

Researchers' Voice Matters: Securing EU Support for Global Health R&I

Introduction

Global health researchers have the opportunity to significantly advance global public health goals and outcomes through their research, improving available treatments, and strengthening healthcare systems. They also play a crucial role in engaging with policymakers to ensure public research funding has the maximum impact and prioritises the most neglected diseases.

Researchers' engagement with the European Union (EU) is a strategic move to secure the necessary financial support and resources for global health, in particular for poverty-related and neglected diseases (PRNDs). The EU is the largest collective source of funding for global health research globally, offering substantial financial support through its Horizon Europe programme and other funding mechanisms.

With global funding for PRNDs research and innovation (R&I) declining, the EU's role is becoming increasingly vital. This policy brief outlines concrete opportunities to engage with EU policy processes to secure continued and increased funding for PRNDs. It summarises the EU's role, the importance of researcher engagement, and specific opportunities for action.

The EU's vital role in addressing PRNDs

PRNDs, including tuberculosis (TB), malaria, sleeping sickness, and neglected tropical diseases, disproportionately affect the world's poorest populations. These diseases contribute to significant health disparities and hinder socio-economic development in affected regions. Addressing these diseases requires comprehensive, collaborative research efforts across multiple disciplines and countries.

The EU's investment in global health research and innovation (R&I), including PRNDs has supported the development of breakthrough technologies. Thanks to EU investments across the research spectrum, from basic research to clinical trials, we now have new tools to fight against malaria¹, TB²,

¹https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/download/7fb9c8c4-c85f-4c6d-af2c-031fbeb700f3_en?filename=ec_rtd_hiv-malaria_factsheet.pdf

²https://hadea.ec.europa.eu/news/world-tuberculosis-day-eu-funded-projects-contributing-fighting-global-tuberculosis-epidemic-2025-03-24_en

and HIV³. It is estimated⁴ that **every \$1 dollar invested in neglected disease R&I generates a return on investment of \$405 dollars**, mostly thanks to the societal value of lives saved.

In 2023, the world's governments invested \$2,622 million in PRNDs basic research and product development⁵. This represents a 4% decrease compared to 2022 record fall figures, and the fourth consecutive year of declining public funding for PRNDs R&I. The US government, which provided 80% of the total High-Income Country (HIC) contribution in 2023, already then started to reduce PRNDs R&I funding. The current administration's horrific attack against science⁶ could lead to disastrous consequences in the fight against PRNDs. **The EU's leadership in global health R&I is now more vital than ever.**

A recent report⁷ by [Impact Global Health](#) found that, if Team Europe - the EU, together with its Member States – investments in PRNDs R&I are sustained, the resulting global health innovations could achieve tremendous transformative outcomes: it would ultimately be responsible for 3.45 million lives saved, 240 million disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) averted, and 441 million cases of neglected disease averted. If investments are sustained, Team Europe would provide 8.5% of global funding for PRND R&I for the period 1994-2040, with **the EU itself accounting for around forty percent of that: 3.6% of global funding.**

All these impacts, though, depend on a continued commitment from funders to build upon the progress made thus far. **With more than three-quarters of the gains from R&I projected to arrive over the next two decades, funding is needed to complete the products still in the pipeline and to enable their manufacture and wide-scale distribution, including promising products**, like TB vaccines to meet the many still unmet needs of the people who suffer from neglected diseases.

Therefore, these projected figures assume and rely on continued commitments from Team Europe and other global funders.

The current European Commission President has committed⁸ to research and innovation being at the heart of the EU's economy and to increase EU R&I spending to focus more on strategic priorities. Global Health R&I, however, is not explicitly mentioned as a priority for the European Commission.

Opportunities to engage in EU processes – take action!

As the EU works towards its global health commitments, particularly in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), via its [Global Health Strategy](#), and taking into account the global context,

³ <https://www.edctp.org/projects-2/success-stories/hiv-treatment-chapas/>

⁴ <https://cdn.impactglobalhealth.org/media/The%20Impact%20of%20Global%20Health%20R&D%20Report.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.impactglobalhealth.org/insights/report-library/public-funding>

⁶ <https://healthpolicy-watch.news/nih-limits-overhead-cost-funding-to-15-cutting-off-9-billion-to-biomedical-research-institutions/>

⁷ <https://www.impactglobalhealth.org/insights/report-library/the-impact-of-global-health-rd-european-union->

⁸ https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029_EN.pdf

it is crucial for global health researchers to engage in EU discussions and stress the importance of continued EU support to global health R&I to ensure it remains a priority in the EU's research agenda.

Engaging with the EU is strategic for several reasons. Firstly, the EU's financial resources, collaborative networks, and global influence provide an unparalleled opportunity to accelerate progress against global health challenges. Secondly, global health researchers possess the recognised expertise and insights necessary to inform EU policy decisions. To shape the future of EU global health research and ensure sufficient funding is dedicated to PRNDs, the following processes present an opportunity: the development of the Horizon Europe Work Programme for 2026-2027, and the development of the EU's post-2027 EU Research Instrument (FP10).

Shaping the Horizon Europe Work Programme for 2026-2027

[Horizon Europe](#) is the EU's key R&I funding programme, with a budget of €93.5 billion for the period of 2021-2027. The [Horizon Europe work programmes](#) set the priorities for EU research funding. The EU is currently developing the next work programme for 2026-2027, which should be adopted by the end of 2025. Researchers can influence these priorities by engaging with Member State representatives who contribute to the programme's development.

ACTION! **contact your Member State representatives⁹ in the Health Configuration of the Horizon Europe Programme Committee, and make the case for specific calls for proposals for PRNDs.** Highlight to them the specific research gaps and promising areas for innovation in PRNDs prevention, treatment, or control, as well as the importance of EU continued funding. The paper [Filling the Gaps](#) developed by our partners [DSW](#) identifies several ways the EU R&I can contribute. Reach out to your representatives before their next meetings, which will take place on 10 April and 20 May, to make your voice heard.

Shaping the post-2027 EU Research Instrument (FP10)

Horizon Europe runs until the end of 2027. The European Commission is expected to put forward a proposal for the next long-term EU budget (MFF) this summer, as well as the next generation of financial programmes, including the successor of Horizon Europe (Framework Programme 10, or FP10). FP10 will set the strategic direction for EU research funding for 5-7 years, starting in 2028. Negotiations are expected to last approximately 2 years, with a final decision expected by the end of 2027.

Researchers can contribute to this process by being engaged from the start. Concrete examples of how to engage include: contacting your national government and sharing your expectations for FP10; and providing feedback on the Commission's consultation.

ACTION! **Contact your Ministry of Research and share with them the following [ten recommendations](#)** developed by our partner DSW to ensure that the FP10 promotes economic, social and ecological sustainability by delivering on the EU's health agenda:

1. **Secure an appropriate budget for FP10:** at least €200 billion is needed to realise the programme's ambitions.

⁹ you can find who is representing your country on [this webpage](#)

2. **Reverse the de-prioritisation of health R&I:** the health cluster budget should amount to at least 10% of FP10's total budget, as was previously the case under Horizon 2020
3. **Focus on areas requiring public support:** by prioritising areas with high unmet medical needs and market failures, where private sector engagement is limited, in particular PRNDs.
4. **Make health R&I a priority in international cooperation:** fostering international collaboration in health R&I to address health challenges that transcend national borders
5. **Reinforce collaboration with low and middle-income countries:** catalyse actions to deliver on the [AU-EU Innovation Agenda](#)
6. **Adopt an end-to-end approach:** supporting promising products throughout the entire pipeline, from basic research to scaling up production of new tools
7. **Ensure accessibility and affordability:** include clear access and affordability conditions to health R&I
8. **Advance equity and diversity:** encourage the participation of women scientists and gender-diverse populations in EU programmes
9. **Enhance transdisciplinary investigation:** integrate a One Health approach into R&I and support interdisciplinary projects that combine insights from various fields
10. **Improve participation of diverse research actors:** adopt a multi-stakeholder, co-design approach for the preparation and implementation of programmes.

ACTION! Submit your feedback to the [EU open consultation](#) on the next MFF by 6 May. R&I has been clustered with other topics under the 'EU funding for competitiveness' issue. Although very broad, the consultation allows you to upload documents supporting your position. We encourage global health researchers to provide input to this consultation, highlighting the ten recommendations mentioned above, the specific research gaps and promising areas for innovation in PRNDs, as well as the need to secure an independent, standalone R&I programme that is and not part of a broader European Competitiveness Fund.

The fight against PRNDs requires a sustained, collaborative effort. Global health researchers have a crucial role to play in shaping EU policy and ensuring that research continues to drive progress in this area.

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