligibility check

The EBRA Project Management Team (PMT) will check the proposals to ensure that they meet the call's formal eligibility criteria. Proposals not meeting the formal criteria will be rejected at this stage. Rejection at this stage does not preclude re-submission of the proposal to the next cut-off date. Eligible proposals will be forwarded to the EBRA Project Steering Committee (PSC) for evaluation.

5.2 Evaluation

The EBRA PSC is composed by EBRA Beneficiaries and chaired by the Project Coordinator. The PSC will assess if the application is within the scope of the call and will appoint evaluators within the networks of the members of the EBRA consortium. The evaluators will carry out the evaluation according to the following criteria and relative weight:

1) Excellence (30%):

- Scientific excellence of the cluster as a whole
- Evidence of contribution of the individual members of the cluster candidate to the scientific field and international recognition
- Aim of the proposed enhanced coordination and the scientific and innovation potential of the proposed cluster

2) Impact and relevance to the aim of the call (40 %):

- Research vision demonstrating the added value brought about by the cluster and the potential leverage for the cluster for the further development of the research area

3) Quality and efficiency of the implementation (30%):

- Documented evidence of successful participation in current or past projects with collaborative activities linked to brain research
- Appropriateness of the management structures and procedures
- Indicative plan for sustainability beyond EBRA collaboration

5.3 Decision

Based on the results of the evaluation, the PSC will put together a ranked list of the eligible clusters for EBRA support. The PSC will propose this list to the EBRA General Assembly (GA) for the final approval. Applicants will be informed of the decision and receive a qualified feedback according to the established timeline of each cut of dates.

5.4 Conflict of interest

All necessary steps will be taken by the PMT to avoid any conflict of interest by the evaluators as well as within the PSC for the proposals assigned to them for evaluation.

5.5 Appeal

There will be **no possibility for appeal** in this call, but applicants may re-apply until the last cut-off date.

5.6 Preparation of the activity plan

After the evaluation and selection procedures are completed, the coordinators of the selected clusters will be invited to prepare the final plan of coordination activities together with the EBRA PSC. The aim of this process will be to **establish the key points of the coordination plan, including time schedule and outcomes of the activities** and each party's requirements and responsibilities, **and** to align the activities suggested in the application with **resources available**. Whilst the coordination plan will be established in a collaborative manner, EBRA reserves the right to provide support actions to the selected clusters on the basis of the evaluation results and available resources.

5.7 Duration of coordination actions

EBRA coordination actions is linked to the duration of EBRA EU Funded CSA under the grant agreement 825348, 1 Nov 2018 – 31 October 2021.

Therefore, all support actions will need to be concluded before the end of the EBRA grant.

6. Support action procedure and responsibilities

The coordinator of each selected cluster will be the contact person for the EBRA PMT. The coordinator, together with the EBRA PSC are responsible for developing the coordination activities and to ensure the participation of the other members of the cluster. An agreement will be signed by the EBRA consortium and cluster coordinator. The agreement builds upon the activity plan and outline the terms and details of the collaboration including duration and type of the activities and each party's requirements and responsibilities. In this regard, the project coordinator on behalf of the cluster will be requested to submit and/or contribute to the report of the coordination activities performed. The coordinators and/or other members of the cluster will also be asked to present the results of the activities to meetings and events organised by the consortium.