



Ministry of Health  
of The Republic of Lithuania

## **JAPAN - LITHUANIA COLLABORATION**

### **Basic research with the use of clinical data and bioresources in rare and undiagnosed diseases, and cancer**

**Call Opens: 12 April 2021**

**Call Closes: 15 June 2021, 17:00 (JST)**

The Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development (further - **AMED**) and the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania, (further – MOH of **Lithuania**) are pleased to launch a call for proposals for **Japan-Lithuania collaborative research** into basic research with the use of clinical data and bioresources in rare and undiagnosed diseases, and cancer. This jointly funded initiative is aimed at fostering collaborative links between researchers in Japan and Lithuania. We invite joint application from researchers based in Japan and Lithuania. The deadline for applications is **15 June 2021, 17:00 (JST)**. Successful awards will be announced in mid-August 2021.

#### **Background**

AMED is committed to fostering collaboration between Japan and Lithuania. MOH of Lithuania has a strong commitment to encourage international partnerships to tackle important and challenging research goals. In response to the promising potential for work between our two countries and based on the Memorandum of Cooperation signed by AMED and MOH of **Lithuania** in March 2017 and the Letter of Intent sign by AMED and MOH of Lithuania on 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2021, this call is dedicated to strengthening collaborations between researchers in Lithuania and Japan with a focus on basic research with the use of clinical data and bioresources in rare and undiagnosed diseases, and cancer.

#### **Aim**

The overarching aim of the Japan-Lithuania collaborative initiative in basic research with the use of clinical data and bioresources in rare and undiagnosed diseases, and cancer is to provide bilateral support to biomedical and health researchers in Japan and Lithuania that will allow them to develop lasting collaborations. This initiative aims to strengthen existing links or foster new links that add value to research taking place in both countries. This is expected to be achieved by facilitating exchange and catalyzing innovative synergy amongst collaborators and is particularly aimed at those who are in the early stages of their careers. Therefore, it is expected that applications will be made by eligible early career researchers or by established researchers who explicitly wish to encourage the career development of their postdoctoral researchers. It is hoped that the partnerships established through these awards will lead to the development of long-term collaborative research programs that will be competitive for international funding.

#### **Objectives**

The objective is to provide bilateral support for up to two innovative collaborative projects between researchers from Japan and Lithuania. These will enable collaborative partnership and create an important synergy between researchers with shared or complementary interests.



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Specific objectives that underpin the Japan-Lithuania research collaborative initiative in basic research with the use of clinical data and bioresources in rare and undiagnosed diseases, and cancer are to promote:

- partnerships between Lithuania and Japan researchers in fields of biomedical, health and clinical research
- the exchange of scientists, particularly early career scientists
- knowledge or methodology exchange
- complementary access to facilities / resources / equipment
- stronger opportunity for collaborative research and catalyse further synergy

It is expected therefore that jointly planned collaborative Japan-Lithuania partnership project applications will be submitted. Applications from early career researchers or from established researchers who wish to encourage their postdoctoral scientists career development are particularly invited.

### **Scope**

In recent years, with the technological advances, medical researches focus on identifying mechanism and causes of diseases utilizing Big data or AI (machine learning tools), and integration of multi-omics data with clinical data has yielded promising information to inform personalized outcome and treatment option to realize precision medicine.

In Lithuania e-Health system is developed for the centralized management, use and collection of patients' electronic health records and exchange between health care institutions, health care specialists and other public bodies. It ensures cooperation among Lithuanian e-Health system entities and integration of their information systems, operation of eHealth services and access to information resources for public administration institutions. E-health system has also been developed and implemented to ensure more efficient health care services.

In Japan, bioresources and individual data are stored in some biobanks, and their infrastructure and systems have been consolidated to utilize the data more efficiently. To accelerate precision medicine, it is important to collaborate between research institutes globally to share and utilize collected data.

We invite research proposals to facilitate basic research with the use of clinical data and bioresources in rare and undiagnosed diseases, and cancer, leveraging synergies between the two countries in terms of;

- 1) use of health/medical data and/or bioresources,**
- 2) cooperation among biobanks, or**
- 3) validation and standardisation of genomic medical research.**

Areas of interest include (researches related to rare and undiagnosed diseases and/or cancer are eligible):

- Investigation on causes of diseases or risk prediction
- Validation study of genomic data analysis and clinical data
- Phenotyping research based on health data comparison



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- Development of database or systems for sharing genomic or health data between Japan and Lithuania

### **Funding**

AMED and MOH of Lithuania will jointly provide bi-lateral support for up to two years (for MOH of Lithuania)/three years (for AMED) to intensify productive collaboration in research between Lithuania and Japan's leading researchers. The total duration of the project will be up to three years (36 months). For the implementation of the project for the FY 2023 and 2024, Lithuanian researchers must foresee their own financial or in-kind contribution.

It is anticipated that up to two projects awards will be jointly supported by Lithuania and AMED respectively, and one joint Japan-Lithuania project will receive the maximum award of 50,000 EUR for the Lithuanian applicants for the years 2021 and 2022 (25,000 EUR per project per 1 FY) and 30 million JPY for Japanese applicants from AMED for three years (36 months) between 2021 and 2024 (10 million JPY per project per 1 year).



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## **GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS**

### **I. GENERAL GUIDANCE**

AMED and MOH of Lithuania invite researchers based in Japan and Lithuania to submit jointly planned collaborative partnership projects in the field of basic research with the use of clinical data and bioresources in rare and undiagnosed diseases, and cancer.

For each joint project, there will be a single Japan-based principal investigator (PI) and a single Lithuania-based principal investigator. The Lithuanian applicants will participate in the capacity as a Mandatory Project Partner. The joint application should be submitted to AMED in Japan. The applicant should be eligible for the receipt of their respective agency/ministerial funding.

This initiative aims to support collaboration between early career researchers, and it is expected that the applications will be made by eligible early career researchers or by established researchers who explicitly wish to encourage their postdoctoral researchers to make collaborative links to foster knowledge exchange and their career development.

#### **In Lithuania**

The applicant wishing to participate in the project as a Mandatory Partner should refer to the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania for receiving the confirmation and recognition as eligible partner according to the description of the Ministry of Health for the eligibility as a Partner. Only in case of success, such confirmation will be issued by MoH and must be submitted to AMED together with the joint application form. For more details, please refer to the Description of the procedure for the selection of Lithuanian partners seeking to participate in the joint Japan-Lithuania collaborative research projects and funding the participation in projects from the state budget in 2021-2022 (further – Description of the procedure of MoH).

#### **In Japan**

The Japan-based applicants have to submit the single Joint Case for Support written in English, an additional application form written in Japanese and a check list of export control written in Japanese through online [e-Rad application system](#).

**The PIs may only apply for one joint project in this Japan-Lithuania call.**

#### **Collaborative Research Agreement (CRA)**

It will be the responsibility of the PIs and their research organisations to draw up a Collaborative Research Agreement (CRA) suitable to administer and manage the delivery of the project activities, finances, and intellectual property rights (IPR) and to avoid disputes which might be detrimental to the completion of the project.

The PIs and their research institutions are encouraged to sign this CRA before the official project start date, and to submit it **no later than one month after the official project start date**.



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### **Start date and Duration**

The duration of the joint collaborative research project shall be up to three years (36 months from 2021 to 2024). The duration of the funding support will differ in Japan and Lithuania. Please refer to the section “III. Financial support”. Project partners from Lithuania must foresee their own financial means or in-kind contribution for the participation in the joint project for the year 2023 and 2024.

## **II. ELIGIBILITY**

The applicants should be eligible for the receipt of their respective agency (AMED or MOH of Lithuania) for funding.

### **In Lithuania**

The applicant (s) for Mandatory partner must be a public body or its affiliation carrying out scientific activity in the field of medicine and health sciences in the area of rare and undiagnosed diseases and/or cancer. For the requirements for the eligible Lithuanian partner, please refer to the Description of the procedure of MoH.

### **In Japan**

The Japan-based PI must be affiliated with a domestic Japanese University etc., or public research organizations and will carry out the proposed project at this institution. The term “University etc.” refers to educational corporations such as national, public and private university corporations; and public research organizations include national and public testing and research bodies, independent administrative agencies, and national R&D corporations; and public organizations such as benevolent corporations.

The following researchers may also submit applications:

- Researchers of foreign nationality who are affiliated with a domestic Japanese University etc. research institution.

For further details, please refer to the Supplemental Guidelines for Japan-based applicants “補足応募注意事項”.

## **III. FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

In this joint call, AMED and MOH of Lithuania will fund **up to 2 collaborative research projects** with bi-lateral support, where each jointly planned Japan-Lithuania project will receive a maximum award of 50,000 Eur from MOH of Lithuania for 2021-2022 plus 30 million JPY from AMED for 2021-2024.

AMED will provide their support to the Japan-based researchers, and MOH of Lithuania will support Lithuania-based researchers, as a project partners. MOH of Lithuania and AMED



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expect the costs on each side to accurately reflect the activities proposed in the application and that the collaborative research effort on both sides should be comparable.

It is anticipated that the requested costs will reflect the nature of the intended activities to fit the objectives of this call:

- partnerships between Lithuania and Japan researchers in fields of biomedical, health and clinical research
- the exchange of scientists, particularly early career scientists
- knowledge or methodology exchange
- complementary access to facilities / resources / equipment
- stronger opportunity for collaborative research and catalyse further synergy

**In the Lithuania (Support by MOH of Lithuania)**

For the Lithuanian partners the duration of the joint project will be up to 36 months (2021-2024) but no longer than 31 December 2024. The Ministry of Health will provide funding for the joint project only for the years 2021 and 2022. Project partner from Lithuania must foresee their own financial means or in-kind contribution for the implementation of the joint project for the year 2023 and 2024.

For Lithuanian Partners, please refer to the Description of the procedure of MoH).

**In Japan (Support by AMED)**

The Japan-based PI will be provided with funding support in accordance with a contract for commissioned research signed between AMED and the institution that the Japan-based PI belongs to. The contract for commissioned research will be signed each fiscal year (April-March) over the collaborative research period. Since the contract is agreed on condition that all administrative procedures related to the project in question shall be handled within the institution, the PI should consult with the department in charge at his/her institution. Please refer to the AMED website for details of contract<sup>1</sup>.

Budget for the Collaborative Research Projects: the total budget for each project proposed by Japan-based applicants should not exceed 30 million yen in principle including indirect cost. The planned annual budget for research projects may vary each fiscal year, depending on the planned activities specific. Funding for Japan-based applicants are allowable for:

	<b>Main ítem</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Direct costs</b>	Costs of goods (equipment/supplies)	Research facilities/equipment, software (ready-made goods), book purchasing costs, purchasing costs for reagents/materials/consumables for use in research
	Travel costs	Travel costs of project participants, travel costs for invited partners such as external experts



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	Personnel costs/ services costs	Personnel costs: personnel costs for PhD student, post-doctoral fellow or Japan-based researchers including PI <sup>2</sup> Service costs: expenditure for services such as lecture requests, consultation, test subjects, interpreters/translators, and unskilled labor.
	Other	Other costs for implementing the relevant contracted project Examples: Publication costs (academic paper contribution costs, academic paper offprint costs, website production costs, etc.), conference costs, equipment leasing costs, Equipment repair costs, printing costs, subcontract costs, testing costs, amount equivalent to consumption tax related to untaxed transactions and expenses of outsourcing (buyout cost) <sup>2</sup> , etc.
<b>Indirect costs<sup>3,4</sup></b>	Expenditure used by research institutes and paid by AMED as necessary costs for managing the research institutes during implementation of the relevant R&D, paid at a fixed percentage (within 30%) of direct costs as an allowance.	

<sup>1</sup><https://www.amed.go.jp/keiri/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> For details of requisite condition and procedure about personnel cost budgeting, please visit the AMED website<sup>1</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Indirect costs are allocated when AMED concludes a contracted R&D agreement with a national university corporation, inter-university research institute corporation, independent administrative corporation, special corporation, special private corporation, general incorporated association, general incorporated foundation, public interest incorporated association, public interest incorporated foundation or private university, etc. The percentage of indirect cost will not exceed 30% of direct cost.

<sup>4</sup> Researchers at national facility or other institution (excluding National Institute for Educational Policy Research) who receive the funds as subsidy are exempt from receiving indirect cost.

#### IV. HOW to APPLY

For this initiative, application of joint Japan-Lithuania collaborative project should be submitted to the AMED following the instructions for submission below. For the instructions for Lithuanian Partners, please refer to the Description of the procedure of MoH. Please follow the instructions carefully and secure sufficient time for the appropriate administrative checks within your host research organizations.

The PI from Japan and the Project Partner from Lithuania shall work together to write a **single Joint Case for Support** in English. The template is provided on the AMED website of the call and the website of MOH of Lithuania. Please follow the instructions in the Joint Case for Support template and complete all sections where necessary.

The Japanese applicants must prepare and submit an additional application form and a check list of export control as well. Please refer to the Supplemental Guidelines for Japan-based applicants “補足応募注意事項” for further information of required documents for application. The confirmation as eligible partner for Lithuanian partner which will be issued by MOH of



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Lithuania must be attached. For more details on the confirmation letter for the Lithuanian partners, please refer to the Description of the procedure of MoH.

A set of the joint application must be submitted to AMED through e-Rad application system (<http://www.e-rad.go.jp/index.html>) by **17:00 (Japanese Standard Time) on 15 June 2021**. Please see the Supplemental Guidelines for Japan-based applicants “補足応募注意事項” for further information.

On the proposal form the Japan-based PI should be listed as the principal investigator and the Lithuania-based PI should be listed as the Project Partner. No application will be submitted to the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania.

**Failure to submit a valid application to AMED will invalidate both funding possibilities from both funders.**

## VI. EVALUATION of PROPOSALS

Evaluation of proposals will be undertaken by the AMED evaluation panel. Peer-review will be conducted by international experts who will be appointed by AMED, and then the AMED evaluation panel will assess proposals and determine the final scores for each proposal by reference to review results and comments of peer-review. Recommendations from the AMED expert panel will be sent to the AMED for final decision for funding. Final decision of AMED will be sent to MOH of Lithuania.

Proposals will be assessed according to the key evaluation criteria. A scoring system from 1 to 10 will be used to evaluate the proposal's performance with respect to key evaluation criteria.

### Key Evaluation Criteria:

1. Fit to joint call purpose
  - Is the proposal in alignment with the aim, objectives and scope of the collaborative call and research theme?
2. Importance, scientific/technological significance and clear benefit through collaborative activities
  - Are the applicants' qualifications enough to conduct the proposed research?
  - Is the proposal creative, novel and innovative?
  - Does the proposal contribute to the advancement of the field of medicine?
  - Does the proposal contribute to the generation of new technology?
  - Does the proposal respond to social needs?
3. Quality and value for money of the implementation/appropriateness of the plan
  - Is there a clear underpinning rationale to the proposed activities?
  - Are the research activities concrete and realistic?



- Does the proposal comply with national policies regarding ethics and safety?
- Do the research teams have enough human resources for collaborative research?
- Is the proposal planned appropriately in terms of cost/activity/benefit, demarcation/overlapping with other research projects and their costs, and FTE for the proposed research, etc.

#### 4. Potential Impact

- Does the proposal contribute to the development of science and technology in both Lithuania and Japan?
- Does the proposal provide unique research opportunities for researchers in each country through the bi-lateral collaboration?
- Does the proposal have clear plan to foster skills and experiences of young career researchers?
- Does the collaboration add value to the research field?

Other factors if they become relevant may be used as criteria -for example institutional location of awards as the funders would wish to diversify their support.

#### Scoring system:

Score	Category
1	Extremely Poor
2	Very Poor
3	Poor
4	Marginal
5	Fair

Score	Category
6	Good
7	Very good
8	Excellent
9	Outstanding
10	Exceptional

Basically, proposals scored under 6 are not recommended for funding.

#### Announcement of Decision:

Successful applicants will be notified of the final decision by AMED and MOH of Lithuania **by mid-August 2021.**

## VII. REPORTING

Awarded researchers and their affiliated institutions will observe the following requirements when carrying out the collaborative research and utilizing funds provided by AMED and MOH of Lithuania.

- Annual Progress Report

The Japan-based PIs will need to send the annual report by email to [kokusai5931@amed.go.jp](mailto:kokusai5931@amed.go.jp), and to complete the annual report submission through e-Rad system.



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For reporting in Lithuania please refer to the Description of the procedure of MoH.

- Final Report

The Funders will request a brief final report on this collaborative activity. Joint final reports should be submitted within two (2) months after completion of the period of international collaborative research. The report should include a general summary compiled jointly by both the Japan and the Lithuania research groups. If papers describing results of collaborative research are presented to academic journals, societies and so on, copies of such papers are to be attached to the final report.

Japan-based PIs will need to send the final report by email to [kokusai5931@amed.go.jp](mailto:kokusai5931@amed.go.jp), and to complete the annual report submission through e-Rad system

The reporting requirements for the Lithuanian project partners are laid out in the Description of the procedure of MoH.

## VIII. TIMETABLE

- Call opens: 12 April 2021
- Closing date for proposals: 15 June 2021, 17:00 (JST)
- Evaluation of proposals: late June - July 2021
- Funding decision: early August 2021
- Award: mid-August 2021
- Project start: September 2021

## IX. CONTACT INFORMATION

### **For Japan-based applicants:**

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