

European Academic Global Health Alliance (EAGHA)

Response to the Green Paper Consultation From Challenges to Opportunities: Towards a Common Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation

The European Academic Global Health Alliance (EAGHA) welcomes the opportunity the EC offers to participate in the consultation on the Green Paper. The Alliance supports the Green Paper's core idea of bringing EU funded research and innovation programmes under one framework and of simplifying administration and access to funding for participants.

The Alliance recognizes that attempts to simplification were made under FP6 and F7, however development of a more uniform set of rules and easy-to-complete templates for reporting and accounting requirements are needed to further facilitate participation. More alignment between MS and within regional and national funding bodies is key for less fragmentation and promotion of transnational European and pan-European collaboration.

The Green Paper touches on a whole range of issues. As an Alliance of academic institutions focusing on global health, it would like to highlight the following aspects:

1. Working together to deliver on Europe 2020

The main value of science is to understand all aspects of our world. Curiosity remains the primary driving force as it is through unexpected research results that truly innovative solutions to research questions arise. The Alliance agrees that socially responsible scientists should be proactively aware of applicability as well. The results of scientific research should be used to greater benefit of mankind as a whole, with respect for our environment, in order to foster sustainable and equitable development of all people, but with special care and attention for those who failed to participate in economic, social, cultural and spiritual well-being until now. In that spirit, public-private partnerships or industry should be encouraged to collaborate with academic researchers to cross-fertilize and complement each other, not for the greater intellectual property right acquisition or to increase financial benefits, but to make sure that the fruits of commonly acquired new knowledge are freely distributed to all who need it.

Security, economic development and health are integrally related in a global context. Recent pandemics, non-communicable diseases and major global health threats cannot be stopped by borders. Hence the EC should promote and sponsor trans-European and wider international collaboration and keep protecting global humanist values. Hence the new framework should foresee considerable research capacity in the global health field.

The Alliance supports the merge of FP7, CIP and EIT to cover the full innovation cycle from research to market uptake but it recommends continuity wherever possible with current programmes to ensure smooth transition with future programmes. The focus of the research programmes should be more towards non-commercial research. The strong focus of the current FP towards SMEs limits academic input as well as space for non-commercial topics in favour of market-driven research.

The Alliance advocates for clear KPI's to measure the output, outcome and impact of research projects. Programme evaluation should be more than impact factor, financial profits and patents. Dissemination of research results should be a part of but not dominate the performance measurement. Training and transfer of knowledge (e.g. by means of the development of communication platforms) should be important components.

The EC could further enhance platforms to Getting Research into Policy and Practice (GRIPP). Programmes aiming to promote a better understanding of evidence-based approaches to health care and facilitating dialogue between researchers, industry, policy makers, practitioners and civil society need to be encouraged. The Alliance sees potential in the encouragement of platforms, networks and consortia that bring together involved stakeholders.

2. Tackling Societal Challenges

In a globalised world, collaboration between European countries is key but research needs to go beyond Europe. Neither intra-European collaboration, nor an integrated effort of the industrialised world alone can possibly resolve global health problems. An essential prerequisite for a successful Europe 2020 is promotion of true partnerships with researchers in European and developing countries and regions worldwide, for the simple reason that the latter are affected most by the diseases that form a worldwide threat. Hence the Alliance strongly advocates an always deeper understanding of and beyond different disciplines, including epidemiology, biostatistics, economics, policy analysis, sociology, anthropology, biomedical sciences and clinical medicines as well as other sectors and disciplines that can influence the health of populations. Improved health indicators driven by research, both basic and applied, will also help to better address other major policy challenges, such as population mobility, national and international security, climate change etc.

Both smaller-scale targeted projects and larger-scale, strategic ones are needed. The larger ones could specifically be selected on the basis of clear criteria such as multi-site and multi-country studies to assess impact of exposure to social and environmental factors within and beyond the EU; clinical trials (e.g. EDCTP), research requiring access to large facilities that cannot be provided by a single nation (e.g. ESFRI, ERINHA). Whereas the smaller ones could be more targeted (e.g. ERC and Marie Curie).

3. Strengthening Competitiveness

Scientific excellence should remain a main requirement for funding. Only in that way the good projects will be supported. Innovation in the absence of good quality science is to be avoided as it is wasteful of resources since the intended impact is missed. In developing countries and regions the centres of excellence are still too scarce. Institutional capacity to perform autonomous research, organise training and provide technical assistance remain by far the prerogative of developed regions and countries. Global health initiatives mainly have their power base in Europe and other industrialised countries. Resetting that balance is to the interest of all stakeholders, including Europe. That requires long-term investment in local education, in exchange platforms and networks of junior and senior scientists and scientific collaboration and long-term health research programmes not only between research institutions and SMEs in European and other industrialised countries but also with the developing world as well as mutually between developing countries.

4. Strengthening Europe's Science Base and the European Research Area

To strengthen Europe's science base cross-border mobility between scientists within Europe and to and from developing countries needs to be further boosted. Brain circulation is

positive to bridge national policy decisions with a globalised context. ERA-NETs and Joint programming encourages promotion of transnational research collaboration. Those programmes foster cooperation and coordination of national/regional European research activities but with eye for international cooperation. One single channel to disseminate information about programmes would certainly encourage participation. Joint Programming Initiatives should be supported for key societal and scientific global health challenges where large scale effort is likely to be more effective.

The Alliance advocates for evidence-based policies and practices and increased resources for global health in Europe and worldwide. With its current 49 academic institutions (37 full and 12 associate members) involved in Global Health, the Alliance offers a wide expert and partner pool to assist and advise the EC in evidence-based health policies.

For all of the reasons mentioned above, the Alliance believes that the EC has strong reasons to foresee funding for global health and to encourage transnational programmes within and beyond Europe.

The Academic Global Health Alliance

This note was prepared by the EAGHA EU Policy Influence sub-committee. For more information, please contact:

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More information about the members, mission and vision is available at <http://www.aspher.org/pliki/pdf/eagha.pdf> and in the Lancet of January 2011 (http://www.internationalsurgery.ubc.ca/PDFs/2011_European%20Academic%20GH.pdf).
