

## Call for research proposals on E-health

### Introduction

**E-Health:** The World Health Organisation defines eHealth as the cost-effective and secure use of information and communications technologies in support of health and health-related fields, including health-care services, health surveillance, health literature, and health education, knowledge, and research. The rapid development of user-friendly technologies and diverse interfaces between patients and health care professionals continues to increase the impact that eHealth has on the delivery of health care in different fields of medicine including that of rheumatic and musculoskeletal disorders (RMDs). While promising and exciting, there are enormous challenges to ensure that E-health makes health care more efficient and more responsive to people's needs and expectations, for instance due to unequal access to the use of technology.

FOREUM seeks to support projects that focus on stimulating application-driven research and innovations that allow to improve both individual and population health of people living with RMDs (for instance via personalized treatment approaches). This call is about the impactful integration of technology into care for people living with RMDs and not about the development of new hard- or software. Projects will also be evaluated for sustainability in long-term patient care.

We therefore call for projects that aim to help those living with RMDs to

- gain insight into their own health, related to daily functioning and (inter)related determinants.
- manage their health and daily functioning.
- contribute to health research (i.e., citizen science) using health (related) data.

We welcome projects that innovate the research area of E-health in RMDs by including several of the following dimensions:

- making health care more efficient and resilient, and decrease health care costs e.g., by enhanced communication possibilities and direct patient involvement.
- reflecting on ethical challenges and issues associated with information collection, sharing and privacy.
- increasing evidence-based approaches and concepts to E-health tools and interventions.
- using E-health approaches to empower the people living with RMD in their self-management as well as health care providers to have optimal access to information for decision-making and strategy definition.
- providing novel tools for education of underserved areas in the RMD healthcare ecosystem.
- enabling better access to optimal care and information for underserved people living with RMDs, in particular those facing socio-demographic or geographic challenges.
- building new relationships between health professionals and/or people living with RMDs in a next generation partnership that supports optimal shared decision making.
- stimulating initiatives to make E-health accessible to all persons living with RMDs e.g., by optimizing E-health approaches and technologies for those persons that live with disability and limitations.

### **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 Executive Committee are not allowed to submit or to participate in applications.

### **Budget**

The E-health 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 (email to [info@foreum.org](mailto:info@foreum.org)). Necessary application forms can be downloaded at [www.foreum.org](http://www.foreum.org).

### **Letter of intent**

All applicants considering submission of a proposal are invited to send a short 'scientific letter of intent' by **6 November 2022** to FOREUM (email to [info@foreum.org](mailto:info@foreum.org)) accompanied by a 'lay (non-scientific language for the general public) summary letter of intent', for review by patients. The structure and required content of the letter of intent are described in the 'Letter of intent template' available from [www.foreum.org](http://www.foreum.org). 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
- Appropriateness of the research design and methods
- Active participation of people with Rheumatic or Musculoskeletal Diseases
- Burden for patients participating in this study

The Secretariat will respond by **12 February 2023** 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 be sent the full project proposal template. 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 provided to applicants invited to submit a full proposal. Full research proposals must be submitted electronically by **11 April 2023** to the FOREUM Secretariat.

### **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

[http://www.eular.org/pare\\_patient\\_research\\_partners.cfm](http://www.eular.org/pare_patient_research_partners.cfm)

### **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 June 2023. Final decisions will be communicated by the FOREUM Secretariat by beginning of July 2023.

### **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**

Call issued	26 September 2022
Closing date for Letter of intent	06 November 2022
Decisions on Letter of intent announced	12 February 2023
Closing date for full proposals	11 April 2023
Decisions on full proposals announced	03 July 2023