

# ALZHEIMER FORSCHUNG INITIATIVE e.V. (AFI)

## 2021 GRANT APPLICATION GUIDELINES

### Statement of Purpose:

In the European Grant Cycle, Alzheimer Forschung Initiative e.V. (AFI) awards grants for basic, translational and clinical research into the underlying mechanisms of, and possible therapeutic treatments for Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. Projects are mainly evaluated on whether the proposed research is likely to improve our understanding of the pathophysiology and underlying mechanisms causing Alzheimer's disease and related dementias and/or is likely to effectively promote therapeutic strategies.

**The applicant is advised to focus on a specific project that can be addressed in terms of a clear and well-defined hypothesis and specific aims, and completed within a reasonable time. Please keep this in mind when preparing the research/work plan section of the application.**

### Terms and Restrictions for the Grant Application:

AFI grants are awarded to

- Universities
- Medical Centers
- Independent non-profit research institutions
- The research group to which the Principal Investigator (P.I.) is affiliated (not to individuals)

Funding cannot be used for

- Salary of the P.I. (not applicable for all grants, please refer to the specification in Table 1)
- Institutional overhead
- Large capital equipment
- Construction of buildings
- Tax-free scholarship

### **Overview of the Grants Available:**

- Standard Grants (€120.000, 3 years)
- Pilot Grants (€50.000, 2 years)
- Cross-Border Standard Grants (€100.000, 2 years)
- Cross-Border Pilot Grants (€50.000, 2 years)

**Table 1: Grant Specifications 2021**

	Standard	Pilot
<b>Project duration</b>	3 years	2 years
<b>Maximum amount to be requested</b>	€ 120.000	€ 50.000
<b>Budget distribution</b>	Max. 50% of the budget can be requested per year. The budget requested should be justified in the proposal. Be aware of AFIs quarterly payments.	Max. 70% of the budget can be requested per year. The budget requested should be justified in the proposal. Be aware of AFIs quarterly payments.
<b>Funding (specifications)</b>	Funding goes to the group/institute to which the P.I. is affiliated  Funding <u>cannot</u> be requested for the salary of the P.I. (except under extraordinary circumstances that must be clearly justified). Indeed, the experience level of the P.I. implies in most cases that he/she has a permanent position at the institution.	Funding goes to the group/institute to which the P.I. is affiliated  Funding <u>can</u> be requested for the salary of the P.I.
<b>Eligibility criteria P.I.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works at a German University/research institution</li> <li>• Academic rank of research associate with PhD or MD assistant professor (or equivalent) or higher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works at a German University/research institution</li> <li>• Post-doctoral level, maximum 6 years after obtaining the PhD or MD</li> </ul> <p><i>If still a PhD student, the P.I. should obtain their PhD before the 31<sup>st</sup> of December of the year in which they apply for the pilot grant.</i></p> <p><i>The 6 years is counted from the PhD date to the date of the beginning of the funding. For maternity leave(s), the effective elapsed time since the PhD defence will be reduced by 1 year per child. For paternity leave(s) the elapsed time will be shortened by the leave taken for each child born.</i></p>

## Cross-Border Grants

AFI also grants Cross-Border Awards for collaborative projects between a German and French or German and Dutch group that focusses on Alzheimer's disease and related dementia research.

Depending on whether the P.I. is from a German, French or Dutch institution the application will be submitted to AFI, Fondation Vaincre Alzheimer (FVA) or Alzheimer Nederland (AN), respectively.

In case of AFI, when the German P.I. submits a Cross-Border Project, the collaborative French or Dutch P.I. does not need to submit anything to the other organization. However, as each organization funds in its own country the collaborative French or Dutch P.I. will need to adhere to the FVA or AN guidelines, respectively in addition the collaborative PI cannot be a (collaborative PI) on another project in the same grant cycle. The AN and FVA guidelines can be consulted through the links below.

AN: <https://www.alzheimer-nederland.nl/onderzoek/voor-onderzoekers-call-innovatief-onderzoek>

FVA: <https://www.vaincrealzheimer.org/appel-candidature>

The following grants can be applied for as Cross-Border Grants:

- Cross-Border Standard Grants (max. €100.000 per 2 years)
- Cross-Border Pilot Grants (max. €50.000 per 2 years)

Please also refer to the details in *Table 1*, for the specifications.

Additionally, for Cross-Border Grants the following applies:

- Indicate in the application the respective contributions from each country.
- Highlight the added value of the collaboration and what parts of the collaboration are complementary. Why is it likely to facilitate in addressing the questions involved?
- Articles should be published jointly with both groups.

## **New Grant Application or Grant Renewal**

AFI will not limit the total number of years of funding that an individual researcher may receive.

A new grant cannot overlap in funding or in topic with that of an active grant, or with a grant that has been extended. Indeed, **no P.I. may receive more than one AFI grant, simultaneously**. This implies that current grantees can submit a new grant application only in the last budget year of their active grant.

When an applicant has received an AFI grant in the past, or is in the last budget year of this active grant, he/she can submit a new application for a new grant. Alternatively, he/she can submit a renewal if the application is a direct continuation/follow-up of the previously received grant. Both type of applications will undergo peer review in the same manner. When a project is a renewal, the application should clearly state the yield (publications, preliminary data of the former grant). Progress made during the previous funding period will then be considered during review of the renewal application.



### **Additional Rules:**

- In the grant application, the scientific research plan should be hypothesis driven, coherent and focused. The work plan should be efficiently planned and it should be illustrated in a convincing manner that the proposed research can be completed within the time available.
- Investigators of the same laboratory can apply for a grant provided that there is no scientific or financial overlap between the proposed research projects.
- When AFI funds are used for a salary, the usual taxes and social security contributions should be included. AFI will not finance a tax-free scholarship.
- A P.I. cannot be included in the personnel section of another application submitted the same year. He/she can be a consultant (time spent <5%) in other projects, which can be mentioned in the embedding section of the application.
- The PI should not include in the personnel section of his/her project a European SAB member as collaborator of the study. For ethical reasons a SAB member can be a consultant only (time spent <5%), which can be mentioned in the embedding section of the application.

### **Grant Cycle Procedure – Review of the Applications:**

Awards are granted on the basis of scientific merit and quality of the applicants' research proposal, and its relevance to improving our understanding of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

AFI uses a two-tier peer-reviewed process in which applicants are first asked to submit a short summary of their project: Letter of Intent (LoI). The applicants that have submitted the best LoIs are subsequently asked to submit full applications.

In the first tier the LoIs are reviewed and selected based on feasibility of the research plan, the applicant's past performance and relevance of the topic for Alzheimer's disease or other related dementias.

Proposals are evaluated by three members of the SAB from AN, AFI and FVA. In the second tier, the full applications, are also reviewed by a fourth external expert. In October, the applications and evaluations are discussed and ranked in a joint meeting of the European Scientific Advisory Board.

For the submission of the proposals FVA uses the Alzheimer Research Management System (ARMS).  
<https://www.alzheimer-research.eu/>

Please refer to Table 2 below for more details on the Grant Cycle timelines for 2021.

**Table 2: Time Table European Grant Cycle 2021**

Call for applications with Lol	January 4 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Deadline</b> for Lol	February 1 <sup>st</sup>
Confirmation Lol was received and is eligible is sent to the applicant by the European Grant Manager	Beginning of February
Request for full application or denial letters are sent to the applicant by the European Grant Manager	Second half of April (exact date to be determined)
<b>Deadline</b> for full applications	End of May (exact date will be communicated)
Final decision is communicated to the applicants by AFI	December
Grant provision, quarterly payments	January, 2022

The Board of Directors (BOD) makes decisions on funding latest in December and grants are intended to start in the beginning of January. To ensure that AFI is funding meritorious research proposals that have a high potential for success, the Board of Directors bases its funding decisions on the results of a formal, rigorous peer-review process, taking program goals and the availability of funds into consideration.

In line with this, the SAB and BOD will select only grants that have received a sufficient, pre-set high rank which guarantees the quality of the research. Applications that receive a low quality score, get a low priority and will not be funded. In addition AFI strives to maintain a good balance in funding between:

- (i) Experience level of investigators (established versus young/promising candidates)
- (ii) Applications from scientists never before funded by AFI and applications from scientists seeking to renew funding from AFI (please refer to the section below *New Grant Application or Grant Renewal*).
- (iii) Topics/areas of study within the dementia research field

Applicants normally will be notified in writing of the Board of Director's decision concerning their application latest in December. AFI staff is not authorized to provide information on priority scores, ranking, or likelihood of funding of applications prior to written notification of applicants. Please do not telephone AFI, or SAB members, to request such information.



## Commitments after Grant Cycle/Approval:

### Participation in Review Process 2<sup>nd</sup> tier

Please note that applicants and grantees will be committed to review future AFI, AN or FVA applications in the 2<sup>nd</sup> tier.

### Shifting Dates of the Grant

After the approval of the grant the grantee should inform AFI immediately if the project is delayed. In this case, the grantee can request a project start-shift (max. 6 months).

### Budget

The project will receive funds only when operational.

Grant payments are made on a quarterly basis.

If budget revisions are necessary, requests must be made in writing to AFI with clear justification:

- A request of cost-neutral prolongation for max. 6 months
- Transfer of more than € 2.000 from one budget category to another

### Human/Animal Research Subjects

AFI requires that research supported by AFI meets or exceeds national regulations regarding the use of human subjects or animals in research. Applicants must provide written certification of approval by the appropriate Ethic Commission before funding begins.

### Sharing of Reagents

AFI believes that biological reagents (e.g. recombinant DNA clones, cultured cell lines, hybridoma cell lines, mutant or unique organisms etc.) developed during the course of AFI-sponsored research must be made available to qualified investigators after the publication of reports using or describing the reagents. These materials represent a valuable resource for the scientific community at large, paid for by the generous contributions of AFI's donors.

The availability of these reagents directly affects the ability of the members of the scientific community to replicate the experiments of others and the pace and cost of future research. Therefore, AFI requires that the Principal Investigator and the grantee institution accept the responsibility of providing biological reagents developed during the course of AFI-sponsored research to investigators who request them.

### Public Education and Acknowledgement

AFI is a publicly supported charitable organization funded by donor contributions, and has an active public education program that informs donors and other interested individuals about the research we sponsor. Information provided to the public by AFI may include the title of the project, the name and institutional affiliation of the Principal Investigator, the amount of the award, and the non-technical project description provided by the applicant. Therefore, the non-technical description should not contain confidential information. The submission of this application shall be deemed consent of the applicant to the publication of this information should a grant be awarded. Awardees may be asked by AFI to assist AFI in other ways to inform the general audience, e.g. by providing information on new developments in their research field or give a presentation, lecture at meetings, lab tours or workshops supported by AFI. Photos of the P.I. and his/her team must be made available without restrictions.

All publications, papers, book chapters or presentations, resulting from research sponsored by AFI must be acknowledged as follows: "Funding was provided by Alzheimer Forschung Initiative e.V. (AFI)", followed by the number of grant application.

 **Alzheimer Forschung Initiative e.V.**

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### Open Access Publication

AFI supports open access (<https://www.alzheimer-forschung.de/forschung/forschungsfoerderung/publication-grants/>).

We strongly encourage researchers to publish in open access journals or to publish in a repository that is freely accessible.

### Press Releases

If press releases on research results sponsored by AFI are planned, the scientists must contact AFI. In the press releases AFI should be mentioned as a sponsor with the name Alzheimer Forschung Initiative e.V.

### Overlapping Grant Awards

AFI awards funds with the express understanding that AFI is the main financial supporter of the research project for which grant monies were requested. Although combinations of complementary, non-overlapping approaches are possible, AFI does not allow AFI grant funds to be used for identical and/or overlapping research projects that are already funded by another source without written AFI permission and full knowledge. The applicant is therefore asked to report if they have submitted the same project to another funder. Failure to report the submission or receipt of overlapping grant funds may require, as determined at the sole discretion of AFI, the return of all, or part of, the monies awarded by AFI to the grantee. Furthermore, the grantee is responsible for all costs expended by AFI in obtaining the return of the grant award funds including but not limited to reasonable attorney's fees incurred.

### Discontinuation of Grant Funding

Although AFI has committed grant funding for the stated term of the grant, it reserves the right to discontinue the grant at any time in the event the work performed is in breach of the terms and obligations stated herein. AFI reserves the right to discontinue or reclaim the grant in case of incomplete reports and/or reports being received by AFI later than the deadline.