



October 2025

Autumn issue



A COMPREHENSIVE NETWORK AGAINST BRAIN CANCER

Supporting Young Scientists in Our COST Action

A message for the younger by a younger

One of the greatest strengths of our COST Action is the energy, curiosity, and fresh perspective of young researchers, starting with PhD students and fellows. As a shy person myself, I know how even the simplest things can sometimes feel difficult.

At the beginning of a scientific career, it is normal to feel intimidated: you may think you are “too junior” to contribute or feel hesitant to speak up in front of experienced colleagues—especially in a language different from your mother tongue. Thoughts like “what if I don’t understand the question?” are common. But my message is simple: don’t be afraid to take an active role.

Your ideas and contributions always matter. Very often, the most innovative insights come from those who see things differently. And remember – silly questions do not exist. Every question is valuable—not only for you, but also for others who may feel too shy to ask the same.

COST Actions are designed to be inclusive and supportive, offering young scientists the chance to learn, share, and grow. In Net4Brain, we truly care about giving space to our youngest members, because you will be the leaders of tomorrow.

On behalf of our community, I encourage you to explore two opportunities that can truly make a difference in your career and personal growth:

- Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM) Grants

With up to EUR 4,000 in support, STSMs allow you to visit host institutions abroad, access new knowledge, techniques, and equipment, and expand your network. The next Call will open on November 1, 2025. (→ [Apply!](#))

From my own perspective, after completing my degree and PhD in Italy, my first experience abroad was thanks to a STSM. It not only helped my research but also gave me the courage to step outside my comfort zone. It was a turning point for my personal and professional growth. So, be brave to explore the unknown!

- Net4Brain Young Researchers Group (YRG)

The YRG is a space to connect with peers, gain practical skills, share your work, and build collaborations. Join us by reaching out to Annalisa (→ [Text her!](#)). In this context, join the first Net4Brain Early Career Researchers (ERCs) Online Meeting on October 28, 2025. (→ [Register!](#))

Your enthusiasm today is the foundation of tomorrow’s breakthroughs.

Best regards,

Ilaria D’Agostino, PhD
Creative group member





Upcoming scientific events

Bordeaux School of Neuroscience in France

Date: 22 September – 10 October

Cutting-edge technologies inspired by the neuroscience field are transforming our ability to study brain cancers from a neural perspective. This course will enable students to integrate theoretical and methodological concepts in neuro-oncology, combining modern neuroscience approaches with hands-on experience in state-of-the-art methodologies. The course provides an integrated understanding of the crosstalk between neuro-oncology and neuroscience.

Net4Brain Young Researchers Group (YRG) Meeting

Date: 28 October

We are excited to launch the first Net4Brain Early Career Researchers (ECRs) Meeting, taking place on 28th October (online). This new initiative is part of our ongoing commitment to supporting PhD students and ECRs by promoting engagement and professional development across the network.

This event is designed to be more than just a scientific meeting; it's an opportunity for young researchers to connect, learn from leading experts, and gain practical tips for navigating the early stages of a research career.

We are also pleased to announce our two confirmed keynote speakers, who will share valuable research insights and tools with the community:

Prof. Bozena Kaminska-Kaczmarek – Head of the Laboratory of Molecular Neurobiology, International Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology (IIMCB), Warsaw, Poland. She will share insights from her latest research on brain tumor biology and immunology.

Dr. Trygve Bakken – Senior Scientist, Allen Institute for Brain Science, Seattle, USA. He will present the ABC Atlas and Genetic Atlas online tools, along with recent scientific findings.

The day will include interactive discussions on topics relevant to early-career researchers: publishing and peer review tips, funding and fellowships for ECRs, building collaborations, life/work balance and managing early-career pressures.

To attend the event and/or express interest in presenting, please register here: [Registration Link](#), or contact the YRG leader Prof. Annalisa Occhipinti at a.occhipinti@tees.ac.uk



Net4Brain
Let's beat brain cancer together

cost
EUROPEAN COOPERATION
IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

www.net4brain-cost.eu

Funded by
the European Union

WEBINAR 2025



Exploiting microenvironment heterogeneity to challenge brain metastases in mice and human



Manuel VALIENTE

DVM/PhD, Brain Metastasis Group Leader
CNIO / RENACER Network
Madrid, Spain



MONDAY, NOVEMBER 24

Save the date !



1.00 - 2.15 pm
(Paris time)



ZOOM LINK



petranetwork.fr



contact@petranetwork.fr



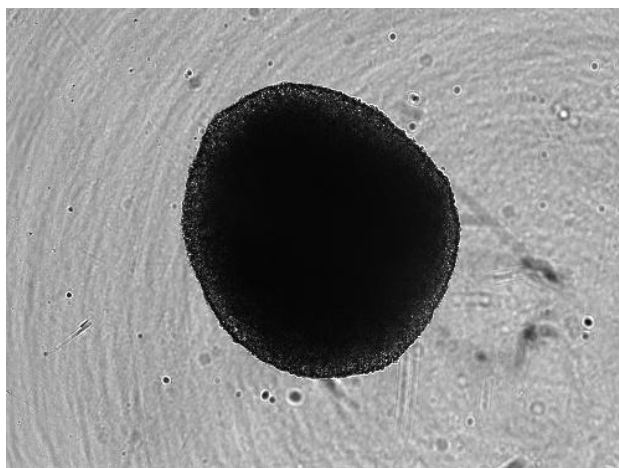
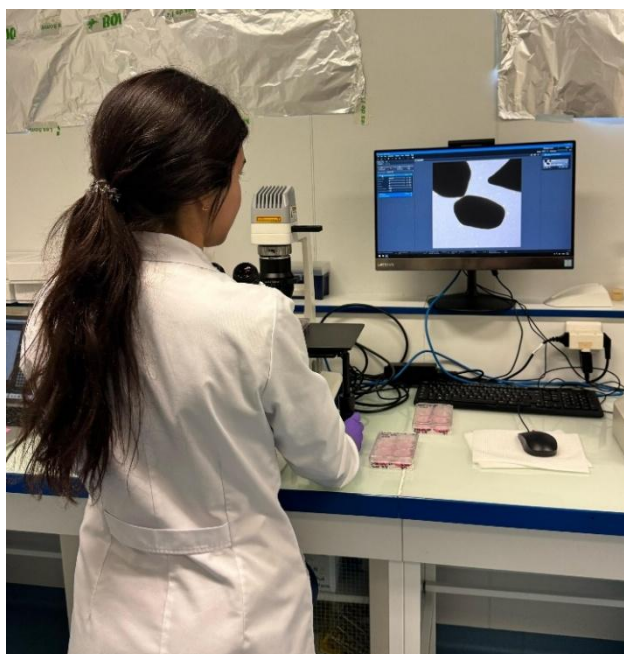
Experiences from STSMs

Bárbara Marques

My name is Bárbara Marques, and I had the opportunity to spend one month with the GlioMe team at the Institute of NeuroPhysiopathology (INP) in Marseille, France. During this period, I worked with an incredible group that taught me how to establish biomimetic glioblastoma patient-derived tumoroids. I followed the entire workflow, from tissue processing to the development of tumoroid models, gaining valuable hands-on experience. I also took part in lab meetings and had the opportunity to present my own project, which led to interesting discussions and knowledge exchange.

Beyond the professional experience of the STSM, I was warmly welcomed into the team's social activities, including Laser Tag, an Easter egg hunt, and a picnic in the faculty gardens. I also connected with international students at the institute, learned some French (although I still haven't quite mastered "Joyeux anniversaire"), tasted delicious French cuisine, and explored the beautiful city of Marseille. Among the highlights, I visited the breathtaking Calanque de Sugiton, where the sea meets the mountains, and traveled to nearby cities along the Côte d'Azur.

This month in Marseille was an unforgettable experience, and I am deeply grateful for the opportunity! Please let me know if this draft meets your expectations. I'd be glad to adapt it further, either to highlight more of the scientific aspects or the "outside the lab" experiences. I also have additional photos I would be happy to share.





Khuraman Sayin

My name is Khuraman Sayin, a PhD candidate at Ege University and a member of the COST Action Net4Brain. I recently completed my STSM project titled "Identifying and creating deep learning models on brain tumor data (MRI) that determine patient survival time and the probability of tumor recurrence" at Teesside University, Middlesbrough, UK, under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Claudio Angione. The project lasted three weeks (09.05.2025 – 26.05.2025). I am truly grateful for this opportunity, as it was a very valuable and enriching experience for me. I believe that I not only carried out meaningful research but also built strong professional connections and friendships that I will cherish.





Hamed Allahverdi

My name is Hamed ALLAHVERDI and I am a second year PhD student at the NORLUX Neuro-Oncology Laboratory, Luxembourg Institute of health, under supervision of Dr Anna Goleibewska.

During mid April 2025, I had the opportunity to spend two weeks at the Uniklinikum Erlangen in the lab of Prof. Dr. med. Dieter Henrik Heiland. The main focus of my stay was to gain hands-on experience with spatial transcriptomics techniques, which will be highly valuable for the projects we are currently developing in our group at the Luxembourg Institute of Health.

During my time in Erlangen, I was able to work directly with the team and learn each step of the process, from setting up the experiments to familiarizing myself with the data analysis workflows. The group was extremely welcoming and supportive, which made the learning process both effective and enjoyable.

Beyond the scientific training, this STSM was also a great networking experience, providing me with insights and collaborative opportunities that I look forward to bringing back to our lab.

I am grateful for this opportunity that NET4BRAIN provided and also for the hospitality of Prof. Heiland and his team.



Past events

Core Group Set 2026 Plans at Belgrade Meeting

The Core Group's fifth meeting was held on 6th September 2025 in Belgrade, hosted by **Dr. Milica Pešić** at the Institute for Biological Research "Siniša Stanković". It was chaired by Prof. Xinzhong Li, with Vice Chair Prof. Radim Jančálek, the meeting brought together Working Group leaders and co-leaders to review progress, refine priorities, and plan upcoming activities.

Key decisions included:

- Advancing deliverables on single-cell techniques for brain tumor profiling, integrating standardization, bioinformatics, wet lab analysis, and AI modelling
- Expanding collaborative publications, including special journal issues and multi-country review papers.
- Scheduling the Annual Meeting 2026 for 1–3 June in Istanbul, Turkey, with combined sessions for the Annual Meeting, Management Committee, and Young Researcher events.
- Keeping the Short-Term Scientific Missions, Inclusiveness Targeted Countries and Young Researcher Grants open for new applications.

The group also discussed integrating databases into the [Net4Brain website](http://Net4Brain_website), high-impact journal submissions, and ways to enhance engagement for early-career researchers.

Net4Brain continues to strengthen cross-border collaboration, accelerate innovation in brain cancer research, and empower the next generation of scientists.





News

WG6 has a new WG leader, Aylin Toplu

Aylin Toplu is a medical doctor and medical-clinical pharmacology specialist from Istanbul (Health Sciences University). She graduated with a PhD in Neuroscience program. She worked as a guest researcher at Lund University in Sweden last year, focusing on immunohistochemistry/tissue clearing/ microelectrode array techniques. She generally works on epilepsy models, neurodegeneration, and drug development with different techniques that are experimental models, stereotaxic surgery, EEG, MEA, patch clamp, cell culture techniques, and advanced data analysis tools, also with patients in the program. Her aim is to bridge clinical pharmacology and neuroscience research to develop safer and more effective therapeutic approach for patients.



Creative group

We are currently creating a design and promo team (Creative group) to share our news. Our group is now composed of **Aylin Toplu**, as a new WG6 leader, **Ilaria D'Agostino**, **Claudia Mazo**, **Muhammet Karaman**, and **Terezia Kiskova**, as Science Communication Coordinator. Our newest members are **Annalisa Occhipinti** and **Helene Castel-Gandolfo**.

Do you have some ideas? Are you feeling like a creative fellow? Would you like to join us?

Simply contact: terezia.kiskova@upjs.sk

Exciting News from the Frontlines of Brain Cancer Research

We're thrilled to announce the successful funding of a bilateral project: "Assessing the combinatorial effects of Arginine Methyltransferase inhibitors and radiotherapy on glioblastoma organoids."

Led by **Prof. Tugba Bagci Onder** (Koç University School of Medicine, Türkiye) and **Assist. Prof. Barbara Breznik** (National Institute of Biology, Slovenia), this 24-month collaboration aims to unravel the epigenetic mechanisms behind therapy-resistant brain tumours and discover small-molecule compounds that enhance radiotherapy effectiveness.

Supported by research agencies in Turkey and Slovenia, TÜBİTAK and ARIS, this project marks a major step toward more effective glioblastoma treatments.



Introducing Net4Brain Young Researchers Group (YRG)

The Net4Brain Young Researchers Group (YRG) is a dedicated platform for PhD students, postdoctoral fellows, and other early career researchers (ECRs) involved in brain and CNS cancer research. Our goal is to support the next generation of scientists by providing opportunities for training, networking, collaboration, and leadership within the Net4Brain COST Action.

The Net4Brain Young Researchers Group is led by Prof Annalisa Occhipinti. Please feel free to get in touch with Annalisa if you have any questions (a.occhipinti@tees.ac.uk)

The YRG creates a vibrant community where young researchers can:

- Connect with peers across Europe and beyond,
- Present their research and receive feedback,
- Gain practical skills in publishing, funding, project management, and communication,
- Participate in workshops, mentoring sessions, and training schools,
- Build collaborations with both early career and senior experts.

By joining the YRG, you will:

- Be part of a supportive community of young scientists,
- Access career development opportunities tailored to early-career researchers,
- Have a voice in shaping Net4Brain activities,
- Contribute to a sustainable network of future leaders in brain and CNS cancer research.

The YRG organizes regular events, both online and in-person.

First Net4Brain Early Career Researchers Online Meeting (28 October 2025): This event will bring together PhD students, ECRs, and senior experts. The program includes keynote lectures by Prof. Bożena Kamińska-Kaczmarek and Dr. Trygve Bakken, an Elsevier Author Workshop on academic publishing, ECR presentations, and interactive breakout discussions.

Register here to attend the meeting: [Meeting Registration Link](#)

If you would like to join the YRG Network, please use this link: [Join the Net4Brain YRG Network](#)

Future events will include annual meetings, training schools, mentoring programs, and collaborative research exchanges.

YRG leader, Annalisa Occhipinti

Annalisa Occhipinti is a Professor at Teesside University, where she works at the intersection between AI and Biology. Her current research topics involve the integration of metabolic modelling and multi-modal deep learning techniques for biomedical and bioprocessing applications.

Annalisa has recently received several awards for her contributions in the field of AI, big data, and cancer research, including an award from the Italian Embassy and the University of Cambridge.

Annalisa is currently leading various research projects funded by BBSRC and EPSRC, developing AI models for healthcare applications and bioprocessing optimization in collaboration with industrial partners.





Net4Brain
Let's beat brain cancer together



www.net4brain-cost.eu

Net4Brain Challenge

We are excited to launch **the first Net4Brain Lab Photo Challenge!**

All members are invited to share **snapshots** from their daily experimental work in the lab whether it is a striking microscopy image, a creative experimental setup, or a moment that captures the spirit of scientific discovery. By posting your photos on social media with the hashtag **#Net4BrainChallenge**, you can showcase your research to the wider community, connect with fellow scientists, and engage in friendly competition.

The most original and inspiring images will be shortlisted by our creative group, and the final winner will be selected through community voting across our social media platforms. The winning entry will not only be featured in our next newsletter and Net4Brain channels but will also receive a special recognition prize.



Net4Brain
Let's beat brain cancer together



www.net4brain-cost.eu

Contacts

Chair: Prof Xinzhong Li x.li@tees.ac.uk

Further contacts see:

<https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA22103/#tabs+Name:Main%20Contacts%20and%20Leadership>

Follow us

Follow us



<https://www.youtube.com/@Net4Brain>



<https://www.facebook.com/people/Net4Brain-COST/61556381019768/>



<https://www.instagram.com/net4brain/profilecard/?igsh=dWhvcnh0ZH FieWh5>



[LinkedIn account: Net4Brain Dissemination](#)

<https://net4brain-cost.eu/>