The EU is the 3rd-largest public funder for global health R&D

In 2017, the EU was the third-largest public funder (5% of total) of global health research and development (R&D) focused on poverty-related and neglected diseases (PRNDs, including tuberculosis (TB), malaria, and HIV/AIDS; referred to as 'global health R&D' in this section). Funding increased to US$120 million, following a drop in 2016 (US$77 million in 2016, down from US$126 million in 2015), according to G-FINDER data. This is largely due to uneven disbursements by the European Commission (Commission) to the EU's main funding instrument in this area, the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP). While in 2016 the EU had disbursed only US$8 million to the EDCTP, in 2017 it provided US$56 million (or 47% of total funding). It is expected that funding to global health R&D will continue to increase. In June 2019, the EU proposed €100 billion (US$113 billion) to research and innovation programs under 'Horizon Europe' that will succeed the current 'Horizon 2020'. The exact budget figures for Horizon Europe will be negotiated after the overall Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) figures have been agreed upon.

A quarter of the EU’s global health R&D funding in 2017 went to academic and research institutions (US$34 million), while a further 8% went to pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, government research institutions, and Product Development Partnerships (PDP), respectively. The EU provided the most funding to TB, HIV/AIDS, and malaria, which together received 36% of the EU’s funds to global health R&D in 2017.

Data on global health R&D provided by the Commission differs from these G-FINDER estimates. The Commission reported €269 million (US$303 million) in commitments to R&D for PRNDs for 2014 to 2017, excluding European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnerships 2 (EDCTP 2) and Innovative Medicines Initiatives 2 (IMI 2), two of the EU’s main funding instruments for global health R&D. According to EDCTP 2, the Commission’s contribution in the same time period was €362 million (US$408 million). This figure refers to commitments rather than actual disbursements, which may be distributed across several years. This brings up total funding for R&D to at least US$711 million. G-FINDER figures for EU investments into global health R&D are much smaller US$441 million for 2014-2017. (These figures may differ from the trend numbers presented in the chart due to changes in the scope of the G-FINDER survey from year to year). This is because the Commission takes a broad approach to account for global health R&D funding, while G-FINDER data strictly focuses on expenditure for product-development R&D only.

The Commission's DG Research and Innovation has three main programs for global health R&D

The Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG Research) defines and implements the European research and innovation policy, which includes global health R&D. The EU funds research and innovation through so-called framework programs that cover six years. Horizon 2020, the EU’s eighth Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, was launched in 2014. It has a total budget of €79.3 billion for the period 2014-2020 and focuses on three key areas: Societal Challenges (39% of the total budget), Excellent Science (32%), and Industrial Leadership (22%). Societal Challenges includes ‘Health, Demographic Change and Wellbeing’, which represents 10% (€8 billion) of Horizon 2020’s total funding.

In June 2019, the Commission published its proposal for funding additional research and innovation programs under the new Horizon Europe framework, which will succeed the current Horizon 2020. The Council and the Parliament have reached provisional agreement on the Horizon Europe legislative file, which includes a ‘Health Cluster’ as one of its six clusters under Pillar II ‘Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness’.
The health cluster includes an area of intervention called ‘infectious diseases including PRNDs’ that will mostly cover “Trans-border aspects of infectious diseases and specific challenges in low- and middle income countries (LMICs), such as AIDS, tuberculosis and tropical diseases, including malaria, also in relation to migratory flows and, in general, to increased human mobility”. A global health partnership has been included as one of the proposed institutionalized partnerships as a successor to EDCTP. Additionally, a health-related mission focusing on cancer was included in Horizon Europe.