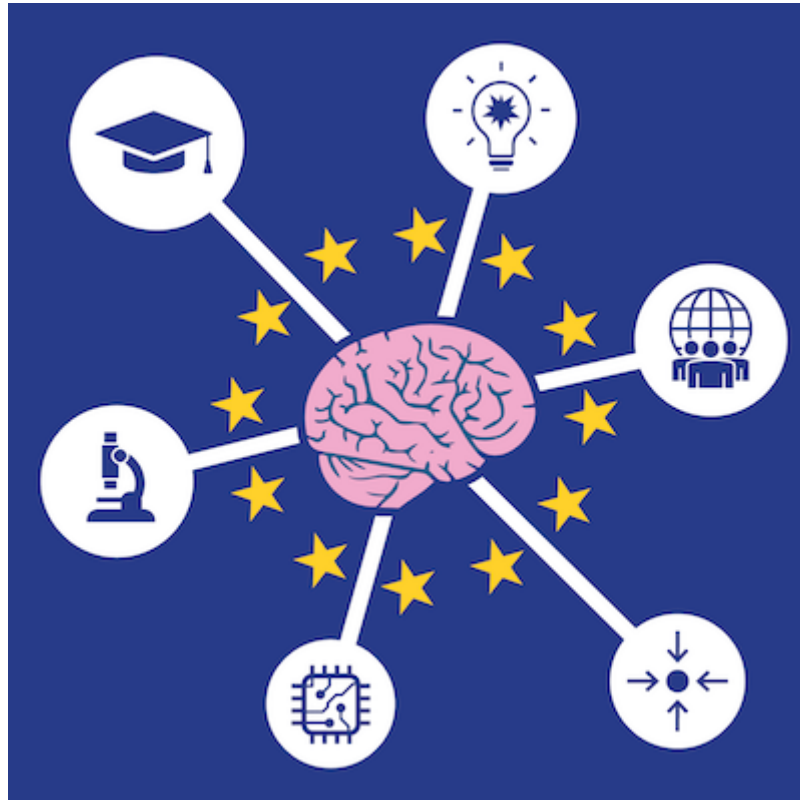


Neurotech^{EU}

The European University of Brain and Technology



[D5.6 [Establishing NEUROFUND]]

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Introduction

The task characterizing the deliverable Establishing NEUROFUND was defined as “Establishing financial bridging between members and stakeholders for the funding of investments and education” and the actions were described as the following: to link TTO’s, municipalities, regional development agencies, ministries and companies to establish mechanisms for (1) addressing infrastructure and investment requirements that can complement EU funding and (2) to support graduate students towards neurotechnology innovation.

NEUROFUND Established

The critical element to building a funding body for NeurotechEU was to bring together the TTO representatives, academics, students, project managers and representatives of NeurotechEU’s associated industrial partners in a meeting. This was important because such a meeting can allow for an open discussion of technological as well as societal innovation goals of the consortium and hence can facilitate putting the subsequent addressing of funding and regional development aspects of NeurotechEU into context.

As planned in 2022, NeurotechEU Technological and Societal Innovation Summit 2023 was held in Turkey in the first week of October 2023. This Summit meeting was designed to serve the above-mentioned goals and hence provided a great opportunity for establishing NEUROFUND. The program for the relevant session of the Summit, the aims of this session and relevant information provided to the participants to stimulate the discussions is shown in Fig. 1.

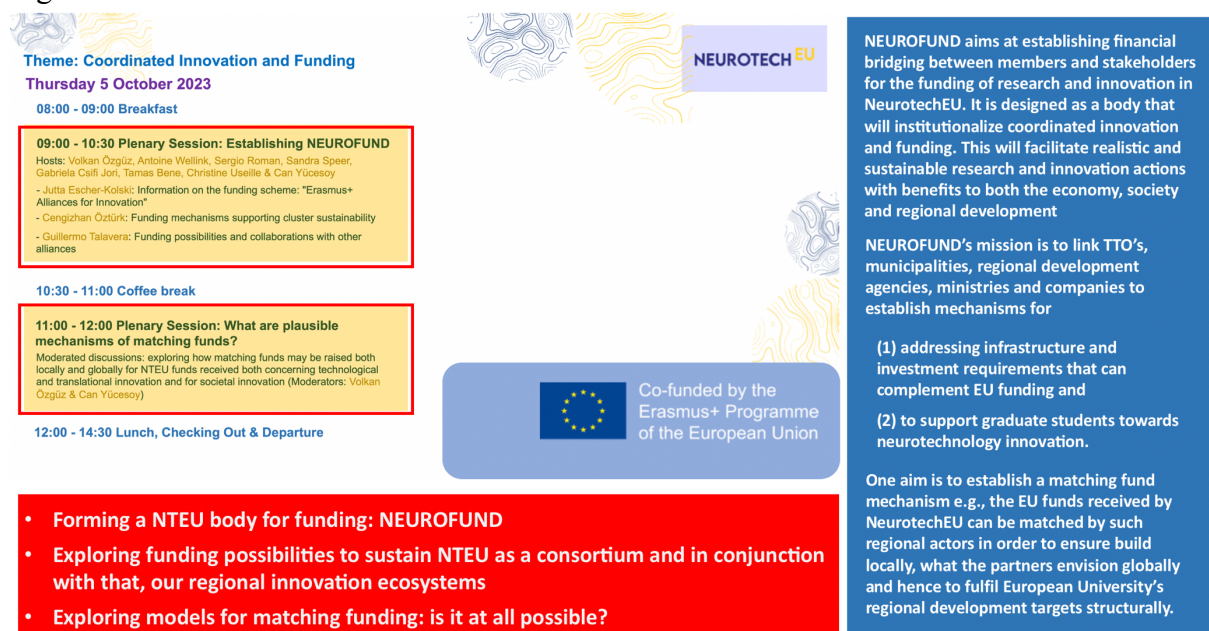


Fig. 1. Program and aims in NeurotechEU Technological and Societal Innovation Summit 2023 for Coordinated Innovation and Funding theme. The sessions included formally establishing the NEUROFUND.



Fig. 2. TTO and KTO representatives' first meeting. From left to right of BOUN (Volkan Özgüz), Gabriela Csifo Jorj (UMF), UMH (Sergio Roman), UBO (Sandra Speer) and RU (Antoine Wellink). ULille representative Christine Uselille also was present in that meeting.

Prior to the Establishing NEUROFUND session, the TTO representatives came together over lunch and discussed collaboration possibilities (Fig. 2). Including the highlights of their opinions, the following comprise the challenges and opportunities ahead of NEUROFUND in the second phase of NeurotechEU:

NEUROFUND's challenges

- *The differences between the operational and administrative procedures of TTO or KTO organizations across NeurotechEU partners:* this indicates the need for developing awareness of those differences and building ways of (1) finding the common ground for a collaborative effort, (2) learning from each other and adapting for an improved action.
- *The differences between mechanisms and policies of financing of innovations in the regions and/or countries of NeurotechEU partners:* this also indicates the need for developing awareness of those differences and defining the possibilities and boundaries of a collaborative effort.
- *The differences between the existing innovative strengths and regional priorities of partnering universities* in terms of the dimensions of neurotechnology: this may make cumulative collaborative efforts of NEUROFUND as the entire NeurotechEU unfeasible in some cases. However, this may also provide a strong capacity for focused collaborations, if the complementarities between those strengths may be addressed well, and tailored towards R&D for developing impactful and translational future emerging technologies. This may be facilitated by NEURICOO, the university-industry collaboration body of the NeurotechEU, which looks into what is available and what is needed for each partnering institution towards such development.

NEUROFUND's opportunities

- *Greater impact capacity for the requesting, acquiring and utilization of funds:* as a part of a body, i.e., NEUROFUND, representing the coordinated TTO and KTO actions of the European University of Brain and Technology, rather than such actions of TTO and KTO units individually, each unit can become much a more convincing actor not only in Europe at large but also locally in their own regions for addressing infrastructure and investment requirements of their institutions for translational research. This is because, such coordinated action will acutely start taking into account the regional needs as well as priorities, and over time, this will serve for diminishing inequalities across different regions. Therefore, when a financing/funding case is made by the NEUROFUND, the description of this will be comprehensive both regionally and for Europe at large and hence will provide a promising plan for an appropriate use of allocated resources.
- *NEUROFUND's broader potential:* NEUROFUND may not only aim at building convincing consortiums for applying for EU grants, but can also create opportunities for matching funds.

NEUROFUND standard operational procedures

This will include online meeting of members once in every three months with the standard agenda to include:

- Updates on NeurotechEU partner universities' university-industry collaboration platforms.
- Updates on NeurotechEU partner universities' corporate projects.
- Updates on NeurotechEU partner universities' targeted translational innovation development plans in relation to the 8 dimensions of neurotechnology.
- Discussion of new regional R&D opportunities in relation to the 8 dimensions of neurotechnology and possible collaboration prospects.
- Invitation of educational program developers of NeurotechEU to the meetings and discussions of funding possibilities to support R&D focused education and mobility of staff and students.
- Building a data bank of regional funding possibilities (funding institutions, regional development agencies, disease support organizations, ministries, municipalities, NGO's, industrial clusters, techno-parks, incubation centers and companies) and matching fund opportunities from each NeurotechEU partner universities' ecosystem and updating this regularly.

The meeting agenda will be extended with Ad-Hoc agenda items in order to have a comprehensive coverage of developing R&D mechanisms in relation to available/newly introduced funding opportunities. This will facilitate institutionalization of coordinated innovation and funding actions within the NeurotechEU ecosystem.

NEUROFUND's current inventory for regional funding institutions

- RU: RU Internal Collaborative Project Vouchers, European Fund for regional development (EFRO), OOST NL: Regional Innovation Fund for spinoff and start-up companies, Interregional Funding (INTERREG), National Growth Fund Biotech Booster, National Growth Fund Deltaplan Valorisation, IMEC iSTART, accelerator for tech startups, TTT Medtech, NWO, Radboud Innovation Science
- UMH: Parque Científico de la UMH
- UBO: Transfer Center enaCom



- BOUN: TÜBİTAK, İstanbul Development Agency, Technopark İstanbul, İstanbul Health Industries Cluster, Greater Municipality of Istanbul, Istanbul Planning Agency
- KI: Swedish Research Council (VR), Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovative Systems (VINNOVA), Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth
- UD: UD Innovation Fund
- ULille: SATT du Nord
- UMF: UEFISCDI, Regional Development Agency (ADR) Nord-Vest, Birou Centrul de Transfer Tehnologic
- HR: the Icelandic Centre for Research (Rannís), HR Infrastructure Fund and HR Teaching Development Fund.

Reflections from the NeurotechEU Technological and Societal Innovation Summit 2023

During the Summit, in day 1, Antoine Wellink (Information on Radboud Innovation Science & RU corporate projects), Sergio Roman (Information on Parque Científico de la UMH & UMH corporate projects), Mathew Abrams (Information on INCF & KI Corporate Projects), and Tamas Bene (UD Innovation Fund) delivered Keynote Talks and introduced their universities' TTO and KTO perspectives (Fig. 3). In day 1 also Wim Scheenen (Aligning NeurotechEU partner education programs) delivered a Keynote Talk towards the alliance's graduate education program development (Fig. 4A).



Fig. 3. Antoine Wellink (A), Sergio Roman (B), Mathew Abrams (C) and Tamas Bene (D) delivering Keynote Talks to introduce the TTO and KTO organizations and R&D focus of their universities, RU, UMH, KI and UD, respectively.

In day 2, Christine Useille (Information on SATT du Nord) delivered a Keynote Talk along the same lines (Fig. 4B).



Fig. 4. Wim Scheenen (A) and Christine Useille (B) delivering Keynote Talks to introduce the graduate education as well as TTO organizations of their universities, RU, and ULille, respectively



Fig. 5. NEUROFUND established. From left to right, Can Yücesoy, the organizer of the NeurotechEU Technological and Societal Innovation Summit 2023 and academic lead of BOUN in NeurotechEU, Christine Useille (ULille), Antoine Wellink (RU), Sandra Speer (UBO), Sergio Roman (UMH) and Volkan Özgüz (BOUN) as managers and/or representatives of TTO and KTO organizations on behalf of NeurotechEU partnering universities.

In day 3, the TTO and KTO representatives came together for the launching of the NEUROFUND in a ceremonial way (Fig. 5). This was followed by Keynote Talks by Jutta Escher-Kolski (Information on the funding scheme: "Erasmus+ Alliances for Innovation") and Guillermo Talavera (Funding possibilities and collaborations with other alliances), to introduce solid funding opportunities offered by the European Commission. Lastly, the participants shared their opinions on raising matching funds in an open-ended discussion moderated by Can Yücesoy (Fig. 6). This discussion indicated possible challenges in achieving such support for

the already raised NeurotechEU funds, but also revealed two very promising examples of already received matching funds: (1) UMH receiving matching funds amounting to half of their NeurotechEU first phase budget from their National Agency and (2) BOUN receiving a large scale university-industry collaboration and high-tech co-development platform grant from TÜBİTAK as a projection of their NeurotechEU wise translational innovation actions onto the regional development programs.



Fig. 6. Funding possibilities within the framework of NEUROFUND and open-ended discussions for mechanisms of matching funding. Jutta Escher-Kolski (A), Guillermo Talavera and Volkan Özgüz (B) provided information on solid funding possibilities, followed by group discussions (C and D).