



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

2026 CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Affiliated Partner within the European Reference Networks

Purpose

This document provides an overview of information related to the 2026 call for Affiliated Partners to the European Reference Networks (ERNs).

1. OBJECTIVE OF THE 2026 CALL

The call aims to:

- Improve geographical coverage of ERN expertise across Member States and Norway
- Facilitate access to specialised care in countries or disease areas where full ERN membership is not yet present
- Strengthen the integration of ERNs into national healthcare systems
- Support cross-border knowledge exchange and clinical collaboration

2. SCOPE OF THE 2026 CALL

The call for Affiliated Partners is limited to Member States and Norway that do not currently have a healthcare provider already approved as a member in an ERN. Based on the objectives of this call for Affiliated Partners, its aim is to **address countries that do not yet have full coverage of all ERNs on their territory, namely:**

Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia.

Indicatively, a maximum of three Affiliated Partners per missing ERN should be submitted for application by a Member State or Norway.

3. WHO DOES WHAT: Procedure and Responsibilities

ACTOR:	ROLE
Competent National Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Identifies and selects Affiliated Partners▪ Submits the national designation letters, corresponding technical annex and administrative information
DG SANTE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Checks document eligibility
ERNs Coordinator:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Assesses/reviews the applications to their ERN, final evaluation, concludes ERN bilateral cooperation agreements and integrates Affiliated Partners into network activities
BoMS (Board of Member States)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Final endorsement of applications
DG SANTE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Publishes the outcome of the BoMS endorsement

4. WHEN: Timeline

Milestone:	Date/Period
Training webinars:	30 March and 9 April
Call launch:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 13 April 2026
Submission deadline:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 1 September 2026
Eligibility check	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ September 2026
ERNs assessment/review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ October 2026 – January 2027
BOMS endorsement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ March 2027
Submission of signed bilateral cooperation agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ April 2027

Legal basis

The establishment and functioning of the European Reference Networks are based on:

- Directive 2011/24/EU on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare¹
- Commission Delegated Decision 2014/286/EU setting out the criteria and conditions that European Reference Networks and healthcare providers wishing to join an ERN must fulfil²
- Commission Implementing Decision 2014/287/EU setting out criteria for establishing and evaluating ERNs and their members³
- Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/1269 amending Implementing Decision 2014/287/EU setting out criteria for establishing and evaluating European Reference Networks and their Members and for facilitating the exchange of information and expertise on establishing and evaluating such Networks⁴

Annexes

Annex 1	Technical Annex: Associated National Centres
Annex 2	Technical Annex: National Coordination Hubs
Annex 3	Template: National designation letter - Associated National Centre
Annex 4	Template: National designation letter - National Coordination Hub
Annex 5	Bilateral cooperation agreement ERN-Associated Partner
Annex 6	ERN Strategy for the Integration of Affiliated Partners
Annex 8	Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

¹ Directive 2011/24/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2011 on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare, OJ L 88, 4.4.2011, pp. 45–65. [Directive - 2011/24 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

² European Commission, Delegated Decision 2014/286/EU of 10 March 2014 setting out criteria and conditions that European Reference Networks and healthcare providers wishing to join a European Reference Network must fulfil, OJ L 147, 17.5.2014, pp. 71–78. [Delegated decision - 2014/286 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

³ European Commission, Implementing Decision 2014/287/EU of 10 March 2014 setting out criteria for establishing and evaluating European Reference Networks and their Members and for facilitating the exchange of information and expertise on establishing and evaluating such Networks, OJ L 147, 17.05.2014, pp. 79–87. [Implementing decision - 2014/287 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

⁴ European Commission, Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/1269 of 26 July 2019 amending Implementing Decision 2014/287/EU setting out criteria for establishing and evaluating European Reference Networks and their Members and for facilitating the exchange of information and expertise on establishing and evaluating such Networks, OJ L 147, 17.05.2014, pp. 79–87. [Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2019/1269 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)