
Volume 2 - Issue 1, Spring 2008 - EU News

EU News: Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development

Author:

Dervla Gleeson
Managing Editor

The Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7) is the European Union's (EU) main instrument for funding research in Europe. Running from 2007 to 2013, it will execute a budget during that period of €50.5 billion and an additional Euratom budget for the next five years of €2.7 billion. FP7 is designed to support research in selected priority areas.

How is FP7 Made Up?

FP7 is made up of four main specific programmes under the headings Cooperation, Ideas, People and Capacities, plus a fifth specific programme on nuclear research. Here we assess the most relevant ones.

Cooperation

With a budget of €32 billion, the "Cooperation" programme will provide research support to international cooperation projects across the European Union and beyond. Its ten thematic areas, corresponding to major fields in science and research will promote the progress of knowledge and technology. Research will be supported and strengthened to address European social, economic, environmental, public health and industrial challenges, serve the public good and support developing countries.

Health Research Programme

With a budget of €6 billion, the health research programme aims to improve the health of European citizens, and increase and strengthen the competitiveness and innovative capacity of European health related industries and businesses. Global health issues, like emerging epidemics, will also be addressed. European collaboration with developing countries will allow those countries to develop research capacities. Its emphasis will be put on translational research (i.e. the translation of basic discoveries in clinical applications), the development and validation of new therapies, methods for health promotion and prevention including the promotion of healthy ageing, diagnostic tools and medical technologies, and sustainable and efficient healthcare systems.

Clinical research will tackle a number of diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular, infectious, mental and neurological diseases, and in particular those linked with ageing, such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases. Through international multi-centre trials involving the required number of patients, new drugs and treatments would be developed in a shorter time frame. European-funded health research will focus on:

- Biotechnology, generic tools and medical technologies for human health;
- High-throughput research;
- Detection, diagnosis and monitoring;
- Prediction of suitability, safety and efficacy of therapies;
- Innovative therapeutic approaches and intervention;
- Translating research for human health;
- Integration of biological data and processes;
- Research on the brain and related diseases, human development and ageing;
- Translational research in infectious diseases (HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, SARS, avian influenza);
- Translational research in major diseases: cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes/obesity, rare diseases, other chronic diseases including rheumatoid diseases, arthritis and musculoskeletal diseases;
- Optimising the delivery of healthcare to European citizens;
- Translation of clinical outcome into clinical practice;
- Quality, efficiency and solidarity of healthcare systems including transitional healthcare systems and home care strategies;
- Enhanced disease prevention and better use of medicines, and
- Appropriate use of new health therapies and technologies.

"People" Programme Supports Careers in Research

With a budget of €4.7 billion, the "People" programme offers individuals training and career development in research. It aims to encourage European researchers to stay in Europe and attract the best researchers in the world to European research excellence and infrastructures. The "People" programme should encourage individuals to enter the profession of researcher; structure their research training by offering options; and, encourage mobility within the same sector. The mobility of researchers is not only key to the career development of researchers but also vital to

the sharing and transfer of knowledge between countries and sectors.

During FP7 a series of EU research funded actions will support the on-going training, research and mobility of highly qualified scientists and encourage the proliferation of centres of excellence in the EU and their contribution in new areas of research and technology. This will be carried out through initiatives such as lifelong training and career development through individual fellowships and cofinancing programmes at international, national and regional level and international outgoing and incoming fellowships aiming to increase research talent outside Europe and fostering mutually beneficial research collaboration with researchers from outside Europe. The activity will also include measures to counterbalance "brain drain" and create networks of European researchers working abroad.

Capacities

With a budget of €4.2 billion, the "Capacities" programme will optimise the use and development of research infrastructures, while enhancing the innovative capacities of SMEs to benefit from research. The programme is designed to support regional research driven clusters and at the same time unlock the research potential in the EU's convergence and outermost regions.

Four Countries Sign Agreement to Join FP7

Croatia, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey all recently signed agreements that enable their eligibility to compete on an equal footing with EU Member States in the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7), following the signature of Memoranda of Understanding with the European Commission.

These countries will now be able to participate in all the FP7 calls for proposals and enjoy the same rights for participation as EU Member States in all the research cooperation and supported actions funded under FP7. Janez Potocnik has noted the importance of the agreement in view of these countries' application to join the EU. 'Research cooperation with Europe's scientific community is a tool which can smooth the way for the integration process of candidate and potential candidate countries into the European Union,' he said.

Montenegro has also requested to become associated with FP7 and it is expected that a decision will be taken Once Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) negotiations have come to a head. Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Israel and Switzerland are also expected to join soon.

Further Reading

<http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7>

<http://www.dti.gov.uk/science/uk-intl-engagement/euro-programmes/fp7/page38886.html>

<http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/i23022.htm>

Published on : Mon, 21 Apr 2008