Guidelines of ECNP Thematic Working Groups

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1. BACKGROUND

Thematic Working Groups (TWGs) serve to flexibly support novel and more targeted collaborations across existing ECNP Networks. A TWG could for example be established in response to an EU project call or to establish a certain technology (e.g. apps for monitoring patients).

A TWG is based on the initiative of a core group composed of up to six persons, who have specific expertise on the novel transnosological, timely and overarching theme. A core group may be formed by people who are not ECNP Networks members. This group prepares the initial proposal and subsequently invites additional representatives with relevant and supplementary expertise from (other) existing ECNP Networks and, whenever relevant, partners from industry or other experts.

The final proposal (including the scope, the action plan, the timeline, the budget, and the final composition of the team) must be approved by the Networks Board. Once approved, the TWG can obtain funding from ECNP.

1. 1 Objectives of ECNP TWGs
- The creation of multiple transnosological themed working groups in applied neuroscience.
- To initiate collaborations to compete successfully for European funding or help shape policies and future calls.
- To disseminate the output of the working groups on identified ECNP platforms, including the annual ECNP Congress.

2. CONTACT POINT

The ECNP Office is the main initial contact point for the ECNP TWGs.
You can contact us and send any question to: ecnp-networks@ecnp.eu
See here for FAQs about the TWGs and Networks.

3. APPLICATION

Formation of a TWG follows a two-stage application process: in stage 1, the core group prepares the initial proposal, followed by an assessment by the Networks Board; in stage 2, after the initial proposal is approved, the core group invites additional representatives with relevant expertise from existing ECNP Networks and possibly, partners from industry or other experts needed to fulfil the aim of the TWG.

During the evaluation process and before the final approval, the main applicant must present the initiative at one of the ECNP Networks Taskforce meetings, to promote the TWG and facilitate the interactions with existing Networks.

Before preparing your application, please visit the ECNP website to discover more about our current Networks and Thematic Working Groups (TWGs).

3.1 Requirements of TWG and its members
- Members of a TWG must be or need to become ECNP members once the proposal is accepted. Within 4 weeks after the approval, all the members of the TWG must be ECNP members. For information regarding ECNP membership, click here.
- Members must be recognised as current or upcoming European leaders in the relevant domain of basic, translational and/or clinical neuroscience.
- TWG members must be based in successful European research or clinical centres with a considerable track-record in research and external funding within translational neuroscience.
- TWG members must have already launched or be involved in successful collaborations with other centres.
- All the TWG members must agree on a single Chair, who is the main person responsible to represent the TWG, to present the application and to communicate with ECNP.

- There is no set maximum number of members per TWG. TWG is encouraged to consider how to best organise themselves, and experience shows that a group of max. 15 persons is an efficient approach and will fit into the overall budget.
- Members from outside Europe can be accepted in the TWG if their expertise, lab resources or data are deemed necessary for the aims of the TWG (e.g. preparing a grant application).

When evaluating the proposal, the Networks Board will take the composition of the TWG into account (geographical distribution, gender balance, career stages and scientific complementarity).

3.2 Requirements of the initial application for the creation of a TWG (stage 1)

1. A short (max 3 pages) document that describes the main goals and aims of the TWG. This document should clearly address how the proposed TWG is complementary and synergistic with existing ECNP Networks or TWG. If an ECNP Network or TWG already exists in the same domain, the application should clearly state how the proposed TWG is complementary, meets unmet needs, and can strengthen the goals of the already existing ECNP Networks and TWGs.
2. A list of the 6 people forming the core group including their affiliation and the reason for their inclusion. At this stage non-ECNP members can be included, but once the proposal is accepted, they must become ECNP members.
3. A list of the main roles and responsibilities of each centre/member.
4. A clear time schedule of the actions to be taken by the TWG.
5. A provisional budget (see section 6).
6. If applicable, the name of the research call to which the TWG will respond with a proposal.
7. Agreement to include both the name of the ECNP TWG and the representatives of the collaborative centres as authors in the project proposal and in the acknowledgements in any manuscript related to the work accomplished by the TWG.

3.3 Requirements of the final application for the creation of a TWG (stage 2)

1. Any update on the original application requested by the Networks Board.
2. The names of additional representatives with relevant expertise (and role and responsibilities in the TWG) from:
   - **Existing ECNP Networks:** coherence between Networks and TWG is assured by attempting to have at least one member from a minimum of three ECNP Networks in the TWG.
   - **Other centres/industries:** 1 representative per centre/industry indicating their relevant and supplementary expertise. These experts do not have to be part of an existing ECNP Network. Industries and centres (academies or institutions) should provide expertise which is fundamental for the TWG aim and that cannot be found in the existing ECNP Networks.

Applicant(s) must make sure to balance the members in terms of gender, career stage and geography (i.e. the number of countries, geographical spread and the numbers of centres per country (usually two per country))

3.4 Order of the application (see 'TWG creation workflow' below for details)

The application is assessed by the Networks Board and may be subject to their requested changes, updates and additional information.

Stage 1:
1. The initial proposal is sent to ecnp-networks@ecnp.eu to the attention of the ECNP Networks Board.
2. The ECNP Networks Board will discuss the proposal and, if deemed necessary, consult the ECNP Executive Committee.
3. The ECNP Networks Board will decide if to proceed to stage 2.
4. ECNP Office will send the decision of the ECNP Networks Board to the main applicant.
   If stage 1 is passed, the main applicant is invited to present the proposal during a Taskforce meeting before approval of stage 2 can be given.

Stage 2:
1. The full proposal including the additional representatives (see above) is sent to ecnp-networks@ecnp.eu to the attention of the ECNP Networks Board.

2. The ECNP Networks Board will discuss the proposal and will decide for or against funding, given the overall budgetary position.
3. ECNP Office will send the decision of the ECNP Networks Board to the main applicant.
4. Failed applications can be reconsidered after two years.

3.5 Post approval, duration, end, renewal or change of a TWG
- A TWG exists:
  a. for a maximum of 1 year. At the end of the year, the Networks Board will proceed with a final assessment to decide on the next step of the TWG: end, renewal (for another year) or eventual transition into an ECNP Network.

  or (if applicable)

  b. for the period of applying for a research call. The TWG must inform the ECNP Office and Networks Board of progress and outcomes of its proposal to the call. The Networks Board will decide on the next step of the TWG.

4. ORGANISATION
4.1 Chair of the TWG
The main applicant of the TWG proposal becomes Chair once the TWG is approved and will become part of the Network Taskforce. The work of the Chair is seen as voluntary work. No funds are available for organisational hours or administrative support etc. The Chair of TWG should also read the Network Guidelines for a full understanding of the organisation of ECNP Networks and TWGs.
Requirements of TWG Chair are the following:
- Give guidance to the TWG.
- Be the contact persons between the TWG and the ECNP Networks Board/ECNP Office.
- Be an ECNP member.
- Obliged to attend the Taskforce Meetings in February/March and during the ECNP Congress.
- Make sure the TWG follows its aims and objectives.

5. DELIVERABLES AND EVALUATION AFTER APPROVAL
ECNP regularly and carefully evaluates the progress and state of the TWGs to ensure that the TWGs are in accordance with good governance and the accounting principles of a non-profit organisation. Evaluations are based on the annual report and deliverables of the TWGs.

Deliverables required from the TWG include, among others:
- List of TWG members that is published on the ECNP website, including member name and affiliation. Whenever changes in memberships occur, the ECNP Office needs to be promptly informed.
- Annual report on general achievements of the TWG, including current and planned activities of the current year (e.g. funded projects, submitted proposals, publications, symposia), dissemination activities within and outside ECNP, possible "special projects" (see section 6.2). The ECNP Office provides a template to prepare the report. The report is discussed during the Taskforce meeting in February/March (see section 6.1).
- Update on achievements of TWG members regarding the main goals and objectives of the TWG.
- Notes and minutes of TWG meetings (or conference calls) to be sent to the ECNP Office within two weeks after the meeting. These should include a list of attendees.
- List of planned, submitted or funded projects through European Programmes (e.g. HORIZON 2020, IHI) or other funding agencies.
- List of publications from the TWG, specifying those acknowledging the ECNP Networks support.
- TWG attendance and activities at symposia, public domain etc.
- Activities with other ECNP Network or Thematic Working Group (TWG).

The deliverables will be posted on the TWG special page on the ECNP website.
The annual report (with updates) is also used during the final assessment (see section 3.5)
See the Networks guidelines at this page for an overview of the evaluation criteria (section 'Evaluation).

6. FINANCE

The applicant and members of the TWG must agree with the following statements:

1. The maximum total budget for all the activities of the TWG is EUR 15,000.
2. The TWG can organise TWG stand-alone meetings (against the TWG budget).
3. Upon the evaluation of the outcomes by the Networks Board, new additional activities may be accepted to be included in the TWG budget (besides meetings organisation). For details, see the section 6.2 '*Special projects*'. The maximum budget remains EUR 15,000 in total.
4. ECNP also offers to support with up to € 5,000, to engage an agency to help put together a proposal for EU-funded project. If the application is successful, this amount must be returned to ECNP. This is not part of the budget of EUR 15,000 of the TWG.
5. During the application process, ECNP can provide funds to organise a preliminary meeting (if requested by the core group). This preliminary meeting (exclusively for the core group) must aim to finalise the stage 2 of the application (e.g. defining the action plan, the timeline, the links with existing ECNP Networks). The costs for this meeting are against the TWG budget.
6. The costs for the initial formal presentation of the TWG at the Networks Taskforce meeting are against the TWG budget.
7. All TWG members must agree and follow the ECNP reimbursement and support policy (see section 6.1).
8. TWG Chair has full responsibility to administer the costs of the TWG according to the ECNP reimbursement policy. ECNP Office will provide support for this.
9. If the TWG ends at any time, the budget amount not spent remains with ECNP.

6.1 TWG Budget

The following items are part of the TWG budget of EUR 15,000:

- Taskforce meetings (see [Network Guideline](#) for details)
- Stand-alone meetings
- Special projects

ECNP does not support research activities of the TWGs. Hence, the following items are NOT part of the TWG budget and are NOT eligible for reimbursement:

- Implementation of a research protocol, for recruiting patients, for generating or analysing data, for recruiting new centres, etc..
- Mailing and other communication with ECNP.

Secretarial support

TWGs can use a secretary to manage their administration activities. The TWGs can use their budget to financially support the secretary. The request of support for secretarial support must provide the following information:

- A list of the activities to perform.
- An estimate of the hours of work.
- An estimate of the hourly rate.

An invoice must be sent to ECNP from the institute which staff has supported the secretarial activity (including timesheet, activities and salary slips). The total maximum reimbursable secretariat support amount cannot exceed EUR 3,000 for the whole period of existence. Secretarial activities eligible for reimbursement are:

- ✓ Organisation of stand-alone Meetings (for example, time spent to reserve hotel and venue, agenda and minutes preparation).
- ✓ Mailing and other communication between TWG members.
- ✓ Organisation of conference calls.
- ✓ Preparation of the annual report of activities (duty Chair).
- ✓ Preparation of the invoices and documentation for reimbursement of the TWG activities using their budget.
- ✓ Give input and content on a regular basis for the TWG's page at the ECNP website.

Any secretarial activity not related to the above work for a TWG is not eligible for reimbursement.

TWG Meetings and reimbursement policy

Costs for meeting organisation that can be claimed in the TWG budget are:

✓ Room rental, catering and AV equipment - at the lowest cost possible.
✓ Travel and accommodation of participants according to the following policy:

Only TWG members being an ECNP member can request reimbursement for the travel.
All travel reimbursements need to be claimed within two weeks after the meeting. The ECNP Office can provide the correct reimbursement form to be used for travel costs and it should be sent to the appropriate participants before the meeting. Travel reimbursement include:

- Free registration at annual ECNP Congress: only applicable for the chair of the TWG attending the Taskforce Meeting.
- Reimbursement of one night at a hotel with a maximum of EUR 160.
- Reimbursement of travel costs from city of origin to congress/meeting city and back if attending a taskforce or stand-alone meeting for a maximum fixed amount of EUR 350 within Europe and EUR 1,100 from outside Europe based on:
  - International train ticket return journey based on second class from the train station nearest to your city of resident to the city of your meeting

  or

  - flight ticket at airfare round trip economy class ticket from the airport nearest your city of resident to the city of the meeting under the conditions that the ticket cannot be cancelled, is non-flexible and the booking is done as early as possible (statistically proven 8 weeks prior to the meeting)

  or

  - driving by car with petrol reimbursement (max. EUR 0.25 per km), tolls, and parking costs (at the congress/meeting location only) from your city of residence to the city of the meeting.

Additional travel costs (such as taxi costs to/from the airport or to hotel) will not be reimbursed.

Rules for TWG meetings

1. The total available budget for the meeting (to cover the total costs of room rental, catering, equipment, travel and accommodation of participants) is calculated by ECNP on the base of the number of expected participants who are also ECNP members, using this formula: EUR 600 x N (N= expected attending ECNP members).
2. The above formula does NOT imply that there is a maximum budget for travel expenses per person (e.g. EUR 600). Each participant is reimbursed on the base of the travel policy and if the total budget allows.
3. *Stand-alone meetings are for TWG members. However, if the topic of the meeting requires invitation of experts not members of the TWG, their travel costs might be reimbursed by exception.* These experts are not TWG members, but their presence is deemed necessary because of their unique expertise within the scope of the meeting. A request to invite these experts should be sent to the ECNP Office for approval, at least two weeks before the meeting. These invitees are reimbursed against the TWG budget *if they are ECNP members*.
4. Agenda and minutes must be sent to the ECNP Office within two weeks after the meeting. No reimbursements can be administered until minutes are not received.
5. A member of the TWG, who cannot join a stand-alone meeting, cannot transfer the right of reimbursement to another person.

6.2 Special projects

Special projects aim to further promote the activities of TWG. TWGs can obtain reimbursement for special projects upon Network Board approval. The following items are eligible:

- Data entry
- Open access publications fees
- Special travel of the Chair or Co-Chair
- Special Expert
- Grant proposal preparation (not part of the budget of Network and TWG)

See the Networks guidelines at [this page](#) for more details (section 'Special projects').

7. TWG CREATION WORKFLOW

STAGE 1

Application, core group
- Application of the initial proposal by the core group

First assessment and approval of TWG proposal by ECNP Networks Board

Internal promotion of the initiative
- ECNP Office formally announces the approval of the initiative to the Network Taskforce
- A formal initial presentation of the TWG at the Network Taskforce is due before to obtain the second final approval
- The core group can organise a preliminary meeting to prepare the final proposal

STAGE 2

Link with existing ECNP Networks
- The core group invites additional representatives with relevant expertise from existing ECNP Networks and, possibly, partners from industry or other additional experts from other centres.
- The TWG should have links with at least one member from a minimum of three ECNP's existing Networks in the TWG.
- ECNP Office will support the core group to contact the Networks members

Final proposal
- Application of the final proposal by the core group indicating scope, timeline, action plan, composition of the team (including links with existing ECNP networks) and budget.

Second assessment and approval of TWG proposal by ECNP Networks Board

TWG final approval