



EU research efforts at front line of fight against Ebola

Brussels, 16 January 2015

The EU has acted decisively since the early stages of the current Ebola crisis and is today announcing its latest actions in the field of research. Support to research is part of the EU's response, together with humanitarian aid, expertise, international coordination and longer-term development assistance.

The European Commission is today announcing eight research projects into Ebola that will be funded with a total of €215 million. These projects will develop in particular vaccines and rapid diagnostics tests, which are key to overcoming the current Ebola crisis. In parallel, another project is now on site in Guinea to monitor the ongoing Ebola crisis with the aim to improve preparedness and planning, operational effectiveness of future interventions in case of similar outbreaks or pandemics.

The eight projects working on vaccine and diagnostics are run under the new Ebola+ programme of the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI) and funded jointly by the European Commission and the European pharmaceutical industry. €114 million come from Horizon 2020, the EU's research funding programme, and the remaining €101 million from the pharmaceutical companies involved in the projects^[1]. The announcement comes shortly before the start of the World Economic Forum in Davos, where the Ebola crisis is expected to feature high on the agenda.

European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation Carlos Moedas said: *"There is no vaccine or treatment against Ebola as yet, so we must urgently step up our efforts in Ebola research. With this funding from Horizon 2020 and our industry partners, we are speeding up the development of an Ebola vaccine as well as rapid diagnostic tests to aid heroic health workers. These are the tools we need to defeat Ebola once and for all."*

The projects include partners from around the world (mainly Europe, Africa, and north America) and address the following aspects (see Annex for more details). The topics are among the key priorities set out by the World Health Organization in the current Ebola crisis:

- Development of Ebola vaccines (3 projects)

There are currently no licensed vaccines for Ebola. Three projects will advance the development of such vaccines by assessing the safety and efficacy of different vaccine candidates.

- Scaling up vaccine manufacture (1 project)

Ebola vaccines can be manufactured in facilities with a higher biosafety rating. This project will establish a platform capable of rapidly producing sufficient quantities of the vaccine, while adhering to stringent quality and safety requirements.

- Compliance with vaccine regimens (1 project)

For a vaccine to have a real impact on an outbreak, high levels of vaccination coverage are essential. In addition, for lasting protection, two doses of the vaccine may be needed. The project will raise awareness of vaccination campaigns and aim to secure patient compliance for vaccines that require two doses.

- Rapid diagnostic tests (3 projects)

There is currently no fast, reliable test to determine if someone has Ebola or not. Three projects will pave the way for rapid diagnostic tests capable of delivering reliable results in as little as 15 minutes.

In addition to these, the Miracle project (Mobile Laboratory Capacity for the Rapid Assessment of CBRN Threats Located within and outside the EU) has developed a "Biological scenario" which closely mimics the current Ebola crisis situation and its rapid spread in West Africa, and how it can be addressed. This scenario is currently being implemented in real life operational conditions: An in-field laboratory in the immediate vicinity of an Ebola treatment centre located in the outskirts of Nzere Kore, Guinea, close to the borders of Liberia, Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone. In addition to helping identify Ebola patients quickly, this laboratory will also support new clinical research into one of the most promising drugs for the treatment of Ebola patients. Lessons learned from this deployment will also help refine the analysis of gaps, technological or logistical improvements and missing technologies for mobile laboratories.

To reinforce EU efforts to help fight Ebola in rural communities of Guinea, under the leadership of the Commission, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control is deploying in the next few days

four teams of French-speaking epidemiologists to support surveillance and response at community level.

Background

The European Commission has already mobilised **€24.4 million** from Horizon 2020, the EU's framework programme for research and innovation, that will fund five projects ranging from large-scale clinical trials to tests of existing and new Ebola compound treatments ([IP/14/1194](#)).

It also worked with the industry partners within IMI to launch the Ebola+ programme, a multi-million euro programme on Ebola and related diseases such as Marburg haemorrhagic fever, in November 2014 ([IP/14/1462](#)). The eight projects announced today were selected following the first call for proposals under this programme.

IMI is a partnership between the EU and the European pharmaceutical industry, represented by the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA), to speed up the development of medicines. IMI was launched in 2007 and had a budget of €2 billion in its first phase until 2013. IMI2 has a budget of €3.3 billion for the period 2014-2024. Half of the funding comes from the EU, the other half from large companies, mostly from the pharmaceutical sector. These do not receive any EU funding, but contribute to the projects 'in kind', for example by donating their researchers' time or providing access to research facilities or resources.

The EU is also helping to fight infectious diseases in sub-Saharan Africa, including Ebola, within the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership programme (EDCTP2). This partnership works with a budget of €2 billion over the next ten years, with nearly €700 million coming from Horizon2020 ([IP/14/2273](#)).

The Miracle project operates with a budget of €1.4 million, co-funded by the Security research programme of the European Commission. The project is coordinated by the Universite Catholique de Louvain and runs from 1 December 2013 to 31 May 2015.

For more information

Annex: [List of selected IMI projects](#)

[EU research on Ebola](#)

EU response to Ebola: [website](#) and [factsheet](#) (MEMO/14/2464)

[Horizon 2020](#)

[Innovative Medicines Initiative](#)

[Miracle project](#)

[1] The Grant Agreements for some projects selected under the first call of the some Ebola+ programme are still being finalised. Final information on all selected projects, including budget details, will be published once the Grant Agreements have been signed.

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