

The European Commission published an orientation paper presenting key features and proposed topics for the 2011 calls for Theme Health, cooperation programme, in the 7th Framework programme (FP7).

Through the 2011 calls in Health research, the European Union is expected to provide funding in grants to support **research and innovation** in order to improve health and foster competitiveness in Europe.

The main feature of these calls will be the strong support for innovation – in line with the Europe 2020 strategy¹. This will be implemented through a series of complementary actions:

- Special topics should encourage strong involvement of **small and medium-sized companies** (SMEs). There are 8 topics proposed (listed below) that are predominantly broad in scope, of interest to research-intensive companies and which stipulate that a minimum percentage (15% or 30%) of the EU grant must go to the SME(s) in each project. SMEs are encouraged to consider participation very carefully. Should they decide that it fits with their overall strategy, they should be involved from the onset in the conception of the project rather than have a minor role with no influence on project outcomes. We are encouraging the applicants to carefully review the rules of participation, including SME status and their financial viability. Most of these topics will be evaluated through a two-stage process in order to lower overall transaction costs for applicants.

- Two **high impact research initiatives** will support ambitious research projects in immunisation and in epigenomics respectively, thus establishing a robust platform for innovation (see also the explanatory memorandum for these initiatives published on <http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/health/> with at least 15% of funding going to the SMEs.

- A strong component of **clinical trials** through 8 broad topics (listed below) predominantly for investigator-driven clinical trials that should provide opportunities to verify the relative safety and efficacy of various treatments and promote the translation of research into clinical practice. A specific section of the orientation paper describes what is expected for these topics including regarding patient involvement and ethics² (see pp 14-15). Most of these topics will be also evaluated through a two-stage process.

There will also be a special emphasis on research to tackle **lifestyle-related health issues** across the calls and thematic areas, such as in diabetes/obesity, cardiovascular disease, brain-related diseases and social determinants of health.

Another significant policy objective is tackling **global health issues**. Thus, the calls will feature a series of topics on combating anti-microbial resistance and to address emerging epidemics.

International cooperation continues to be a priority, with the possibility of involving partners from any part of the world, in most cases with EU funding. There are also a number of topics which are either for programme level cooperation with non-European countries, that will require collaboration with these countries, or for Specific International Cooperation Actions (SICA) that require the involvement of at least two partners from the target region(s).

All these aspects are presented in greater detail in the orientation paper, which is available on our website: <http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/health/>

Flexibility

It is important to remind potential applicants that beyond the eligibility criteria of a minimum of 3 partners from 3 different European countries and the upper limits for the EU contribution per project set for each topic³, the size and composition of the consortium is left entirely up to the applicants. Also beyond the basic rules stipulating that all participants must be legal entities, there are no special conditions regarding the types of organisations or their geographical location, except when this is expressly stipulated in the topic description (e.g. for SME topics or SICA topics). Likewise, it is for the applicants to decide on the duration of the project.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/index_en.htm

² The European Commission encourages the involvement of patient organisations in clinical trials and requires that the ethical and regulatory framework, both at European and national level, is respected.

³ For precise conditions, please refer to rules for participation.

Support

Applicants are encouraged to make use of their national contact points (NCPs) for advice and support or to find partners. http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/health/support_en.html

Another useful resource to survey ongoing EU-funded research in Health is the newly-launched HealthCompetence website: www.healthcompetence.eu

Implementation

There will be two main calls for proposals: one for single-stage submission/evaluation and one for two-stage submission/evaluation. The calls for proposals are planned to be published at the end of July 2010, with closing dates for submission in October and November 2010 (see box for details). If this planning stands, the evaluation process is expected to end in March/April 2011.

The final version of the Work programme 2011, together with conditions for applying for grants, is due to be published on the website (<http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/health/>) on 30 July 2010 with closing dates planned on 13th October for the 1st stage of the two-stage call and 10th November for the single-stage call. For the 2nd stage of the two-stage call, applicants should be notified of the outcome by 10th December and the successful ones will have 2 months to prepare a full application.

There are currently about 50 topics proposed in the orientation paper, which is currently in the inter-service consultation by the European Commission services, prior to being submitted to the Member States for consultation. Some of these proposed topics are listed below:

Topics targeting SMEs:

- *Developing tools and technologies for high-throughput research*
- *Genome-based biomarkers for patient stratification and pharmacogenomic strategies*
- *Tools, technologies & devices for application in regenerative medicine*
- *Development and production of new, high-affinity protein scaffolds for therapeutic use*
- *Development of multi-analyte diagnostic tests*
- *Development of tools to control microbial biofilms with relevance to clinical drug resistance*
- *Evaluation and validation studies of clinically useful biomarkers in prevention and management of cardiovascular disease*
- *New methodologies for clinical trials in personalised medicine*

Topics for investigator-driven clinical trials:

- *Regenerative medicine (not necessarily investigator-driven)*
- *Childhood-onset neurodegenerative diseases*
- *Therapeutic interventions in the elderly populations*
- *Off-patent antibiotics*
- *Rare cancers*
- *The management of cardiovascular diseases*
- *Reducing diabetes complications*
- *On off-patent medicines for children*

Topics for high impact research initiatives:

- *High impact initiative for better immunisation*
- *High impact initiative on the human epigenome*

Disclaimer: the text of the orientation paper and proposed topics and conditions are subject to changes as a consequence of the various ongoing consultations. Applicants must refer to the final published text that will be published on Cordis.europa in the calls for proposals.