

## Press Release

# EuroNeurotrophin project - 14 Early Stage Researchers have been recruited

20 November, 2018

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### **14 Early Stage Researchers to be trained in a European training network for the discovery of small molecule neurotrophin mimetics as candidate therapeutic agents for neurodegeneration and neuro-inflammation.**

Neurodegenerative diseases (ND), like Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, Multiple Sclerosis and Motor Neuron Disease, are on the rise with population ageing. Alzheimer's disease alone affects 36 million people across the world, and 7 million in Europe. The economic burden for ND exceeds 724 billion € and it will reach a trillion euros by 2019. Currently, there is no cure for any ND and most of the available drugs fail to tackle ND pathogenesis.

Neurotrophins are a family of closely related secreted proteins that control a number of aspects of survival, development and function of neurons in both the central and the peripheral nervous systems. Preclinical studies point to the therapeutic potential of neurotrophins as a means of tackling both the symptoms (improving clinical status) and the pathogenesis (delaying disease progression) in several NDs despite their varied and incompletely understood underlying pathogeneses. However, poor pharmacokinetic properties of neurotrophins render their use as drugs prohibitive.

The EU-funded project EuroNeurotrophin, is the first European consortium to study small molecule neurotrophin mimetics in depth, and in order to progress their clinical translation will build the research capacity necessary for the development of novel candidate therapies. The EuroNeurotrophin network consists of 10 Beneficiaries and 8 Partner Organisations from 9 countries who together provide a highly multidisciplinary and intersectoral training and research scheme.

Coordinated by the National Hellenic Research Foundation ([www.eie.gr](http://www.eie.gr)), EuroNeurotrophin started on 1 January 2018 and will run for 4 years. The participants will address the major limitations of neurotrophins by developing novel small molecule mimetics with favourable profiles of stability, tissue penetration and targeted biological actions.

Most importantly, the project aims at creating a new generation of young scientists with a broad understanding and skill set in chemical biology and drug discovery with emphasis on the field of neuroscience, particularly as related to neurotrophins



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 765704

14 Early Stage Researchers (ESRs) have been recruited to research new approaches to ND treatment by capitalising on a synergistic combination of medicinal chemistry, natural product isolation, computer-aided drug design, structural biology, molecular biology, pharmacology, high throughput screening and 'omics' technologies. The project will contribute to the development of small molecule therapeutics for the treatment of neurodegenerative diseases and neuroinflammation, the understanding of neurotrophin receptor signalling, and the creation of a pan-European neurotrophin research network.

The National Hellenic Research Foundation (NHRF) ([www.eie.gr](http://www.eie.gr)), Institute of Biology, Medicinal Chemistry and Biotechnology, coordinates the project. NHRF is a multidisciplinary organisation aiming to develop basic research and advance scientific knowledge in selected areas of natural sciences and the humanities. IBMCB, one of the three Institutes of NHRF, was established in 2012 with the objective to act as a focal point, unique within Greece, of innovative research at the interface of Chemistry and Biology for resolving issues of great socio-economical importance in the areas of health, drug research and biotechnology through a state-of-the-art interdisciplinary approach. NHRF/IBMCB Research Director and Project Coordinator, Dr Theodora Calogeropoulou will participate through the synthesis of novel neurotrophin mimetics capitalising on previous promising patented results.

Two early stage researchers have been successfully recruited by NHRF, and are enrolled as Ph.D students at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. Mr Daniele Narducci (ESR1) and Ms Alessia Latorrata (ESR2), are both extremely enthusiastic about the project and are looking forward to the excellent training and research capabilities available to them through the EuroNeurotrophin consortium which will greatly impact on their careers.



## The EuroNeurotrophin Consortium - Kick-off Meeting, January 2018



### EuroNeurotrophin Facts and Figures

EuroNeurotrophin is a research project co-funded by the European Union.

- Involves 10 Beneficiaries and 8 Partner Organisations from 9 countries
- Started on 1 January 2018, Kick-off meeting 23-24 January 2018, will end on 31 December 2021
- Budget: 3.56 million euro
- Website: [www.euroneurotrophin.eu](http://www.euroneurotrophin.eu)
- Email: [info@euroneurotrophin.eu](mailto:info@euroneurotrophin.eu)
- Goal: A European training network for the discovery of small molecule neurotrophin mimetics as candidate therapeutic agents for neurodegeneration and neuroinflammation

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