

## “Horizon 2020”

### Need for Collaborative Research on Poverty-related diseases

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Poverty-related diseases (PRDs) are the major cause as well as the consequence of considerable poverty in Developing Countries (DCs). They include **HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, pneumonia, diarrheal and neglected tropical diseases** and kill approximately 14 million people annually, most of them in developing countries. Acute lower respiratory diseases like pneumonia represent the single most important cause of death in children under 5 years and account for at least two million deaths annually in this age group. Fighting these diseases will be one of the most effective ways to alleviate poverty and promote economic progress in these countries. There is an urgent need for local research capacity building in affected countries and for collaborative research activities. Research questions have to include health system aspects as well as monitoring and evaluation. **The solutions lie in a mix of strengthening human resource capacities in developing countries, supporting local research infrastructures, encouraging south-south and north-south networks and providing research project funding for collaborative projects including developing and European countries.**

The European Foundation Initiative for African Research into Neglected Tropical Diseases (EFINTD)<sup>1</sup> welcomes the Framework Programme for research and innovation “Horizon 2020”<sup>2</sup>, that the Commission presented on November 30, 2011, along with a Specific Programme<sup>3</sup> for its implementation. It is pleased to note that the three objectives related to international cooperation of Horizon 2020 include the aim to “*tackle effectively global societal challenges*” and to “*support the Union's external and development policy objectives, complementing external and development programmes*”. It is unfortunate, however, that the programme says very little about the means to be deployed to attain these objectives.

The 7th Framework programme (2007-2013)<sup>4</sup> was more explicit. It clearly identified “*specific cooperation actions in each thematic area dedicated to third countries [...] selected on the basis of the scientific and technological level and needs of the countries concerned*” and more specifically for developing countries activities “*focusing on their particular needs in fields such as health, including research into neglected diseases, agriculture, fisheries and environment, and implemented in financial conditions adapted to their capacities*”.

EFINTD would have appreciated the maintaining of such “*cooperative actions*” in particular in the field of infectious and poverty related diseases as well as the announcement of activities aiming at local capacity building. This would have been in line with the recent orientations of the EU development policy<sup>5</sup> which target EU support towards “*those sectors which build the foundations for growth and help ensure that it is inclusive, notably social protection, health and education*”. These sectors can significantly derive benefit from research and innovation.

Such activities would also be consistent with the Commission’s statements in its communication dated 31/03/2010 on the EU Role in Global Health<sup>6</sup>:

- “*The EU Research Framework Programs should continue to give priority to actions which tackle global health challenges. [...]*”
- “*The EU should strengthen and balance the complete health research process of innovation, implementation, access, monitoring and evaluation. Such research should [...] include mechanisms for partner countries to build and sustain their national research capacity.*”

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ntd-africa.net/>, Fondazione Cariplo, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Fondation Mérieux, Nuffield Foundation, VolkswagenStiftung

<sup>2</sup> COM(2011) 0809

<sup>3</sup> COM(2011) 0811

<sup>4</sup> DECISION No 1982/2006/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 18 December 2006

<sup>5</sup> COM(2011) 637 final, “Increasing the impact of EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change”

<sup>6</sup> COM(2010) 128 final, “The EU Role in Global Health”

Thus, there is a clear call for more synergy between research and development policy on the one hand and between EU and Member States on the other. Research and capacity building in Global Health cannot be the sole responsibility of development policy and/or of the Member States. On the contrary this is an area in which the EU research framework programme has to contribute and we do not see here in which frame nor by which means it can be done with a scale adapted to the stakes.

Our suggestions concerning the EU Research Framework Programme Horizon 2020 would therefore be:

- **mentioning actions on poverty-related diseases** among those to be undertaken in the societal challenge, “*Health, demographic change and wellbeing*”, and in particular cooperative research and capacity building activities focused on the “*particular needs*” of developing countries, like in FP7
- introducing in the sections dealing with the priorities “*excellent science*” and “*societal challenges*” a **line for international cooperation with an appropriate budget** including **both horizontal activities and specific cooperative actions** targeted towards the priority sectors identified in the EU development policy i.e. “*those sectors which build the foundations for growth and help ensure that it is inclusive, notably social protection, health and education*”.
- The announcement that the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (**EDCTP**) will be extended to other diseases like neglected infectious diseases is well received, as far as the budget will be increased in consequence. However this is far from being insured and dependent from the contribution of Member States and there is a need to maintain a budget line on poverty-related diseases in the programme Horizon 2020 including funding for human resource capacity building and infrastructure support.
- With regard to **Marie Curie** actions - whose part in the overall budget should be at least maintained, if not increased - their extension to third countries is confirmed, as is the possibility of targeting certain activities that address “*the specific societal challenges*” mentioned earlier. As these challenges “*are becoming more and more global*”, and, without questioning the principles of scientific excellence - **specific action should be taken** to promote the exchange of researchers with developing countries, and, in general, **to build up scientific capacities in those countries and in domains not covered by EDCTP.**

