



Newsletter

NetwOArk

The European Network on OsteoArthritis

ISSUE 3, APRIL 2025

Welcome to the third issue of the CA21110 - Building an open European Network on OsteoArthritis research (NetwOArk) newsletter!

Spring greeting from our Action Chairs Corné Baatenburg de Jong, Sylvia Nürnberger, and Cecilia Aulin.

“With this Newsletter we report on the continuous work performed in NetwOArk, as reported by the WG Leads. From the organizational perspective we are moving forward step by step with the formation of a society. The MC has decided by voting the formal name will be “NetwOArk” to continue to build on the recognition we already achieved during the first two years and formation of Bylaws an location is ongoing. The organization of the aim and work in the European Patient Council continues with an upcoming meeting in Umhausen in May. Don’t forget to mark your calendars for September 11-12, for the annual meeting held in Porto. Together with the local organizers we are finalizing the program that we expect to share with you within the coming month. We hope for a productive spring in all the WG until we meet in Porto!”



Action Chair Mr.
Corné Baatenburg
de Jong

NetwOArk STSM Grant Period 3, Call 2 is now open, more details [here](#).

STSMs (Short-Term Scientific Missions) are part of the COST Action NetwOArk, supporting short research visits between institutions in different countries. It’s a unique opportunity to strengthen collaborations, gain new skills, and grow your network.

To apply, you’ll need:

1. A research plan aligned with the Action’s goals (be part or having the intention to be part of CostAction)
2. Support letters from your home and host institutions
3. A clear work plan and expected outcomes
4. A motivation statement



We would like to congratulate once more the NetwOArk STSM Grant Winners, Grant Period 3, Call1.

Funded by the European Union

NetwOArk
The European Network on OsteoArthritis

Congratulations to the NetwOArk STSM Grant Winners!

cost
EUROPEAN COOPERATION
IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY


Ruwandi Abeysekara


Marlies Verleyen


Thanh Le


Nádia Santos


Abdullah Khalid


Marthe Tofthagen

<https://netwoark.eu>

Period 3, Call 1

Let's get to know a little bit about some of the STSM previous grant periods:

"I am Andrea Schwab, a postdoctoral fellow at the Experimental Orthopedics lab at the Medical University, Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg. My work focuses on osteochondral explant models and to study cartilage calcification in the zone of calcified cartilage and in OA. Since my PhD, I took many opportunities to visit collaborators with different research focus and disciplines for a short or long-term stay. Between May and June 2024, I spent six weeks in the lab of Gerjo van Osch to work with the OsteoChondral Platform (LifeTec Group), a bioreactor to dynamically load osteochondral explants and thus mimic mechanical loading in the knee during walking. My expertise on the static osteochondral platform I worked with in my PhD project, the support the lab members, especially the help of Elias Salzer (Postdoc in the lab), together with my new insights in the field of mechanobiology resulted in the successful optimization and validation of this explant model. This model expanded our portfolio on explant models relevant for OA in current and future projects. My STSM application was a great chance to start this new and exciting project and to strengthen the collaboration between Rotterdam and Magdeburg. We used the new insights resulting from my STSM to apply for a European research project to foster our collaboration. My STSM was a great experience with lots of new learnings, exciting results, meeting friends and exploring Rotterdam and the Dutch coast. There is no doubt that I would apply for an STSM again at any time. I would like to say a big thank you to the NetwOArk COST Action for funding my STSM, the whole lab at Erasmus for their support and my colleagues in Magdeburg.



Andrea Schwab.



Géraldine Borer; Huaizhong Xu, Valentina Basoli, and João Henriques.

“My name is João Henriques, and I am a PhD researcher in Ali Mobasher Research Group at the University of Oulu. My research focus is on understanding the molecular mechanisms involved in osteoarthritis, specifically how adiposity accelerates the osteoarthritis development through inflammation and fibrosis. From April to June, I had the opportunity to visit Dr. Valentina Basoli and her research group at the University of Basel. I applied for the STSM to gain hands-on experience and work closely with experienced researchers in the osteoarthritis field. During my visit, I focused on developing a co-culture system that mimics the joint environment, with macrophages, chondrocytes, and adipose-derived stem cells. I worked with imaging techniques, RNA isolation, and histology, and explored the use of 3D bioprinting to create more consistent OA models. This gave

me different insights and new approaches to studying osteoarthritis. The STSM was a truly enriching experience that helped me grow scientifically while building meaningful collaborations. It gave me a broader perspective on cross-disciplinary research in osteoarthritis and introduced new ideas and techniques that I can integrate into my current projects. I'm eager to carry forward the knowledge and connections I made during this visit as I continue to develop my research.

Working Group updates



WG1

Patient engagement & information
programme on OA

WG1: Marlies Verleyen started her STSM in March and started therefore the analysis of the survey about the knowledge of people with OA across Europe. Result will follow and be presented in the Porto meeting. WG 1 continues to work on identifying patient priorities through a real-time Delphi. Furthermore, the Brussels meeting was fruitful. The responses of the Mentimeter/survey showed a growing interest and experience with patient engagement. The responses also showed that not yet everybody is aware of what patient and public engagement and involvement means. We would like to point out that it is still possible to follow the workshop we organized in year 1 together with experienced PPIE experts: [Workshop: Patient and Public Involvement \(PPI\) in Arthritis Research](#).



WG2

Speeding up translation from
bench to bedside

WG2 has had an active and collaborative start to 2025, marked by consistent engagement and significant progress across multiple initiatives.

The first monthly meeting of the year was held online on 30th January 2025, where an overview of ongoing tasks was presented. Currently, WG2 is developing one online survey and five manuscripts. The group also initiated discussions on future outreach formats, including a potential webinar series, exploring different time frames and thematic focuses.

The second monthly meeting took place on 11th February 2025 as a face-to-face gathering in Brussels, with strong participation from WG2 members. The session featured



productive discussions on the progress of the manuscripts and the formation of a new consortium focused on in vivo models, which attracted significant interest from members eager to contribute. On the same day, WG2 held a joint meeting with WG3, highlighting shared interests and identifying clear opportunities for collaboration. Three immediate action points emerged: (1) Crossover between WG3's Endotypes subgroup and WG2's manuscript on surrogate outcomes and predictive markers for knee osteoarthritis development. (2) To enhance collaboration and transparency between WG2 and WG3, it was suggested that manuscript leads attend each other's WG meetings, and that meeting dates and minutes be regularly shared across both groups. (3) The development of a new series of webinars and podcasts, with a particular emphasis on podcasts after evaluating their accessibility and impact.

An exciting idea was proposed to host a live webinar or podcast event in Porto (during the f2f meeting in November 2025), recorded with a live audience for broader dissemination.

Looking ahead, the third monthly WG2 meeting is planned for 27th March 2025, where further updates on manuscript progress will be shared. The group is aiming to submit its first manuscript before the summer.



WG3

OA Phenotypes, patient stratification
and comorbidities

WG3 has made substantial progress in its activities, structured around two dedicated sub-groups—one focusing on clinical aspects and the other on research. This dual approach has led to the development of two review papers, each offering distinct yet complementary perspectives on osteoarthritis.

Of the manuscripts resulting from this work, one has been [accepted](#) and another is currently under review at BMC Rheumatology. Two additional manuscripts are in preparation. In addition, WG3 has actively contributed to international scientific dissemination, with two abstracts submitted to the upcoming EULAR congress.

Furthering interdisciplinary collaboration, WG3 engaged in a joint discussion with WG2 to explore opportunities for synergy. A key outcome was the decision to facilitate a focused meeting between the WG3 sub-group working on endotypes and WG2 members investigating surrogate outcomes and predictive markers for knee osteoarthritis development. This collaborative initiative aims to align and strengthen the scientific impact of both groups.



WG4

Building the European Society for
Osteoarthritis (EUSOA)

WG4 has made significant strides in shaping the future of our network. One of the key milestones was the endorsement of a name for the to-be-established association. This proposed name has been forwarded to the Management Committee (MC) for vote, and was approved: **NetwOArk!** This marks an important step toward establishing our long-term identity and legal framework.

Collaboration between WG4 and WG1 was further strengthened during the February meeting in Brussels, where a dedicated session of the Patient Council was held. This session provided a platform to present recent achievements and foster a meaningful discussion on the next steps in our joint efforts. The engagement and insights from this session continue to shape our patient-centred approach.



The NetwOArk Patient Council has also seen encouraging growth, expanding its representation across Europe. New patient organizations and advocacy groups have joined, enriching our diversity and strengthening our collective voice. This broader representation ensures that our work remains inclusive, grounded in lived experience, and responsive to the needs of patients across the continent.



The NetwOArk Patient Council has expanded further across Europe, with new patient organisations and advocacy groups now on board. All countries with participating organisations are represented in green on the map.

For more information patient Council check our website: [Patient Council Information and Updates](#)

Would you like to be up-to-date with information, publications and presentations from the NetwOArk?

Make sure to follow us!

Our Website: network.eu

CA21110 - (NetwOArk): cost.eu/actions/CA21110

Facebook : facebook.com/people/Network/100090517234454

Instagram: instagram.com/cost_action_network

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/cost-action-ca21110-network/>



NetwOArk in the 33rd National Orthopedic Surgery and Traumatology Congress

5 - 10 October 2024 Antalya, Türkiye

The 33rd National Turkish Orthopedic Surgery and Traumatology Congress was held at Antalya Pine Beach Belek Congress Center between 5 and 10 November 2024. The main theme of this congress was "Complications and Management" and a special NetwOArk session was organized on 7 November 2024 Thursday. Panel chairs were Mehmet Akif Akçal and Victoria Sarafin. Mehmet Akif Akçal MD presented the COST and the NetwOArk to the society. Luminita Labusca MD and Ricardo Ferracini MD shared their experiences during the panel session and Nazife Öztürk PhD was also among the participants.



Short before the meeting, Prof. Paul Lee from the UK also joined our activity. We had the chance to explore Perge the ancient city and the aqueducts of Aspendos ancient city.

Before the panel, the hotel staff Plexis made the participants do exercises in the garden of the congress hotel to highlight the importance of non-weight bearing movement in osteoarthritis. Participants wore t-shirts with NetwOArk written on them during the exercise and sessions to increase awareness of the action. In addition, informative brochures in Turkish and English and key chains having the name of the action on them were shared with congress participants. NetwOArk therefore walked among the participants throughout the congress.

The first publication from the COST Action CA21110 - NetwOArk consortium is out in BMC Rheumatology (Springer Nature)!



Graphical summary of clinical phenotypes in osteoarthritis and their therapeutic implications (Gijon-Nogueron, et al 2025, PMID 40087790)

The NetwOArk consortium has published its inaugural paper in BMC Rheumatology. This scoping review identifies and describes eight clinical phenotypes of knee osteoarthritis: inflammatory, biomechanical, metabolic, pain-sensitization, minimal joint disease, psychologically driven, menopause-related, and severe radiographic. Standardizing terminology and adopting phenotype-based frameworks are highlighted as promising strategies for advancing personalized osteoarthritis care and research. This work marks a significant step toward more targeted management of a disease affecting over 600 million people worldwide.

Congratulations to the Working Group 3 members of this European initiative for their collaborative efforts in achieving this milestone.

You can read the full paper [here!](#)



NetwOArk f2f Working Groups Meeting in Brussels 11 February 2025, Brussels, Belgium

On 11 February 2025, COST Action CA21110 - NetwOArk members have gathered for a face-to-face Working Groups Meeting hosted by the COST Association in Brussels, and proudly celebrated also the International Day of Women and Girls in Science. This vibrant gathering brought together dedicated researchers, experts, and patient representatives, both onsite and online, highlighting our shared commitment to advancing osteoarthritis research through inclusive, collaborative dialogue.



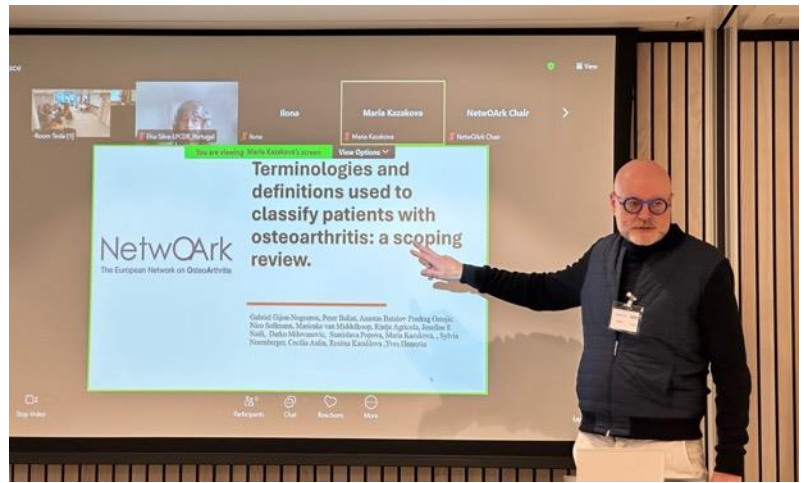
This picture features some of the amazing female researchers involved in the COST Action CA21110 - NetwOArk.

Discussions continued over lunch, focusing on patient organisation engagement and the value of COST Actions in building strong networks. A special highlight was the symbolic gifting of the NetwOArk key chain to our Scientific Officer and NetwOArk members—an emblem of gratitude for the COST Association’s key role in shaping our community. Some pictures about our NetwOArking in Brussels:









Would you like to know more about the challenges of developing DMOADs?

Current therapies for osteoarthritis mainly focus on symptom relief, leaving the root cause unaddressed. Despite many efforts, no disease-modifying osteoarthritis drugs (DMOADs) have yet reached clinical approval.

In a recent expert insight, Prof. Mobasher outlines the key hurdles holding back DMOAD development, the promising research aiming to overcome them, and other emerging advances that offer hope for millions living with osteoarthritis.

You can listen to the podcast [here!](#)

podcast

Challenges of developing DMOADs: Why are disease-modifying treatments for osteoarthritis such a difficult proposition?

Prof. Ali Mobasher
University of Oulu

Did you know?

Recently the WHO published a Handbook: [Integrated Care for Older People handbook](#)

This booklet has been prepared by Doctor Yuka Sumi and Doctor Matteo Cesari, from the Department of Maternal, Newborn, Child & Adolescent Health & Ageing (MCA) at the World Health Organization, in Geneva, Switzerland. You will see that osteoarthritis is mentioned several times in this document.



SAVE THE DATE

**Call 2, Period 3, Short-Term Scientific Missions
(STSMs) is Open**

Deadline, May 1st, 2025

You can find more information [here](#).

NetwOArk Annual Meeting in Porto

Porto, Portugal, September 11-12, 2025

More details soon!

LEOPOLDINA - SYMPOSIUM

Skeletal Interfaces in Health & Disease

Salzburg, Austria, October 9 -11, 2025

Program and registration details [here](#).

If you would like to know more about the main news in real time, please visit the Action webpage:
<https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA21110/>



NetwOArk Social Media
Channels are Open and
Active!

Our Website: netwoark.eu

CA21110 - (NetwOArk): cost.eu/actions/CA21110

Facebook : facebook.com/people/Netwoark/100090517234454

Instagram: instagram.com/cost_action_netwoark

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/cost-action-ca21110-netwoark/>

FUTURE ISSUES OF THE NETWOARK NEWSLETTER

This issue of the newsletter was produced by Jaqueline L. Rios, Ilona Uzieliene, and Nazife Öztürk in collaboration with the WG leaders and the NetwOArk Communications Members. We are planning to issue a newsletter every quarter with news, important announcements, and updates. We would also like to encourage the young investigators in NetwOArk to get involved in the development, editing and production of the newsletters. Photos from this newsletter were kindly shared by the NetwOArk members.

Please contact the NetwOArk Communications Coordinator Ali Mobasheri (ali.mobasheri@oulu.fi), the Newsletter leader Jaqueline L. Rios (j.l.rios-2@umcutrecht.nl), or any member of the communications committee if you are interested.

NetwOArk

The European Network on OsteoArthritis



Building the European Network for Osteoarthritis (NetwOArk)

<https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA21110/>