



March 2026

Spring issue



A COMPREHENSIVE NETWORK AGAINST BRAIN CANCER

Editorial – Strength in Diversity and Shared Purpose

Dear Net4Brain Community,

As we embrace the first quarter of 2026, our network stands stronger and more vibrant than ever. This month, we reflect on two pivotal dates: World Cancer Day (February 4th) and the International Day of Women and Girls in Science (February 11th). These are not just dates on a calendar; they are the heart of why we do what we do.

Our mission to tackle brain cancer is a global challenge that requires every perspective. We take immense pride in the women scientists within Net4Brain who are pushing the boundaries of neuro-oncology every day. In this issue, we celebrate our recent milestones from the high-energy ECR meeting to our upcoming event in Istanbul.

Best regards,

Working Group 6



Introducing new WG leaders

WG 4

Dr. Milana Frenkel-Morgenstern

She completed her PhD at the Weizmann Institute of Science in 2006, where she specialized in computational biology and molecular genetics. She is currently a researcher at Reichman University, where she leads interdisciplinary research at the intersection of bioinformatics, genomics, and precision medicine. Her work focuses on integrating computational approaches with molecular and clinical data to better understand complex biological systems and disease mechanisms.



Her current research focuses on the development of liquid biopsy technologies for brain cancers, aiming to identify non-invasive biomarkers that can improve early diagnosis, disease monitoring, and treatment decision-making. By analyzing circulating biomarkers such as cell-free DNA (cfDNA), extracellular vesicles, and other blood-based molecular signatures, her work seeks to enable more precise and personalized approaches to cancer care. Dr. Frenkel-Morgenstern's research integrates advanced bioinformatics, machine learning, and multi-omics analysis to uncover novel molecular mechanisms and diagnostic opportunities.

WG 5

Alkinoos Athanasiou

He completed his MD in 2008, followed by an MSc in Medical Informatics in 2012 and a PhD (with distinction) in 2018, focusing on neuronal circuits after spinal cord injury. He is currently an Assistant Professor of Neurosurgery at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and a Consultant Neurosurgeon in private practice. His work spans neurosurgery, medical informatics, and biomedical technology, integrating clinical practice with research and innovation in neurosciences.



His current activities focus on advancing neurotechnology and biomedical innovation, including participation in international research networks and the development of interdisciplinary approaches to brain disorders. He has been involved in multiple European initiatives, contributed to numerous research projects and publications, and actively engages in teaching, mentoring, and scientific collaboration.

Upcoming events

3rd Net4Brain Annual Meeting | June 1–3, 2026



Get ready for our most significant gathering yet! From June 1st to 3rd 2026, we will meet in the historic and breathtaking city of Istanbul, Türkiye, for the 3rd Net4Brain Annual Meeting. For the first time, ECR One-Day In-Person Event will be presented as a part of the Annual Meeting.

A Hub of Innovation: Hosted by **Koç University**, this meeting will bring together our Management Committee, Working Groups, and Young Researchers for three days of intense scientific exchange.

High Demand: We are thrilled to announce an overwhelmingly high volume of participation requests! This incredible interest reflects the growing impact of our network.

What to Expect: Keynote lectures from world-renowned experts, hands-on workshops on the latest brain tumor profiling techniques, and dedicated networking sessions to spark new collaborations.

Mark your calendars! We can't wait to see the Net4Brain family reunite on the shores of the Bosphorus.

The Annual Meeting will bring together members of the Net4Brain network to review scientific progress, discuss ongoing and future activities, and strengthen collaboration across Working Groups and partner institutions. The program will include scientific sessions, Core Group(CG) meetings, and Management Committee (MC) meetings.

In parallel with the Annual Meeting, a one-day Early Career Researcher (ECR) event, organised by the Net4Brain Young Research Group will be held, with a focus on career development, mentoring, and networking.

Further information regarding the detailed program, registration, and logistics will be communicated in due course.



Net4Brain 3rd Annual Meeting Draft Agenda

1 June 2026

9.30–10:00 | Registration & Welcome Coffee
10:00–13:00 | CG Meeting
13:00–14:00 | Lunch
15:30–17:00 | MC Meeting
17:00–19:00 | Networking Event (MC+CG+ECR)

2 June 2026

8:00–9:00 | Registration & Welcome Coffee
9:00–9:30 | Welcome Speeches
9:30–10:00 | Keynote Lecture
10:00–11:25 | Scientific Session 1, WG1, Non-invasive Biomarker Discovery

Chair:

Talk 1 (20 min)
Talk 2 (20 min)
Talk 3 (7 min)
Talk 4 (7 min)
Talk 5 (7 min)
WG1 Dialog (20 min)

11:25–12:50 | Scientific Session 2, WG2, Preclinical Modelling

Chair:

Talk 1 (20 min)

Talk 2 (20 min)
Talk 3 (7 min)
Talk 4 (7 min)
Talk 5 (7 min)
WG2 Dialog (20 min)

12:50–13:50 | Lunch

13:50– 15:15 | Scientific Session 3, WG3, Pathogenesis and Tumor Profiling

Chair:

Talk 1 (20 min)

Talk 2 (20 min)
Talk 3 (7 min)
Talk 4 (7 min)
Talk 5 (7 min)
WG3 Dialog (20 min)

15:15–17:00 | Poster Session & Coffee

18:00–22:00 | Bosphorus Tour & Dinner

3 June 2026

8:00–9:00 | Registration & Welcome Coffee
9:00–9:30 | Keynote Lecture
9:30–10:50 | Scientific Session 4, WG4, Mathematical and Computational Modelling

Chair:

Talk 1 (20 min)



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Talk 2 (20 min)
Talk 3 (7 min)
Talk 4 (7 min)
Talk 5 (7 min)
WG4 Dialog (20 min)
10:50-11:40 | Poster Session & Coffee
11:40-13:00 | Scientific Session 5, WG5, Clinical Treatment Recommendation
Chair:
Talk 1 (20 min)
Talk 2 (20 min)
Talk 3 (7 min)
Talk 4 (7 min)
Talk 5 (7 min)
WG5 Dialog (20 min)
13:00-13:30 | Closing Remarks
14:00-19:00 | Guided Istanbul Tour



Net4Brain ECR One-Day In-Person Event Draft Agenda

1st of June 2026

We are thrilled to announce an upcoming one-day in-person event for Early Career Researchers (ECRs), organized by the Net4Brain Young Research Group and led by Prof Annalisa Occhipinti. The event will take place concurrently with the 3rd Net4Brain Annual Meeting.

This event is designed to be highly interactive, providing networking opportunities, career discussions, and collaborative exchange across the Net4Brain community. The programme will include:

- Keynote talks on topics highly relevant to early career researchers, including career development, funding opportunities, and scientific communication.
- Panel discussion with experienced researchers sharing insights and advice on navigating the early stages of a research career.
- Networking and interactive sessions, giving participants a chance to connect, share ideas, and build collaborations.

This is a fantastic opportunity for PhD students, postdocs, and other early career researchers to engage with peers and senior researchers, gain practical tips, and strengthen the Net4Brain community.

9.30–10:00 | Registration & Welcome Coffee

Meet fellow participants, collect materials, and settle in.

10:00–10:15 | Opening & Introduction

Prof Xinzhong Li, Lead of the Net4Brain COST Action

Prof Annalisa Occhipinti, Lead of the Young Research Group, Net4Brain Core Group Member

10:15–11:00 | Keynote Talk – Career Development & Funding for ECRs

Speaker: 2 CG members

Covers strategies for career growth, navigating early research stages, and funding opportunities.

11:00–11:30: Short talks 1

4 short talks (5 minutes + 2 min Q&A) from STSM grantees

11:30–12:00 | Coffee Break & Networking

12:00–12:45 | Interactive Networking Session 1 – Meet & Connect

Small-group rotations to introduce participants, share research interests, and discuss early-career challenges.

13:00–14:00 | Lunch & Informal Networking (with Poster presentations)

14:00–15:00 | Panel Discussion – Navigating the Early Career Path

Panel of senior researchers and recent ECR alumni. Interactive Q&A with participants. (Anna from Italy on career paths)

15:00 – 15:30 | Short talks 2

4 short talks (5 minutes + 2 min Q&A) from STSM grantees

15:30–16:00 | Coffee Break & Interactive Networking Session 2–Collaborative Ideas

Brainstorm opportunities for collaborations, joint projects, and initiatives within the Net4Brain network.

16:00–16:45 | Workshop / Open Discussion – Scientific Communication & Publishing

Tips and discussion on manuscript preparation, submission, and effective science communication.

16:45–17:00 | Open Floor & Wrap-Up / Closing Remarks

Participants share reflections and takeaways; next steps for the ECR community.

17:00–19:00 | Networking Event (MC+CG+ECR)



Past events – Empowering the Next Generation

PhD & Young Researchers Meeting

In December, there was a dynamic meeting specifically for our young fellows. It was a day filled with "no silly questions" and high-level science.

- Scientific Deep Dive: Discussions ranged from medicinal chemistry to the latest in neuro-oncology imaging.
- Career Growth: Beyond the lab, we focused on soft skills and navigating the early stages of a research career in a supportive, inclusive environment.

Propel your **doctoral research**
forward!



December 9th



11:00 (CET)

Join us online

Be part of the event and register!!!

<https://forms.gle/Dtw6xY3LD8kaTT6w8>



**Manuel
Valiente**

Scientific Director
CNIO & RENACER
Head of the Brain
Metastasis Laboratory



**Sarah
Brüningk**

Assistant Professor,
Center for AI in
Radiation Oncology
(University of Bern)



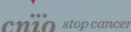
**Gabriel F.
Calvo**

Full Professor,
MOLAB (UCLM)
WG4 Leader
Net4Brain



**Carmen
Ortega**

PhD Candidate at
MOLAB (UCLM) &
CNIO researcher





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Tackling Brain Metastases

In our continuous effort to bridge specialized research networks, we recently highlighted a fascinating session from the PETRA Network webinar series.

On November 24, 2025, our community had the opportunity to learn from Dr. Manuel Valiente, a renowned expert and leader of the Brain Metastasis Group at CNIO and the RENACER Network in Madrid. Dr. Valiente presented his cutting-edge research titled "Exploiting microenvironment heterogeneity to challenge brain metastases in mice and humans".

The talk provided a deep dive into the complex mechanisms of the tumor microenvironment and how these insights are being translated from bench to bedside. This event was a testament to the strong synergy between Net4Brain and partner organizations like the PETRA Network, all working toward the common goal of advancing brain cancer research.

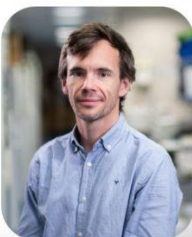
For those who missed the live session or wish to revisit the discussion, we encourage you to stay connected with our partner networks for future collaborative webinars.

**WEBINAR
2025**

**PETRA
Network**



**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**



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contact@petranetwork.fr

World Cancer Day

Net4Brain shared content via social media, highlighting the importance of cancer awareness.

International Day of Women and Girls in Science

Gender equality in science is crucial for building a better future for all, yet women and girls continue to face systemic barriers and biases in pursuing scientific careers.



IUPAC Global Women's Breakfast

an annual event held in February, often coinciding with the UN Day of Women and Girls in Science, designed to foster networks, mentorship, and gender equality.



Shaping the Future: The Creative Group Update

Our creative and dissemination teams have been working tirelessly to ensure our breakthroughs reach the wider public. We are back on socials—stay tuned for more updates!



Calls

Short term scientific mission (STSMs)

Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM) aim to support individual mobility and strengthen the existing networks and foster collaborations by allowing scientists to visit an institution in another participating COST country or an approved NNC or IPC institution.

The eligibility of grantees will be based on the following criteria:

Scientists (who have preferably not previously received a grant for a STSM) involved in the burden-eu Action, and either:

- a) affiliated in a Participating COST Full/Cooperating Member,
- b) affiliated in a Near-Neighbor Country, or
- c) affiliated in an approved European RTD organization.

Inclusiveness criteria (geography, gender, age) may be taken into consideration when evaluating STSM applications.

Highest priority will be given to encourage participation of Young Researchers and Innovators (YRI) in the COST Action activities. An applicant can be considered as being an YRI when they are younger than 40.

Priority will also be given to applicants coming from Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITC). The list of COST ITCs is available [here](#).

For more details, contact our STSM coordinator: Dr Milica PESIC (camala@ibiss.bg.ac.rs)

Our publications

Kiskova-Simkova T, Simko P, Pesic M, Occhipinti A, Breznik B, Golebiewska A, Athanasiou A, Gazea T, Hajdarpasic A, Booth T, Onder TB, Kaymaz Y, Angione C, Ngameduru U, Jancalek R, Li X. **COST action CA22103 Net4Brain: Pan-European Network Advancing Translational Research in Brain Cancer**. Crit Rev Oncol Hematol. 2026 Mar 12;105260. doi: 10.1016/j.critrevonc.2026.105260. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 41831627.

Doan, L.M.T., Shahhosseini, K., Verma, S. et al. **Bridging modalities with AI: a review of AI advances in multimodal biomedical imaging**. Commun Eng 5, 30 (2026). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44172-026-00602-x>

Taleban H, Li X, Ali Z, Kalesh K, Prakash J, Bagci-Onder T and Breznik B (2026) **Integrating computational fluid dynamics into organ-on-chip systems: a glioblastoma-centred design and validation framework**. Front. Bioeng. Biotechnol. 13:1716813. doi: 10.3389/fbioe.2025.1716813

Lupšić, E.; Stojković, P.; Grozdanić, M.; Terzić-Jovanović, N.; Pajović, M.; Koutsougianni, F.; Alexopoulou, D.; Opsenica, I.M.; Pešić, M.; Podolski-Renić, A. **Novel Adamantane–Sclareol Hybrids Exploit ROS Vulnerability to Overcome Multidrug-Resistance in Glioblastoma Cells**. Molecules 2025, 30, 4756. <https://doi.org/10.3390/molecules30244756>

Hasimi F and Ymeri F. **Case Report: Rare presentation of spinal meningioma in Kosovo** [version 1; peer review: awaiting peer review]. Open Res Europe 2026, 6:7 (<https://doi.org/10.12688/openreseurope.22197.1>)

When publishing with us, do not forget to thank COST:

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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>

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