International Cooperation in Health Research

Connecting the global scientific community and underpinning the role of Europe in international research and technology for Health

The Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) is the "Cooperation" fund's research activities partly undertaking different countries, locales through international cooperation. The aim is to support European leadership in key gaps of science and technology. This fund is open for health research international cooperation via the Framework Programme, involving cooperation between the Institutions of the Member States and countries associated to FP7 (ACs) on the one hand and non-associated third countries (TCs) on the other.

International cooperation is one of the key aspects of FP7 and an integral part of the Health theme. Project consortia in all areas of Health are encouraged to include research entities from third countries, including International Cooperation Partner Countries (ICPCs) and countries with Scientific and Technological cooperation agreements with the EU. The participation of non-associated third countries is possible under all topics of the theme and is mandatory for Special International Cooperation Actions (SICA). This represents an expansion of the EU framework programmes, which aim to remove barriers between countries and different types of organisations and disciplines.

International Cooperation in Health Research follows four main routes:

1. General opening of all topics to any country in the world
2. Specific International Cooperation Actions - SICA
3. Coordinated Topics with Certain Countries
4. Programme Level Cooperation with Industrialised Countries

The partnership in Health Research projects will extend beyond EU Member States and Associated Countries as early as the start of the Sixth Framework Programme in 2002 and partners from third countries in the world could participate in FP projects. The result of this general opening is that FP7 24 partners from 51 non-associated third countries are represented in Health projects. This amount doubled for those partners, mostly those from low or middle income countries is EUR 31 million, or about 1.5% of the total.

In the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) this general opening is continued and a gradual increase in the number of third countries can be observed from one call to the next. This expansion of the programme is underpinned by the fact that the FP7 is by definition a multi-country programme and therefore lends itself to wider collaboration.

The SICA concept is a new feature in FP7 2007-2013. It is a result of the FP7 NIDO programme for supporting research collaboration with third countries. By linking the management of 'Europeans' projects, an improved synergy and visibility can be achieved. The first call programme for Health FP7 had 10 SICA topics in total of which only one (virulence research) was open in the first call proposal in 2007. Two projects were selected for funding following the first call. In total, 20 countries submitted 23 proposals. From the second call for proposals in 2007 24 research projects and 7 Coordination and Support Actions have been selected and will start in late 2008.

Timeframe for FP7 projects

- General opening of all topics to any country in the world
- Specific International Cooperation Actions
- Coordinated topics with certain third countries
- Programme level cooperation with industrialised countries

A new feature in FP7 is the opening of coordinated topics for co-financing between the EC and the target countries. In this case the topics are defined in close collaboration with research and funding agencies of the target country. The intention is to support those projects which have an approximately equal number of partners from the EU including AC and from the participating third country, which will finance the expenses of its own partners.

This type of cooperation is ideal for large nations containing many regions and which have the capacity to collaborate on an equal basis with several EU / AC partners.

In the third call for proposals in FP7 (2008) Russia participates in coordinated call. Two topics were selected at a workshop in St. Petersburg in September 2007. Those topics are based on SICA topics in order to guarantee the inclusion of a target country's institutions. It is expected that this model will lead to a close integration of the projects partners and may pave the way for a wider co-funded cooperation in the future. Other large nations such as China, Brazil and India will be invited to join in later calls.

The unity of the funded projects will be guaranteed through a combination of management and scientific reporting, although in principle they are two separate initiatives.

* The unity of the funded projects will be guaranteed through a combination of management and scientific reporting, although in principle they are two separate initiatives.
Examples of Projects

Pharma-Plants
The Pharma-Plants project is a successful pan-European collaboration that will change the way pharmaceuticals are made. The project will create a new paradigm in the way synthetic biology is used to create novel therapeutic platforms.

Allcells
The Allcells project aims to develop a new generation of cell-based therapeutics. The project will use synthetic biology to create cells that can be used to treat a range of diseases.

International Mouse Knockout Consortium (IMKC)
The IMKC is a collaboration between the US, Europe, and Japan. The project is working to create a library of genetically modified mouse models that can be used to study human disease.

AsiaFluCap
The AsiaFluCap project is a collaboration between universities in Asia and Europe. The project is working to develop new vaccines for influenza.

CATHFLU
The CATHFLU project is a collaboration between universities in Europe. The project is working to develop new treatments for influenza.

Get support with preparing proposals under the Health Theme

FP7 contacts in third countries
Some third countries have established Contact Points (CPs) for cooperation with the EU. These CPs undertake a wide range of activities aimed at providing information, training and networking, thereby facilitating cooperation among the respective scientific communities:

List of the International Cooperation Partner Countries (ICPC):

Find FP7 calls and relevant documents
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/calls/cottage/enhtml

Contact
European Commission, 2008
Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

International Cooperation in Health Research - The role of Europe