

## Call for Research Proposals: Novel Omic Technology approaches to tackle specific unmet needs in Rheumatic and Musculoskeletal Disorders

### Introduction

The Foundation for Research in Rheumatology (FOREUM) recognizes the growing importance of novel omic technologies beyond transcriptome analysis such as proteomics, lipidomics, and metabolomics in advancing our understanding and management of rheumatic and musculoskeletal disorders (RMDs). We are pleased to announce our latest call for research proposals focused on harnessing **these emerging and increasingly important omic technologies for hypothesis-driven research in RMDs. The proposals should start from and focus on a clearly articulated unmet medical need and aim to provide solutions for the identified challenge.** Pure screening approaches without functional validation of the hypothesis will not be funded. This call aims to support collaborative consortia of at least three partner universities to undertake research that would be challenging to fund through generic calls across disciplines. By fostering collaboration and innovation, we aim to catalyze transformative research that will ultimately benefit individuals living with RMDs.

### Scope

We invite scientific proposals that address the following objectives:

1. Utilization of emerging Omic Technologies:

- **Develop and apply omic technologies such as proteomics, lipidomics, and metabolomics to provide solutions for unmet medical needs such as but not limited to immune-reset, induction of remission, prevention of flare.**

and/or

- **Focus on omic data integration and systems biology approaches to elucidate complex interactions within the immune system and the musculoskeletal system in RMDs.**

2. Hypothesis-Driven Research:

- Propose hypothesis-driven research projects that leverage emerging omic technologies to address specific research questions or hypotheses related to the identified unmet medical needs in the approach to RMDs. Provide strategies to validate and functionally confirm the omic findings.
- Focus on research areas where these omic technologies have the potential to provide novel insights or transformative solutions, including but not limited to autoimmune diseases, inflammatory arthritis, connective tissue disorders, and osteoarthritis.

3. Collaborative Consortia:

- Encourage the formation of collaborative consortia involving at least three partner universities from different countries to facilitate interdisciplinary research and knowledge exchange.
- Foster collaboration between basic scientists, clinicians, bioinformaticians, and computational biologists to ensure the translation of omic data into clinical applications and patient benefits.

### **Eligibility**

FOREUM primarily encourages collaboration across Europe and therefore requires multi-centre project applications involving partners from at least three different countries. Any given institution shall be allowed to lead on only one application. However, that institution, or its staff may participate in other projects as collaborators. The call shall be open to participants from EULAR membership countries. Also, the Principal Investigator should come from a [EULAR membership country](#). Centres from non-EULAR membership countries can participate as partners in exceptional cases (e.g. specific scientific expertise), but will not be eligible to receive research funding. Members of the FOREUM committees and EULAR Council are not allowed to submit or to participate in applications.

### **Budget**

The call is designed to fund a range of research projects. An individual proposal may be funded with up to a maximal amount of **600.000 Euro for a 3-year funding period**, provided the expenditure is appropriately justified. Collaborating partners should have a substantial part of the budget to appropriately conduct research. Projects will be subjected to an interim evaluation of progress and will have to offer a written final report. Submitted publications can be used as part of the report.

### **How to apply**

Applications should be made electronically via the following link (please chose Topic call): [APPLY HERE](#)  
For any questions or issues, contact us at [www.foreum.org](http://www.foreum.org).

### **Letter of intent**

All applicants considering submission of a proposal are invited to fill out an online 'scientific letter of intent' form by **27 October 2024**, accompanied by an online 'lay (non-scientific language for the general public) summary letter of intent' form, for review by patients.

Letters of intent should not only include information on the study question and its novelty, but also the agreement of the participating centers to collaborate in data analyses or to provide aggregated or raw data in line with national regulations and their governing boards. Letters of intent will be assessed by members of the FOREUM Scientific Committee on these aspects:

- Relevance to the subject matter of the call
- Feasibility
- Novelty and importance for the field of rheumatology
- Design and processes

Applications deemed meritorious of full application will be selected on a competitive basis. Please note that the lay summary is a critical part of our evaluation as the views of people with RMDs are central in our decision making process. Trained Patient Research Partners will evaluate the lay summary on these aspects:

- Relevance to the call and importance for patients
- Active participation of people with Rheumatic or Musculoskeletal Diseases
- Burden for patients participating in this study

The Secretariat will respond by 09 December 2024 as to whether the proposal meets the scope, priority and requirements of the call such that a full application will be invited.

### **Full project proposal**

Selected applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal; they will receive an invitation to extend their letter of intent into a full proposal. To facilitate review by patients, additionally a lay (non-scientific language for the general public) summary must also be completed at this stage. Both forms will be available within the online submission platform. Full research proposals must be submitted electronically by **02 February 2025**.

### **Participation of patient research partners**

Participation of patient research partners is strongly recommended for all research projects to provide experiential knowledge, with the aim of improving the relevance, quality and validity of the research process.

For more information, please read the material on [PARE Patient Research Partners | EULAR](#)

### **Evaluation and decision**

The proposals will be independently peer-reviewed to evaluate their feasibility, novelty, design, relevance, and potential impact relative to the subject matter of the call. In addition, the involvement of patient-related research partners will be evaluated. Based on this peer review, the FOREUM Scientific Committee will make a funding recommendation to the FOREUM Executive Committee, which will make funding decisions in **March 2025**. Final decisions will be communicated by the FOREUM Secretariat by the **end of March 2025**.

### **Ethical aspects**

FOREUM expects a high standard in the conduct of research it funds. For researchers this includes scientific integrity and adherence to the principles of good research practice. Patients subjected to investigation shall be included with due adherence to the declaration of Helsinki.

Declaration of Interest forms will be completed by all successful applicants.

### **Management of the call**

The FOREUM call and approval process will be administered by the FOREUM Secretariat, together with the FOREUM Scientific Committee.

#### **Call timeline**

Approved	
Call issued	23 September 2024
Closing date for Letter of intent	27 October 2024
Decisions on Letter of intent announced	09 December 2024
Closing date for full proposals	02 February 2025
Decisions on full proposals announced	21 March 2025

### **Inquiries**

For general inquiries please contact the FOREUM Secretariat at [info@foreum.org](mailto:info@foreum.org).