



SENC-J Ambassador Distinction

Call for Nominations – 2026 Cohort

Dear colleagues,

The Spanish Society for Neuroscience (SENC), through its Young Researchers and Education Committee (**SENC-J**), is proud to announce the creation of a new distinction: **SENC-J Ambassador**.

This distinction recognizes early-career neuroscientists who have demonstrated outstanding international achievement and scientific independence at an early stage of their careers. It aims to highlight and support the next generation of leaders in Spanish neuroscience.

The first cohort of SENC-J Ambassadors (2026) will be appointed in June 2026 and publicly recognized during a brief ceremony at the FENS Forum 2026 in Barcelona.

Purpose

The SENC-J Ambassador distinction seeks to:

- Recognize internationally competitive early-career excellence.
- Strengthen the visibility of Spanish neuroscience abroad.
- Create a structured leadership pipeline within SENC.
- Inspire ambition and constructive excellence across our community.

This is not a hierarchical title. It is a recognition of trajectory and potential, combined with a commitment to community engagement.

Selection Mechanism: Nomination-Based

Candidates must be nominated by:

- A SENC member (senior or peer), or
- A SENC institutional representative.



Self-nominations will not be accepted.

Nomination Process

Potential candidates must be nominated by any SENC member or SENC institutional representative through the “Private area”: “SENC-J Ambassador Distinction” on the SENC website (<https://www.senc.es/en/senc-grants/>) to fill in and upload the following information regarding the nominee: full name, email address, research institution, and whether the nominee meets the eligibility criteria.

Submission Process.

Individuals proposed for nomination will be informed by SENC-J via email.

Following nomination, the nominee must submit the required documentation through the official online submission system provided by SENC.

Nominations must include:

1. Short justification letter (max. 1 page).
2. CV (5 pages maximum).
3. Statement of commitment to SENC community engagement (max. 300 words).
4. A brief statement outlining a specific initiative the nominee would initiate if selected as SENC-J Ambassador (max 300 words).

Eligibility

Nominees are not required to be SENC members at the time of nomination. Candidates selected for the distinction will be required to obtain active SENC membership prior to formal appointment.

Nominees must have obtained their PhD degree within the past 15 years (excluding documented parental, caregiving, or medical leave).



Nominees must have undertaken a cumulative minimum of two years of postdoctoral research experience at one or more international institutions outside their country of PhD training.

Evaluation Grid

Selection will be conducted by a mixed committee (SENC-J + SENC Executive representation) using the following criteria:

1. Scientific Excellence (40%)

- Internationally competitive achievements (ERC, MSCA, EMBO, Fullbright, major prizes, equivalent distinctions).
- High-quality publications and evidence of independence.
- Field-relevant impact.

2. International Projection (20%)

- International collaborations.
- Invited talks.
- Leadership in global international initiatives.

3. Leadership & Independence (20%)

- Evidence of scientific independence.
- Mentorship of students or postdocs.
- Institutional or community contributions.

4. Commitment to SENC Values (20%)

- Willingness to contribute to SENC-J mentoring.
- Promotion of ethical research and inclusivity.
- Engagement with training, outreach, or Brain Bee-type initiatives.

Gender balance, regional diversity, and disciplinary breadth will be actively considered.



Cohort Size and Term

- Maximum 7 Ambassadors per year.
- 3-year term.
- Renewal possible once, subject to engagement.

At any given time, no more than approximately 20 active SENC-J Ambassadors will exist.

Role and Responsibilities

SENC-J Ambassadors will:

- Serve as visible role models for early-career neuroscientists.
- Participate in at least one SENC-J initiative per year (mentoring, workshop, panel, outreach).
- Acknowledge and highlight this distinction in their scientific communication (including social media and invited talks) to enhance the international visibility of Spanish neuroscience.
- Represent the spirit of excellence, integrity, and collaboration associated with SENC.

The role is honorary and voluntary, but symbolically important.

Creating Constructive Competition

The SENC-J Ambassador distinction is designed not to exclude, but to motivate.

By recognizing internationally competitive trajectories early, we aim to:

- Encourage ambitious funding applications.
- Foster international engagement.
- Provide aspirational role models.
- Build a culture of excellence anchored in collaboration.

Every nomination strengthens our community by identifying emerging leaders and making excellence visible.



Timeline 2026

- Call for nominations: March 9, 2026
- Deadline: April 30, 2026
- Announcement of 2026 cohort: June 2026
- Public recognition ceremony: FENS Forum 2026 – Barcelona

With this initiative, SENC reinforces its commitment to nurturing and retaining internationally competitive talent while building a cohesive and forward-looking neuroscience community.

Carlos Matute
President, Spanish Society for Neuroscience (SENC)