



PRESS RELEASE

## **Newron Pharmaceuticals' Consortium Gains EU Funding for Development of ION Channel Drug Screening Systems**

**Milan, Italy – December 1, 2004** – Newron Pharmaceuticals SpA, a research and development company focused on novel CNS therapies, announced today the raising of European funding from the Cooperative Research Programme (CRAFT) to innovate drug screening technology by the company and a consortium of small-medium enterprises (SMEs) and academic groups. Newron will coordinate the two-year research project named ION.

The scope of ION is the development of an innovative integrated system for efficient high throughput screening (HTS) of molecules for ion channel targets related to important neurological and psychiatric disorders such as depression, neurodegeneration, epilepsy and pain. The most important innovative feature of ION is introducing a suite of new software tools able to accelerate the analysis of the experimental output and the design of the next screening round for drug discovery in ion channels.

“ION is an important challenge for Newron and its partners not only for the technological innovation it will introduce in drug discovery but also for its strong transnational and collaborative character,” said Dr. Luca Benatti, CEO of Newron.

The project will be conducted in collaboration with academic institutions and with complementary innovative SMEs.

The European Commission and Newron have signed a research contract of €1,833,160, with the Commission contributing €1,275,340.

A consortium of nine research teams from five countries will conduct the ION Project: Newron Pharmaceuticals (Italy); Multichannel Systems (Germany); Nikem Research (Italy); SC IT Romania (Romania); University of Debrecen (Hungary); Università degli Studi di Firenze (Italy); Polish Academy of Science (Poland); Istituto Ricerche Farmacologiche Mario Negri (Italy); and Politecnico di Milano (Italy).

The Project Scientific Coordination is assigned to Mrs. Patricia Salvati, VP, Discovery, Newron, and the Project Management to Mrs. Carla Caccia, Head of Biology, Newron.

### **About Newron Pharmaceuticals and Consortium**

Newron Pharmaceuticals S.p.A ([www.newron.com](http://www.newron.com)) is a research and development company focused on novel ion channel based therapies for diseases of the Central Nervous System (CNS), particularly Parkinson's disease, epilepsy and pain. Newron is conducting Phase III clinical trials in Parkinson's disease with safinamide, a unique molecule with multiple mechanisms of action. Safinamide is also in Phase II clinical development for epilepsy and Restless Leg Syndrome (RLS). In addition to safinamide, Phase II trials with ralfinamide, a potent sodium channel blocker for the treatment of neuropathic pain are ongoing. Newron's clinical pipeline is supported by a broad portfolio of early stage proprietary compounds generated by our ion channel drug discovery platform. Newron is headquartered in Bresso, near Milan, Italy.

Multi Channel Systems MCS ([www.multichannelsystems.com](http://www.multichannelsystems.com)) offers online data acquisition and analysis of the PC-platform and produces high-end electronic devices for single and multichannel

measurements. MCS has its core competence in the field of development and manufacturing of multi channel recording systems and automation. MCS is based in Reutlingen, Germany.

Nikem Research ([www.nikemresearch.com](http://www.nikemresearch.com)) is a chemitechnology company spun-off from GSK offering a full range of medicinal, combinatorial and computational chemistry services, products and partnering possibilities for the pharmaceutical and biotechnological industries. Nikem is based in Baranzate di Bollate near Milan, Italy.

SC IT Romania ([www.itr.ro](http://www.itr.ro)) is an emerging software company in a candidate member state with important links with the Italian software industry (BBS Software) and it has solid experience in developing CRM applications, B2B projects, ASP applications, document management and Work Flow Automation solutions with international customers.

University of Debrecen, Hungary ([www.unideb.hu](http://www.unideb.hu)) is a multi-disciplinary public research and educational body affiliated to the Ministry of Education. The major scientific activities are connected with the cellular and molecular basis of pathology of human diseases with a high socio-economic impact. The Department of Anatomy and Histology is under the supervision of Prof. M. Antal, a well recognized leader in the field of neuroanatomy and neurophysiology, in particular motor and sensory neural circuits in the spinal cord.

The Department of Preclinical and Clinical Pharmacology of the Università degli Studi di Firenze ([www.pharm.unifi.it](http://www.pharm.unifi.it)) is a large teaching, research and clinical institution offering PhD and master programmes in Pharmacology and Toxicology. The unit of Neuroscience is led by Prof. F. Moroni, widely recognized for his contributions to the fields of glutamate neurotransmission and excitotoxicity.

The “Institute of Pharmacology of Polish Academy of Sciences”, Krakow - Poland ([www.if-pan.krakow.pl](http://www.if-pan.krakow.pl)) is a non-profit Institution well known for brain disease studies and development of novel methods for their treatments. In the laboratories of Prof. K. Wedzony, Head of Pharmacology and Brain Biostructure, several studies are carried out at various experimental stages, from molecular to behavioural level in the field of depression and schizophrenia.

The “Istituto Ricerche Farmacologiche M. Negri”, Milan - Italy ([www.marionegri.it](http://www.marionegri.it)) is a non-profit Institution widely recognized in the International scientific community with areas of excellence in the fields of both basic and clinical research. The Institute has developed a range of skills, all coordinated “under the same roof” in order to obtain a comprehensive picture of biomedical problems. Dr. A. Vezzani, Chief of Experimental Neurology Lab., has great experience in biochemical and molecular mechanisms involved in epileptogenesis.

The “Politecnico di Milano”, Milan - Italy ([www.elet.polimi.it](http://www.elet.polimi.it)) is one of the largest technical universities in Italy, offering Bachelor, Master and Ph.D. courses in Engineering and Architecture. The “Electronics and Informatics Department”, coordinated by Prof. Gini, covers a broad area of research from micro electronics to telecommunication, from system science to computer science. In particular it is widely recognized for its research in the field of Artificial Intelligence: learning from data, knowledge-based systems, ensembles of classifiers, planning, vision and humanoid robotics.

The assistance of BICO in the preparation of the ION project proposal is gratefully acknowledged. BICO Srl ([www.bicogroup.com](http://www.bicogroup.com)) is a consulting company specialized in the EU RTD policy implementation and in research funding.

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