TRANSCAN-4

Joint Transnational Call for Proposals 2026 (JTC-2026)

"Translational Research on Cancer Metabolism: Multidisciplinary Approaches for Diagnosis and Treatment"

Call Text

Submission deadlines

Pre-proposals: 21 July 2026 at 12:00 CEST

Full proposals: 13 January 2027 at 12:00 CET

Electronic proposal submission system: https://ptoutline.eu/app/TRANSCAN-JTC2026

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

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1. MOTIVATION **3**
2. AIM OF THE CALL **4**
CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES 6
3. APPLICATION: ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA **6**
DEFINITION OF EARLY CAREER RESEARCHER/SCIENTIST **8**
4. TIMELINE OF THE CALL **9**
5. SUBMISSION OF JOINT PROPOSALS **9**
6. CALL IMPLEMENTATION BOARDS **10**
7. EVALUATION CRITERIA **10**
8. SCORING **11**
RANGE AND INTERPRETATION OF THE SCORES 11
THRESHOLDS AND WEIGHTING 12
9. ELIGIBILITY CHECK OF PRE-PROPOSALS AND FIRST STEP OF EVALUATION **12**
ELIGIBILITY CHECK 12
EVALUATION OF PRE-PROPOSALS 12
10. PROCESS FOR THE INVOLVEMENT OF UNDERREPRESENTED COUNTRIES **13**
11. ELIGIBILITY CHECK OF FULL PROPOSALS AND SECOND STEP OF EVALUATION **14**
12. FUNDING DECISION **14**
13. FINANCIAL AND LEGAL ISSUES **14**
FUNDING MODEL AND FUNDING DETAILS 14
CONSORTIUM AGREEMENT, INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS, ETHICAL ISSUES 15
CONFIDENTIALITY 15
14. REPORTING AND DISSEMINATION **15**
15. GENDER EQUALITY **16**
16. CONTACT AND FURTHER INFORMATION **16**
ANNEX 1. CONTACT INFORMATION OF THE NATIONAL/REGIONAL FUNDING ORGANISATIONS 18
ANNEX 2. INDICATIVE FUNDING COMMITMENT OF THE FUNDING ORGANISATIONS PARTICIPATING IN TRANSCAN-4 JTC-2026 21
ANNEX 3. ELIGIBILITY OF BENEFICIARY INSTITUTIONS FOR THE FUNDING ORGANISATIONS PARTICIPATING IN TRANSCAN-4 JTC-2026 23

1. MOTIVATION

The proposal of the "hallmarks of cancer" framework by Hanahan and Weinberg in 2000[1], and its updates in 2011[2] and 2022[3], profoundly changed our vision of cancer and continue to shape modern oncology. By distilling the complexity of cancer into a set of core biological capabilities, this model provided a common language for researchers, clinicians and drug developers. It shifted the field from descriptive pathology to a mechanistic understanding of tumour biology, thereby accelerating translational research and driving major breakthroughs in cancer treatment, including the development of targeted drugs and immunotherapy.

In the 2011 update[2], an emerging cancer hallmark was identified in the reprogramming of energy metabolism. The chronic and often uncontrolled cell proliferation that represents the essence of neoplastic disease involves not only deregulated control of cell proliferation but also corresponding adjustments of nutrient uptake and energy production pathways in order to fuel cell growth and division.

Over the past two decades, equipped with new and detailed understanding of the genetic and epigenetic drivers of transformation, as well as with new powerful experimental technologies, the field of cancer metabolism has entered a dynamic new era. Metabolism is now recognised as a central regulator of cell fate and function, with unexpected connections to ROS biology, immune responses, modulation of tumour microenvironment (TME), interactions with the microbiota, systemic metabolic shifts, ageing, and metastatic dissemination.

Metabolic reprogramming in tumorigenesis enables transformed cells to escape tissue homeostatic defences co-opting both internal signalling pathways and a spectrum of local tissue and whole-body resources. Crucially, these changes extend beyond cancer cells themselves: stromal components of the TME and the metabolic balance of the entire organism are also reshaped. Altogether, these adaptations promote cancer cell accumulation and dissemination, reducing the ability of the immune system to counteract tumour growth and directly contributing to cancer-associated lethality.

Despite major progress in understanding the multifaceted consequences of metabolic reprogramming in tumour cells, these mechanisms remain insufficiently explored as clinical targets. There is an urgent need to bridge the gap between fundamental discoveries in cancer metabolism and their diagnostic, prognostic, and therapeutic applications.

Dissecting the metabolic strategies that support tumour survival—even in nutrient-poor or otherwise hostile environments—can inform the development of innovative therapies, including rational dietary interventions, designed to synergise with current treatments. Realising the full potential of these insights requires a truly interdisciplinary approach, integrating expertise from cell and molecular biology, biochemistry, clinical oncology, nutrition science, microbiology, pharmacology, biophysics, computational biology, and related fields.

In this context, advancing translational research on cancer metabolism at both the European and international levels is vital to establish new paradigms for cancer prevention and care. TRANSCAN-4 is committed to fostering ambitious and innovative collaborative initiatives in translational cancer research. Building on these foundations, it is both timely and highly relevant to intensify efforts and convert advances in cancer metabolism into concrete clinical benefits, ultimately leading to more effective therapeutic strategies and improved patient outcomes. Therefore, the TRANSCAN-4 partners have agreed to focus their first Joint Transnational Call for proposals (JTC-2026) on:

[1] Hanahan D, Weinberg RA. The hallmarks of cancer. Cell. 2000 Jan 7;100(1):57-70.
[2] Hanahan D, Weinberg RA. Hallmarks of cancer: the next generation. Cell. 2011 Mar 4;144(5):646-74.
[3] Hanahan D. Hallmarks of Cancer: New Dimensions. Cancer Discov. 2022 Jan;12(1):31-46.

Translational Research on Cancer Metabolism: Multidisciplinary Approaches for Diagnosis and Treatment

The following national/regional funding organisations have agreed to participate in the JTC-2026:

- Austrian Science Fund (FWF), Austria
- Fund for Scientific Research - FNRS (F.R.S.-FNRS), Belgium
- Research Foundation - Flanders (FWO), Belgium
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), Canada
- French National Cancer Institute (INCa), France
- ARC Foundation for Cancer Research (ARC Foundation), France
- Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (BMFTR), Germany
- National Research, Development and Innovation Office (NKFIH), Hungary
- Chief Scientist Office, Ministry of Health (CSO-MOH), Israel
- Ministero della Salute (IT-MOH), Italy
- Fondazione Regionale per la Ricerca Biomedica (FRRB), Lombardy Region, Italy
- Tuscany Region (RT), Tuscany, Italy
- Xjenza Malta (XM), Malta
- 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 Turkiye (TÜBITAK), Turkiye

2. AIM OF THE CALL

The JTC-2026 focuses on:

Translational Research on Cancer Metabolism: Multidisciplinary Approaches for Diagnosis and Treatment

The overarching objective of this funding opportunity is to foster new collaborations between researchers and clinicians and to support original, high-quality projects with strong translational potential. Funded projects are expected to significantly advance the understanding and exploitation of cancer metabolism in clinically relevant settings.

The anticipated outcome of the call is the development of innovative, personalised approaches for cancer diagnosis, patient stratification, and treatment, grounded in a deeper mechanistic understanding of metabolic alterations in cancer.

Proposals must address at least one of the aims or sub-aims described below.

Aim 1: Enabling better cancer diagnostics and monitoring through metabolic biomarkers

Novel metabolic biomarkers and technologies offer major opportunities for earlier cancer detection, improved patient stratification and more accurate monitoring of treatment response and disease progression.

Eligible **sub-aims** include:

- Advancing metabolic imaging approaches to improve sensitivity and specificity in tumour detection and longitudinal monitoring.
- Identifying and/or validating novel biomarkers or biomarker signatures based on tumour-associated metabolic alterations, to enhance cancer diagnosis, patient stratification or disease monitoring. Proposals may include hypothesis-driven studies on a broad range of biomarkers, including structural, functional, molecular, and genetic biomarkers. Digital biomarkers are eligible only when integrated with biological or molecular signatures. In all cases, proposal must demonstrate a clear pathophysiological rationale and include studies on human participants and/or human-derived tissues.

Aim 2: Intercepting metabolic vulnerabilities to improve precision medicine

Metabolic reprogramming in cancer creates unique dependencies that can be exploited therapeutically. Tumours often develop distinct metabolic signatures, shaped by oncogenic mutations, which drive tumour initiation, progression, therapy resistance, and metastasis. These metabolic adaptations open the door to precision medicine approaches that target defined metabolic vulnerabilities with tailored interventions.

Eligible **sub-aims** include:

- Identifying key druggable metabolic regulators and signalling networks to personalise therapy and improve clinical outcomes.
- Designing and evaluating innovative interventions, including novel or repurposed therapeutics, that target metabolic vulnerabilities and synergise with existing treatments.
- Implementing advanced and clinically relevant preclinical models that enable rigorous assessment of novel or repurposed therapeutic strategies targeting specific metabolic vulnerabilities.

Novel targets and interventions should be evaluated in translational studies with regard to their impact on treatment efficacy and potential patient benefit. Any model systems employed must closely reflect human disease and demonstrate clear translational relevance.

General requirements

An essential requisite for all proposals is the substantial clinical relevance of the planned research.

Applications incorporating spatial transcriptomic, single-cell/multi-omic approaches are strongly encouraged, as are other innovative methodologies such as artificial intelligence, liquid biopsy, radiomics, and advanced computational approaches. Proposals may also include strong biomedical components, for example organoids, cancer vaccines, nanoparticles, or other advanced model systems. Interdisciplinary approaches integrating expertise from engineering, informatics, physics, or related fields alongside biology and medicine, are particularly welcome, provided they clearly address unmet clinical needs and demonstrate potential impact on patients and populations. Applicants are encouraged to consult / communicate with patients and / or their representatives during preparation of the proposal and during their research projects.

The following types of projects are excluded from this call:

- Studies based exclusively on preclinical models limited to established cell lines;
- Phase III and IV clinical trials;

- Studies not compliant with applicable European Union regulations on State aid and services of general economic interest, in particular Commission Regulation (EC) No 800/2008 and Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014, as well as related communications and guidance documents.

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-4 fosters capacity building activities to promote the formation and upgrading of multidisciplinary teams in an integrated process:

i) exchange/mobility of individual researchers/professionals between teams and countries participating in the project (especially young investigators); in order to bring new expertise to an existing multidisciplinary translational team; and/or

ii) recruitment of individual researchers/professionals by a team in order to cover expertise and "know-how" unavailable in the existing team (short-term training of several partners/teams by one expert, operational staff, technical workshops dedicated to relevant aspects of the scientific work planned in the project, etc.).

These types of activities, when present, will be supported within the projects, which will be selected for funding under TRANSCAN-4 JTC-2026. Thus, applicants may add a 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).

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 below:

- 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 the accompanying document "Guidelines for applicants") and are advised to contact their respective national/regional contact points.

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

- Only transnational projects will be funded.
- Applications must 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-4 JTC-2026, 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**.
- A 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 a consortium includes one partner from the following participating countries: Hungary, Malta, Slovakia and Turkiye.**
- It is mandatory to integrate at least one early-career researcher (ECR) as principal investigator in a consortium and this must be clearly indicated in the proposal. For the TRANSCAN-4 definition of ECR, see definition below. In addition, individual regional/national funding regulations might apply (see "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 chapter 10.
- Each consortium is represented by a coordinator responsible for the scientific management (such as scientific and financial 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 JTC-2026 (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 pre-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. Partners with their own funding must be comprised in the maximum number of six partners.
- Applicants should refer to the "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.
- Please note that an eligibility check **before the pre-proposal submission** is mandatory for:

- Ministero della Salute (IT-MOH), Italy;
- Fondazione Regionale per la Ricerca Biomedica (FRRB), Lombardy, Italy;
- Tuscany Region (RT), Italy;
- National Institute of Health Carlos III (ISCIII) and The Scientific Foundation of the Spanish Association Against Cancer (FCAECC), Spain;
- Chief Scientist Office, Ministry of Health (CSO-MOH), Israel;

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-4, 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 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.[4]

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 of the TRANSCAN-4 JTC-2026 (after 3rd August 2016). 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. Although, there is no need to attach additional documentation when submitting the project proposal, it is advised that those PIs applying as ECR confirm their eligibility with their corresponding Funding Agency before submitting the 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

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

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 "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://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000219109

4. TIMELINE OF THE CALL

15 April 2026	**Publication of the call pre-announcement**
20 May 2026	**Call announcement**
21 July 2026 at 12:00 (CEST)	**Deadline for pre-proposal submission**
25 November 2026	**Invitation of successful pre-proposals for full-proposal stage**
02 December 2026	**Communication of evaluation reports to unsuccessful pre-proposal coordinators**
13 January 2027 at 12:00 (CET)	**Deadline for full-proposal submission**
May 2027	**Communication of the preliminary funding decisions to the applicants**
November 2027	**Expected project start**

5. SUBMISSION OF JOINT PROPOSALS

TRANSCAN-4 JTC-2026 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 accompanying document entitled "Guidelines for Applicants". It is mandatory to use application forms available on the TRANSCAN website (http://www.transcan.eu/) and on the electronic submission system. Please note, that incomplete proposals (proposals missing any sections), proposals using a different format (font type and size) or exceeding limitations (length, number of figures, etc.) of any sections may result in formal rejection without further review. 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 **21 July 2026, 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 **25 November 2026**.

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 Call Steering Committee (CSC) under exceptional circumstances.

The invited full proposals will have to be submitted to the electronic submission system not later than **13 January 2027 at 12:00 (Central European Time, CET)**. Please note that full proposals will only be accepted from applicants explicitly invited by the JCS.

The decision on the results of the full proposal evaluation meeting will be communicated to all (successful and unsuccessful) coordinators by May 2027. 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-4 JTC-2026. 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-4; 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 the 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 attention 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, travel, 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 criterion, 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 (e.g. date of submission, number of participating countries/regions and groups, inclusion of all necessary information in English, adherence to the application forms, number of pages of chapters and entire document). The JCS will forward the pre-proposals to the participating 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;
- 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-4 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 demonstrate clear added value for the consortium as a whole. The widening process is entirely voluntary: inclusion of a research group from an underrepresented country is optional and will not influence the final assessment, which will be solely on 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(s) 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 assigned to at least three reviewers which may include experts who had reviewed the corresponding pre-proposal in the first stage. If required due to the number of proposals and/or the specific scientific field, additional experts may be invited to join the SEC panel. One of the reviewers will be appointed as rapporteur. The reviewers will independently assess each full proposal according to the evaluation criteria described above and will deliver their evaluation reports to the JCS (via an electronic evaluation system). All reviewers will be invited to attend the second SEC meeting and will have access to their assigned evaluation reports. During the meeting, each full proposal will be presented by the rapporteur and the panel will discuss it based on the individual assessments with the aim of reaching a consensus score. Following these discussions, the SEC will establish a ranking list of the full proposals recommended for funding.

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/regional funding organisations.

13. FINANCIAL AND LEGAL ISSUES

Funding model and funding details

The TRANSCAN-4 JTC-2026 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 according to national/regional rules to a maximum of 100% of the requested budget. 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 according to national/regional regulations from his/her national/regional funding institutions.

As a rule, no changes to the composition of research consortia or in budget may occur during the contract. 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 November 2027. 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.

Consortium agreement, 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-4 JTC-2026 funding organisations.

Results and new IPR resulting from projects funded through the TRANSCAN-4 JTC-2026 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-4 JTC-2026 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

Proposals and any information relating to the evaluation process shall be kept confidential by the JCS, 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 together with the consortium composition will be published on the TRANSCAN-4 website and websites of the respective national/regional funding organisations. All other project details shall remain strictly confidential.

14. REPORTING AND DISSEMINATION

Each coordinator of a funded project, acting on behalf of all consortium partners, must submit to the JCS a mid-term scientific progress report (in English) and a final scientific report (within three months after the project's conclusion).

In addition to these centrally-administered TRANSCAN-4 reports, principal investigators may be asked to

submit financial and/or scientific reports to their national/regional funding organisations. Each individual funding contract 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 TRANSCAN-4 initiative, e.g.: "*This project/work received funding from [name of funding organisations, or an acknowledgment as requested by your regional/national funding organisation] under the framework of TRANSCAN-4: Sustained collaboration of funders to support translational cancer research, funded by the EU Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Programme (Grant Agreement No. 101288225)*".

The coordinators and/or principal investigators may be asked to present the results of their projects at a TRANSCAN-4 symposium. Travel expenses to attend this event should be included in the budget.

15. GENDER EQUALITY

TRANSCAN-4 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-4 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 Joint Call Secretariat is set up at the **DLR Projektträger, Germany (TRANSCAN-JTC2026@dlr.de).** The JCS will assist the CSC during the implementation of the JTC-2026 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-4

JTC-2026 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 JTC-2026 (see Annex 1 below).

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

Country/Region	Funding Organisation	Contact
Austria	Austrian Science Fund (FWF)	Kathrina Proschinger Kathrina.Proschinger@fwf.ac.at Herbert Mayer Herbert.Mayer@fwf.ac.at
Belgium, French speaking community	Fund for Scientific Research - FNRS (F.R.S.-FNRS)	Maxime Bonsir maxime.bonsir@frs-fnrs.be Tel : +32 2 504 92 36 Joël Groeneveld joel.groeneveld@frs-fnrs.be Tel : +32 2504 9270 international@frs-fnrs.be
Belgium, Flanders	Research Foundation - Flanders (FWO)	Kristien Peeters (SBO) europe@fwo.be +32 (0)2 550 15 95 Toon Monbaliu (FO) europe@fwo.be +32 (0)2 550 15 70
Canada	Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)	Emma Ito cihr.icr@uhn.ca CIHR Contact Centre support-soutien@cihr-irsc.gc.ca
France	French National Cancer Institute (INCa)	Charlotte Gudewicz cgudewicz@institutcancer.fr
France	ARC French Foundation for Cancer Research (ARC Foundation)	Charlotte Audoynaud preti@fondation-arc.org
Germany	Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMFTR)	Hubert Misslisch Hubert.misslisch@dlr.de Sebastian Hückesfeld Sebastian.hueckesfeld@dlr.de
Hungary	National Research, Development and Innovation Office	Zsuzsanna Kürti ncp@nkfih.gov.hu +36 70 680 6421

	(NKFIH)	
Israel	Ministry of Health (CSO-MOH)	Liron Even-Faitelson Liron.ef@moh.gov.il
Italy	Ministero della Salute (IT-MOH)	Grazia Papagni g.papagni@sanita.it int-dgric@sanita.it Tel. +39 06 59942928
Italy, Lombardy Region	Fondazione Regionale per la Ricerca Biomedica (FRRB)	Giulia Rossignolo, Tel.: +39 02 6765 0159 giuliamaria.rossignolo@frrb.it Fabio Rondini, Tel.: + 39 02 6765 0163 fabio.rondini@frrb.it bandi@frrb.it
Italy, Tuscany Region	Tuscany Region (RT)	Teresa Vieri Tel. +39 055 4383289 Ina Vorsa Tel. +39 055 4383525 Elisa Nannicini Tel. +39 055 4382891 transcan4@regione.toscana.it
Malta	Xjenza Malta (XM)	Ana Cuca ana.cuca@gov.mt, Christy Baldacchino christy.baldacchino.2@gov.mt General inbox - eusubmissions.xjenzamalta@gov.mt/+356 23602322
Poland	National Centre for Research and Development (NCBR)	Paulina Puchalska paulina.puchalska@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 Nicoleta Dumitrache Nicoleta.dumitrache@uefiscdi.ro Tel: +4 021 30 23 886

Slovakia	Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS)	Katarina Bibova katarina.bibova@urad.sav.sk Martin Novak martin.novak@urad.sav.sk
Spain	National Institute of Health Carlos III (ISCIII)	Mauricio Garcia Franco mauriciog@isciii.es Tel: + 918222885 Cándida Sánchez-Barco cbarco@isciii.es Tel: + 918222063
Spain	The Scientific Foundation of the Spanish Association Against Cancer (FCAECC)	Estela Cepeda estela.cepeda@contraelcancer.es Tel: +34 91 3108266 – ext. 89266
Taiwan	National Science and Technology Council (NSTC)	Ching-Mei Tang cmtom@nstc.gov.tw Tel: +886-2-2737-7695
Turkiye	The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkiye (TÜBITAK)	N. Selcan TÜRKER selcan.turker@tubitak.gov.tr

ANNEX 2. INDICATIVE FUNDING COMMITMENT OF THE FUNDING ORGANISATIONS PARTICIPATING IN TRANSCAN-4 JTC-2026

Country/Region	Funding Organisation	Envisioned amount of funding (M€ for 3 years)	Anticipated number of fundable research groups
Austria	Austrian Science Fund (FWF)	1.35	3 (max. 450.000 € / project)
Belgium, French speaking community	Fund for Scientific Research - FNRS (F.R.S.-FNRS)	0.3	1
Belgium, Flanders	Research Foundation - Flanders (FWO)	0.7	2-3
Canada	Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)	$900,000 CAD	2
France	French National Cancer Institute (INCa)	2.0	6-8
France	ARC French Foundation for Cancer Research (ARC Foundation)	0.7	1-3
Germany	Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMFTR)	3.0	10 (max. 300.000 € / project)
Hungary	National Research, Development and Innovation Office (NKFIH)	0.3	2-3
Israel	Ministry of Health (CSO-MOH)	0.3	2
Italy	Ministry of Health (IT-MOH)	1.5	4 (max. 400.000 € / project)
Italy, Lombardy Region	Fondazione Regionale per la Ricerca Biomedica (FRRB)	2.0	4-5
Italy, Tuscany Region	Tuscany Region (RT)	0.3	1-2
Malta	Xjenza Malta (XM)	0.3	1-2
Poland	National Centre for Research and Development	1.2	3-4

	(NCBR)		
Romania	Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI)	1.0	4-5
Slovakia	Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS)	0.12	1
Spain	National Institute of Health Carlos III (ISCIII)	1.0	4-6
Spain	The Scientific Foundation of the Spanish Association Against Cancer (FCAECC)	2.0	8-10
Taiwan	National Science and Technology Council (NSTC)	0.81	3
Turkiye	The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkiye (TÜBITAK)	0.5	2-3

ANNEX 3. ELIGIBILITY OF BENEFICIARY INSTITUTIONS FOR THE FUNDING ORGANISATIONS PARTICIPATING IN TRANSCAN-4 JTC-2026

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
Belgium, Flanders	Research Foundation - Flanders (FWO)	Yes	According to specific FWO eligibility criteria	No
Canada	Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)	Yes (according to national eligibility criteria)	Yes (according to national eligibility criteria)	No
France	French National Cancer Institute (INCa)	Yes	Yes	No
France	ARC French Foundation for Cancer Research (ARC Foundation)	Yes	Yes	No
Germany	Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMFTR)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hungary	National Research, Development and Innovation Office (NKFIH)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Israel	Ministry of Health (CSO-MOH)	Yes (according to national criteria)	Yes (according to national criteria)	No
Italy	Ministry of Health (IT-MOH)	No	Yes	No
Italy, Lombardy	Fondazione Regionale per la Ricerca Biomedica	Yes (in partnership	Yes	No

Region	(FRRB)	with IRCCS/ASST/ARE U/ATS), as Partners, not as Coordinators of a Consortium.		
Italy, Tuscany Region	Tuscany Region (RT)	Yes (in partnership with Authorities of the Tuscany Health Service SST)	Yes	No
Malta	Xjenza (XM)	Yes	Yes	Yes
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 specified in national rules	Yes	No
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
Turkiye	The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkiye (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 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.