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ADVANCING WOMEN'S HEALTH IN RMDs

Call for Research Proposals: "Advancing Women's Health in RMDs"

Introduction

The Foundation for Research in Rheumatology (FOREUM) recognizes the importance of women's health across the life course in determining RMD onset, trajectory, outcomes, and day-to-day impact. Conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) disproportionately affect women and bring unique risks including pregnancy complications, heightened cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, and major impacts on work, mental health, and quality of life.

Scope

Studies may be **clinical, epidemiological, or translational**. Proposals should start from and focus on a clearly articulated unmet medical need and aim to provide solutions for the identified challenge. This call aims to support collaborative consortia of at least three partner universities. By fostering collaboration and innovation, we aim to catalyze transformative research that will ultimately benefit women living with RMDs.

We invite scientific proposals that address the following objectives:

1. **Clinical and Epidemiological Research** aims to optimize RMD management across reproductive stages, including contraception and family planning, fertility and assisted reproduction, pregnancy and postpartum (including flare prediction and prevention, as well as children's outcomes after birth in high-risk pregnancies due to diseases such as SLE). Such projects may encompass pharmacoepidemiology, real-world evidence using registries and linked datasets, patient-reported outcomes, and health-services research.
2. **Translational and Mechanistic Research** undertakes hypothesis-driven translational studies to elucidate mechanisms underlying sex and gender differences in RMDs, including but not limited to the roles of sex hormones and receptors, immune modulation across the menstrual cycle, pregnancy and postpartum biology (e.g., placental/immune crosstalk, microchimerism), menopause-related changes, pharmacokinetics/pharmacodynamics, and tissue-specific biology (synovium, bone, cartilage, muscle).

This topic call favors clear, testable hypotheses that link specific determinants of women's health (biological, clinical, behavioral, or societal) to measurable outcomes in RMDs. Projects should focus on research areas where the proposed approach can deliver novel insights or transformative solutions, including but not limited to systemic diseases, inflammatory arthritis, and osteoarthritis in women.

3. **Collaborative Consortia** involve at least three partner universities from different countries to facilitate interdisciplinary research and knowledge exchange and ensure meaningful involvement of Patient Research Partners in all stages of the research project.

Eligibility and requirements

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 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.

Initial Applications

All applicants considering submission of a proposal are invited to fill out an online 'scientific letter of intent' form by **26 October 2025**, accompanied by an online 'lay (non-scientific language for the general public) summary letter of intent' form, for review by patients.

Applications 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. Applications 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 15 December 2025 as to whether the application 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 (30% chance); 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 **01 February 2026**.

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 [EULAR | PARE patient research partners](#)

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 2026. Final decisions will be communicated by the FOREUM Secretariat by **mid-April 2026**.

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.

How to apply

Applications should be made electronically via the following link (please chose Topic call):

[APPLY HERE](#)

Management of the call

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

Call timeline

- Closing date for applications: 26 October 2025
 - Decisions on applications announced: 15 December 2025
 - Closing date for full proposals: 01 February 2026
 - Decisions on full proposals announced: April 2026
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Inquiries

For general inquiries please contact the FOREUM Secretariat at info@foreum.org.

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FOREUM is devoted to promote research in rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs)

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