TRANSCAN

TRANSCAN-4: Sustained collaboration of funders to support translational cancer research

Preliminary Announcement*

The First Joint Transnational Call for Proposals 2026 (JTC-2026) will be launched in May 2026 on the topic:

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

TRANSCAN-4, in continuity of the preceding ERA-NET TRANSCAN-3, has the goal of coordinating national and regional funding programmes for research in the area of translational cancer research. The specific challenge is to promote a transnational collaborative approach between scientific teams in demanding areas of translational cancer research to ensure a more efficient use of available resources (e.g. data, infrastructures) and ultimately to produce results of higher quality and impact.

The following TRANSCAN-4 **funding organisations** have agreed to participate in JTC-2026:

- Austrian Science Fund (FWF), Austria (pending)
- 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
- 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 (pending)
- Ministero della Salute (IT-MOH), Italy (pending)
- Tuscany Region (RT), Tuscany, Italy
- Fondazione Regionale per la Ricerca Biomedica (FRRB), Lombardy, 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

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- National Science and Technology Council (NSTC), Taiwan
- The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBITAK), Turkey (pending)

The call will be published simultaneously by the funding organisations in their respective countries and on the TRANSCAN website: **https://www.transcan.eu.**

The TRANSCAN-4 JTC-2026 will be implemented through a two-stage submission procedure: pre-proposals and full proposals.

The call is planned to be formally launched on **20 May 2026** with a submission deadline for pre-proposals in **21 July 2026**. It is expected that consortia invited to the full-proposal stage will be asked to submit their proposal in **13 January 2027**.

Interested researchers and/or research teams are advised to make necessary contacts and arrangements towards preparing applications. Please see below the details of the call topic and the eligibility criteria. They will be further detailed when the JTC-2026 is published.

AIMS OF THE CALL

The JTC-2026 of TRANSCAN-4 will focus 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.

The following types of research projects is excluded from the 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.

Applicants will have the opportunity to add an additional section for **capacity building activities** (with an associated separate budget, in compliance with the rules of their respective national/regional funding organisations). These activities have to be coherent with the objectives of the research project, and aimed to 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).

MAIN ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Only transnational projects will be funded. Each research consortium must involve a minimum of three (3) and a maximum of six (6) eligible partners from at least three (3) different countries participating in the call. In addition, a research consortium must not involve more than two (2) research groups from one 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, with a particular attention to research teams from Hungary, Malta, Slovakia and Turkey. If a consortium includes research teams from one of these countries, the maximum number of partners can be increased to seven (7).

It is mandatory to include at least one early-career researcher (ECR) as principal investigator in a consortium and this has to be clearly indicated in the proposal. The TRANSCAN-4 definition of ECR will be included in the call text.

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.

Applications will be submitted by the coordinator. Each consortium participant will be funded by the funding organisation from their country/region participating in the JTC-2026. Participants are therefore subject to eligibility criteria of national/regional funding organisations.

Upon the call publication, applicants will have to refer to the annexes of the document “Guidelines for Applicants” containing detailed specific national/regional eligibility criteria, and will have to contact their respective national/regional funding organisation contact points for additional clarification if needed.