

# **Regulations for the "National Network Computational Neuroscience - Bernstein Award" Funding Initiative within the framework of the National Network for Computational Neuroscience**

## **1. Funding purpose and legal basis**

### **1.1 Funding purpose**

Computational Neuroscience is a very dynamic research discipline in the field of the neurosciences. With its interdisciplinary approach and systematic cooperation between biology, medicine, physics, mathematics and computer science, this research area promises the accelerated generation of new findings as well as major impetus for application-oriented fields such as health research, information technology and education.

Within the framework of its funding priority "National Network Computational Neuroscience" the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) has established high-performing structures such as the "Bernstein Centres for Computational Neuroscience" and the "Bernstein Foci: Neurotechnology" in order to develop a new quality in Computational Neuroscience, for networking this research area and for promoting its international visibility.

It is particularly important to attract excellent young researchers in order to lastingly strengthen and establish Computational Neuroscience as a field of research in Germany. The Bernstein Initiatives contribute substantially to achieving this goal with their concepts for supporting junior researchers at the level of study programmes and postgraduate studies. But there is also a great need to attract and support young researchers at the level of research group leaders, where they will be able to develop their own research profile and greater scientific independence by establishing and heading their own junior research groups.

The "Bernstein Award" funding activity aims to support research projects in the field of Computational Neuroscience, thus enabling excellent young researchers working in this field to implement innovative project ideas in Computational Neuroscience in the German research environment. This is intended inter alia to promote the academic qualification of these outstanding young researchers. The projects supported under the "Bernstein Award" initiative will become an integral part of the National Network for Computational Neuroscience and give new impetus to scientific activities.

### **1.2 Legal basis**

Projects can be supported with grants awarded in accordance with the present funding regulations, the BMBF's standard terms and conditions for grants on expenditure or cost basis and the administrative regulations under section 44 of the Federal Budget Code (BHO). Applicants have no legal claim to a grant. The grant-awarding agency will decide freely after due assessment of the circumstances within the framework of the budget funds available.

## **2. Object of funding**

Funding is provided for research projects which have been designed by young, German or foreign postdocs which the latter will conduct at a German research institution. Researchers are required to furnish evidence of extraordinary scientific achievements in the field of Computational Neuroscience. By realizing research projects which they have designed and will supervise themselves and by establishing their own junior research group, the young project leaders are to be given an opportunity to conduct independent research. The funded research projects are to be conducted at a German university or scientific institution within or outside the Bernstein Centres.

The funded projects of the young researchers are to be integrated in the National Network for Computational Neuroscience in order to strengthen this network. The young researchers should therefore participate in the annual workshops and status seminars of the Bernstein Centres. The purpose of the status seminars is to facilitate exchanges on the progress and results of research and to promote networking between the Bernstein Initiatives.

### **3. Grant recipients**

Research proposals may be submitted by institutions of higher education and non-university research institutions based in Germany. Research institutions which receive joint basic funding from the Federal Government and the Länder can only be awarded project funding to cover their additional expenditure under certain conditions.

### **4. Prerequisites for funding**

Funding under the "Bernstein Award" initiative is only provided for innovative research projects which have been designed by outstanding postdocs and will be conducted by them at a university or non-university research institution in Germany. A project will only be eligible for funding if the university or research institution concerned employs the young researcher during the funding period. Furthermore, it is expected that the working facilities required for carrying out the project (basic equipment in terms of laboratory space and other infrastructure) will be made available and the young researcher supported in all matters. A statement made to that effect by the receiving institution must be included with the project outline to be submitted.

In their own interest, applicants should familiarize themselves with the EU's Research Framework Programme in the context of the planned national project. They should check whether the planned project includes specific European components which make it eligible for exclusive EU funding. Applicants should furthermore examine whether an additional application for funding can be submitted to the EU in the context of the planned national project. Applicants should briefly state the results of such an examination in their national application.

### **5. Type, scope and rates of funding**

Project funding may be awarded in the form of non-repayable grants.

The basis for calculating the grants for universities, research and science institutions and similar establishments is the project-related expenditure eligible for funding (grants for Helmholtz centres and the Fraunhofer Gesellschaft (FhG) will be calculated on the basis of the project-related costs eligible for funding); up to 100 per cent of this expenditure/costs can be funded in individual cases. Under the "Bernstein Award" initiative, funding will be provided for one research project per year within the framework of relevant medium-term fiscal planning. The maximum funding period for each individual project is five years. Funding for each individual project can amount to up to €1.25 million over the entire project period.

During the project period, funding can be provided for the position of the young project leader (up to salary group E14 TVöD or Ib BAT), for up to two positions for further scientific staff (E13 TVöD or IIa BAT), and for the required technical personnel in accordance with the relevant collective agreements. Funding cannot be provided for posts which are financed from public funds. Equipment and investment costs will be reimbursed pursuant to the other terms and conditions which are applicable.

### **6. Other terms and conditions for awarding funds**

The Nebenbestimmungen für Zuwendungen auf Kostenbasis des BMBF an Unternehmen der gewerblichen Wirtschaft für Forschungs- und Entwicklungsvorhaben (Auxiliary Terms and Conditions for Funds Provided by the BMBF to Commercial Companies for Research and Development Projects on a Cost Basis – NKBF 98) will be part of the notification of award for grants on a cost basis. The Allgemeine Nebenbestimmungen für Zuwendungen zur Projektförderung (General Auxiliary Conditions for Grants for the Promotion of Projects – ANBest-P) and the Besondere Nebenbestimmungen für Zuwendungen des BMBF zur Projektförderung auf Ausgabenbasis (Special Auxiliary Terms and Conditions for Funds Provided by the BMBF for the Promotion of Projects on an Expenditure Basis – BNBest-BMBF 98) will be part of the notification of award for grants on an expenditure basis.

### **7. Procedure**

#### **7.1 Involvement of a project management organization and request for documents**

The BMBF has commissioned the following project management organization to implement the funding activity:

Projekträger im DLR  
Gesundheitsforschung  
Heinrich-Konen-Str. 1  
53227 Bonn  
Germany  
Tel.: +49 (0)228 3821-1210 (Secretariat)  
Fax: +49 (0)228 3821-1257  
Internet: <http://www.pt-dlr.de/>

The contact is Dr. Olaf Krüger (Tel. +49 (0)228 3821-1296; e-mail: [olaf.krueger.1@dlr.de](mailto:olaf.krueger.1@dlr.de)). Application forms, guidelines, information for applicants and the auxiliary terms and conditions can be obtained from the project management organization. Applicants are strongly recommended to use the electronic application system "[easy](#)" for drafting formal applications.

## **7.2 Two-tiered funding procedure**

The funding procedure is two-tiered.

### **7.2.1 Submission and selection of project outlines**

In a first step, written project outlines must be submitted by post to the project management organization (PT-DLR)

**by 02 May 2012 at the latest.**

With a view to the international evaluation procedure, it is recommended that the project outlines be submitted to the PT-DLR **in English**.

The deadline for submission is not a cut-off deadline. However, it may prove impossible to consider project outlines which are received after that date. Depending on demand and the available budget funds, it will be considered whether further deadlines for the submission of proposals will be announced separately in future years.

Young German and foreign researchers who meet the criteria set out in this announcement are entitled to submit project outlines in agreement with the receiving university or research institution.

The project outlines must include a description structured along the following lines:

- Name of the young researcher, full office address, contact details (phone, fax, e-mail)
- A meaningful CV (up to five pages, Arial 11 pt), which includes achievements in Computational Neuroscience (e. g. supervision of young researchers, national and international cooperation, raising of external funds, invitation to or hosting of conferences, membership of editorial boards of relevant scientific journals, expert opinions, other activities)
- List of publications
- Preliminary project description for the research programme of the entire proposed junior research group, including all planned scientific and technical staff members (up to ten pages Arial 11 pt) and a financial plan
- Statement from the university or research institution at which the research programme is to be carried out confirming that the young researcher will be provided with the working facilities needed to perform the project (basic equipment in terms of laboratory space and other infrastructure) and will be supported in all matters.

Applicants are requested to submit 10 copies of their outlines.

A legal claim cannot be derived from the submission of a project outline.

The evaluation of the project outlines received will involve external experts and be based on the following criteria:

- a) Previous achievements of the young researcher in the field of Computational Neuroscience
  - Scientific work including publications

- Supervisory activities
- International activities
- Other activities (raising of external funds, etc.)

b) Quality of the proposed research programme

- Scientific and methodical quality
- Scientific expertise of the applicant
- Innovative potential
- Reference to research focuses of the host institution.

On the basis of the evaluation, a suitable project idea will then be selected for funding. The applicants will be informed in writing about the result of the selection procedure.

### **7.2.2 Submission of formal applications and decision-making procedure**

In a second step, applicants whose project outlines have been evaluated positively will be invited to submit (within six weeks of the invitation) a formal application of the institution where the research project is to be carried out; a decision on such formal application will be taken after final evaluation.

Approval and payment of and accounting for the funds as well as proof and examination of proper use and, if necessary, revocation of the award and reclaiming of the funds awarded are governed by the administrative regulations pertaining to section 44 of the Federal Budget Code (BHO) and sections 48 to 49a of the Administrative Procedure Act (VwVfG) unless deviation is allowed under the present funding regulations.

## **8. Entry into force**

These funding regulations will enter into force on the date of publication in the Federal Gazette (Bundesanzeiger).

Berlin, 22 July 2010

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