

Widening Country Inspiration Story

“Comments of evaluators from our previous application provided some useful feedback.”

Organisation name: Bahçeşehir University
Organisation type: Higher education organisation
Country: Türkiye
Project Acronym: RETORNA
Project start and end date: 1.02.2023-31.01.2027
Type of MSC action, Horizon Europe: Doctoral Networks
Is your organisation a coordinator? No

What is your project about and why is the topic important for science advancement?

The doctoral network “Targeting RNA as an approach for treating retinal disease” (RETORNA) aims to study different types of RNA that are expressed in retinal cells. By observing bioinformatic models, cell and tissue cultures, animal models and human patients, we will be able to create RNA profiles for different retinal diseases. Selected miRNAs mimics, RNA-aptamers, and antisense oligonucleotides will be used to treat blinding ailments.

Why is your project important for society?

In 2015, 36 million people worldwide were blind, and 217 million had moderate to severe visual impairment. The rise in life expectancy and ageing enhances the problem since vision impairment affects mainly the elderly population. Despite advancing knowledge on their genetic basis, there is no effective cure for retinal diseases. RETORNA will first profile the content of mRNA and miRNAs in healthy and diseased retinal tissue. For that purpose, in silico, in vitro, and in vivo analyses will be performed, and samples from human patients with vision impairment will be collected. Subsequently, therapeutical RNA-

based molecules selected based on the previous data will be administrated, and their effect will be evaluated in cells and animal models.

What kind of support did you get?

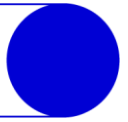
Comments of evaluators from our previous application provided some useful feedback for preparing this proposal. Also, experts in our TTO guided us on some specific points.

Do you have other successful projects under Horizon 2020/ Horizon Europe?

Yes. I have a successful project under the 7th Framework Programme.

What in your experience helped you to succeed?

I think the novelty of the project idea is the main reason for its success. Furthermore, between 2009 and 2013, I worked as a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Calgary in Canada. During my studies in Canada, I have submitted two projects evaluated by a peer-review committee, ranked in the top 5%, and funded by both Federal and Provincial Governments. My experiences in writing these projects and the feedback from reviewers helped me a lot in writing new project proposals.



How did you find the partners in your consortium?

Colleagues, with whom I had previously collaborated, extended an invitation for me to join the project.

More information on the project:



The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) support researchers at all stage of their career across all disciplines. The MSCA also support cooperation between industry and academia and provide innovative trainings and career developments.

The MSCA Doctoral Networks (DN) offer doctoral programmes implemented by partnerships of organisations from different sectors across Europe and beyond to train highly skilled doctoral candidates, stimulate their creativity, enhance their innovation capacities and boost their employability in the long-term.

The MSCA-NET project is the MSCA NCP project to facilitate the transnational cooperation to achieve a consistent and harmonised level of NCP support. The scientific community can also profit from our project to support their MSCA application.

