



Call for Communities of Practice

The NEUROAGE Network will support four Communities of Practice, one in each priority area, bringing researchers, health and care professionals, companies, patients and caregivers together to identify the challenges that matter and turn them into innovation that reaches society.

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Objective of the call

The mission of the NEUROAGE Network is to accelerate the translation of scientific discoveries so that they have a tangible impact on society. To support this mission, the NEUROAGE Network will support the establishment and consolidation of four Communities of Practice (CoPs), one for each priority area, exclusively for NEUROAGE members.

The objective is to promote participatory research and innovation processes that bring together researchers, healthcare and other professionals, patients, families, associations, and other societal stakeholders in order to identify key challenges, inform research priorities, generate societal impact, and build sustainable communities in the fields of aging and neurodegenerative diseases.

Within NEUROAGE, CoPs are expected to act as strategic engines for community engagement, challenge identification and ecosystem mobilization. By participating in a CoP, stakeholders will contribute to:

- Advancing healthy aging: supporting solutions that promote autonomy, independence, wellbeing and quality of life throughout later life.



- Tackling neurodegenerative diseases: identifying opportunities to improve prevention, diagnosis, monitoring, treatment and care pathways for conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease and related disorders.
- Accelerating innovation: transforming real-world needs into innovation challenges that can be addressed through collaborative research, entrepreneurship, technology development and implementation.
- Strengthening knowledge transfer: facilitating the translation of scientific discoveries and technological developments into practical solutions with social, healthcare and economic impact.
- Building a sustainable ecosystem: creating long-term collaborations among researchers, clinicians, companies, public organizations, patients and caregivers.

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What is a Community of Practice?

A CoP is a group of people who share a concern, a set of challenges, or a common interest in a particular topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in that area through ongoing interaction and collaboration (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002).

CoPs provide an opportunity to break down silos by bringing together people with lived and professional experience of aging, dementia and other age-related conditions (Watson et al., 2024). Lived experience is understood broadly: it includes the experience of aging itself, not only the experience of disease.

The establishment of a CoP creates a collaborative environment in which researchers, healthcare professionals, patients, caregivers, associations and other societal stakeholders jointly identify priorities, exchange knowledge, and co-create solutions that enhance the societal impact of research on aging and neurodegenerative diseases.

CoPs should help answer questions such as:

- What are the most pressing unmet needs in healthy aging and neurodegenerative diseases?
- What barriers prevent the adoption of innovative solutions?
- Which technologies, services or care models have the greatest potential impact?
- Where are the main opportunities for collaboration between research institutions, healthcare providers, companies and public authorities?

- Which challenges should be prioritized for future innovation support actions and hackathons?

The knowledge generated through the CoPs will constitute the foundation for subsequent challenge analysis, innovation workshops, hackathons, pilot projects and technology transfer activities.

THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE AT WORK



FROM CHALLENGES TO IMPACT



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Thematic areas

The four CoPs supported by the NEUROAGE Network must be aligned with one of the thematic areas listed below. These areas were defined on the basis of the research lines and activities reported by NEUROAGE member entities. The Network aims to establish one CoP in each thematic area.

- Healthy aging
- Parkinson's disease
- Alzheimer's disease
- Open topic related to aging and neurodegenerative diseases

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Eligibility

Applications must be led by a researcher affiliated with a NEUROAGE member entity, holding a PhD, with an established track record in their field of expertise. Experience in collaborating with patient organizations and other societal stakeholders will be considered an asset.

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Composition of the Community of Practice

The Community of Practice must already be constituted at the time of application, with a minimum of 10 confirmed members. Applications must list



every member by name, together with their organization, profile and role within the CoP, and must include written confirmation of participation from each member. Applications that present only an intention to recruit members will not be considered.

Coordinator

The CoP Coordinator is responsible for leading the selection, recruitment, engagement, communication, dissemination and follow-up of CoP members.

Members

CoP members are expected to participate actively in CoP activities, share knowledge and experience, and contribute ideas and proposals that advance the objectives of the community. All members must have a clear connection to the thematic area of the CoP they join.

Recommended composition

Each CoP must have at least 10 confirmed members at the time of application and is expected to grow to 14–17 members over the course of the cycle. The composition should be distributed as follows:

- 70% patients, family members, caregivers, patient associations and representatives of civil society.
- 30% professionals, including healthcare professionals and researchers, and up to 10% technology and industry partners.

Gender balance

Applicants are expected to promote gender balance in the composition of the CoP wherever possible, ensuring equitable representation and inclusive participation across all stakeholder groups.

Support during the application period

The NEUROAGE Network will publish a map of its stakeholder ecosystem to help applicants build their CoPs. During the application period, applicants may also contact the Network with specific requests — for example, to be introduced to a particular member company, institution or patient organization (see neuroage.net for an overview of all member institutions) — and the Network will facilitate the introduction wherever possible.

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The CoP development process

The CoPs will follow a co-creation process facilitated by the VHIR Impact and Responsible Research and Innovation (IRRI) Office that combines qualitative, participatory, deliberative, creative and ethnographic methodologies in order to:

- identify needs
- prioritize challenges
- develop research recommendations
- design awareness-raising and dissemination activities

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What NEUROAGE offers

Each selected CoP will receive the following support from the NEUROAGE Network, within the first cycle of the Network, which ends on 31 December 2028:

SUPPORT PACKAGE

- Up to three co-creation workshops of two hours each, facilitated by the VHIR IRRI Office, to identify challenges — health-related, care-related, social or technological — within the selected thematic area. NEUROAGE will produce a final report summarizing the primary challenges identified and the recommendations generated.
- Participation in one NEUROAGE hackathon event, in which the challenges prioritized by the CoPs will be addressed.
- Communication and public visibility of the CoP through the NEUROAGE communication channels, including support in presenting the CoP, its members and its results to the wider public.

The selection does not involve a transfer of funds: selected CoPs receive services, facilitation and visibility.

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What the CoP commits to

**REQUIREMENTS**

- The community must be constituted at the time of application, with at least 10 members named and their participation confirmed in writing.
- The applicant must commit to disseminating the work of the CoP: at least one in-person presentation to the Network or the wider ecosystem, and contributions to relevant scientific or public events.

In addition, the CoP Coordinator undertakes to:

- Participate actively in the activities of the CoP and keep the community engaged throughout the first NEUROAGE cycle.
- Represent the CoP at NEUROAGE hackathons, dissemination activities, scientific events and other network-wide collaborative activities, where applicable.
- Contribute to the recruitment, monitoring and evaluation of the CoP's activities and impact.
- Submit an annual public report to the NEUROAGE Network summarizing the activities carried out during the year, the main outcomes and achievements, a reflection on the experience of coordinating the CoP, the challenges encountered, and the planned activities and priorities for the following year.
- Acknowledge the support of the NEUROAGE Network in communications and publications derived from the activity of the CoP.

This annual reporting process will support continuous learning, facilitate the exchange of good practices across CoPs, help engage new members and audiences, and contribute to strengthening the long-term impact and visibility of the NEUROAGE Network.

Dissemination and visibility

Applicants must commit to disseminating the work of the CoP. Dissemination is understood broadly: it covers the scientific community, but also affected people and their families, social organisations, policymakers and the general public.

The Network supports this through its own communication channels, and each selected CoP is expected to make use of that support. The commitment covers two things:



- At least one in-person presentation of the CoP to the Network or to the wider ecosystem during the cycle.
- Contribution to scientific or public events where the work of the CoP is relevant.

The dissemination declaration is signed as part of the application form. Applications submitted without it are not considered.

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Ethical aspects

Where applicable, CoPs may require approval from the relevant Research Ethics Committee (CEIm). In such cases, the selected CoP Coordinator will be responsible for submitting the ethics application, with methodological support provided by the VHIR IRRI Office.

If your CoP is selected, all involved parties will be required to sign a collaboration agreement to formalize their participation and establish the framework for joint work within the community.

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Assessment criteria

Applications will be scored out of 100 points, with up to 5 additional points for accredited collaboration with another NEUROAGE member entity. The full scoring bands are set out in the accompanying evaluation criteria document.

	EVALUATION CRITERION	POINTS
01	Scientific excellence and motivation	15
02	Alignment with NEUROAGE and with the thematic area	10
03	Knowledge of and experience with the community	20
04	Constituted community, team and diversity	20
05	Potential for societal impact	15
06	Ethical aspects, inclusion and bias	10



	EVALUATION CRITERION	POINTS
07	Commitment to dissemination	10
	Total (including up to 5 additional points)	105

CONFORMITY REQUIREMENTS AND THRESHOLDS

- Applications scoring fewer than 4 points on criterion 4.1 (constituted community), and applications submitted without the signed dissemination declaration, will be considered non-compliant with these guidelines and will not proceed.
- Minimum overall threshold: 50 points out of 100, excluding additional points.
- One CoP will be selected per thematic area. In the event of a tie, the score obtained on criterion 4 will prevail, followed by criterion 3.

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Required documentation

Applicants must submit a single PDF document containing:

- A completed application form.
- The curriculum vitae of the CoP Coordinator (maximum 4 pages).
- Written confirmation of participation from every member of the CoP (signed letters or emails).
- A letter of support from the collaborating NEUROAGE member entity, where applicable.

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Submission and key dates

Applications must be submitted by email to neuroage@vhir.org, as a single PDF document, with the subject line "CALL FOR COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE NEUROAGE 2026".



MILESTONE	DATE
Call opens	14/09/2026
Information session (online)	21/09/2026
Application deadline	16/10/2026
Notification of results	11/11/2026

The information session will be held online via Microsoft Teams. No registration is required — the connection link is available here: [Teams link](#)

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