Spain's global health R&D

Spain is not a large donor to global health R&D overall and increasingly channels its funding through research group ISGlobal

In 2017, Spain provided US$4 million for research and development (R&D) on poverty-related and neglected diseases (PRNDs), referred to as ‘global health R&D’ in this profile. This is less than a fifth of where funding stood in 2008, and funding has declined each year since 2014. However, the ‘Master Plan for Spanish Cooperation for 2018 to 2021’ (Master Plan) underlines R&D as a key priority of its contributions to global public goods, and the Spanish secretary of state for development and the Spanish secretary of state for research signed an agreement to strengthen coordination and foster joint activities on R&D and international development in March 2018.

In past years, Spain has concentrated its R&D funding on the fight against HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis. In 2017, 83% of its financing could not be allocated to a single disease, largely owing to US$4 million that was given to the Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal), an influential global health think tank and R&D institution. In 2016 too, Spain’s funding was similarly concentrated on ISGlobal. The ISGlobal is mainly funded by the banking foundation, ‘La Caixa’, and accounts for a varied research agenda with a special focus on malaria due to its institutional links with the World Health Organization’s head of the malaria program, Pedro Alonso. The next-largest areas of funding in 2017 were efforts against malaria (US$454,000) and bacterial pneumonia and meningitis (US$69,000).

According to G-FINDER data, ISGlobal was the largest implementer of Spain’s public global health R&D (97% in 2017). It received core contributions from the Catalan Department of health (US$1.8 million), the Catalan Ministry of Economy and Knowledge (US$1.4 million), and the Barcelona City Council (US$254,000), as well as earmarked funding for projects focusing on combating malaria, bacterial pneumonia and meningitis, and tuberculosis.

The Carlos III Health Institute, the main public research funder in Spain responsible for managing and carrying out biomedical research, played a diminished role in 2017, investing only US$124,000 focused on bacterial pneumonia and meningitis and tuberculosis. The institute reports to the Ministry of Science and the Ministry of Health. Its key mission is to support the development of scientific knowledge.

MAEUEC and the Ministry of Science are the main ministries responsible for global health R&D

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MAEUEC) is the main ministry working on global health R&D. The MAEUEC’s Health Division is mainly responsible for global health R&D funding. The AECID works on funding and implementation of global health R&D programs through its Directorate for Multilateral and Sectoral Cooperation. In turn, the Ministry of Science steers Spain’s national strategy on R&D, including for global health. The Ministry of Science’s Carlos III Health Institute implements health-related R&D interventions through direct investments and channels funding to national research initiatives. It also represents Spain’s position on health R&D to the European Union. Previously, the MAEUEC and the Spanish Development Promotion Fund (FONPRODE) financed product-development partnerships, but this funding channel has been discontinued now that FONPRODE’s budget only includes loans and equities.
SPAIN’S R&D FUNDING FOR NEGLECTED DISEASES

US$ millions; in 2017 prices

- 2015: 6
- 2016: 6
- 2017: 4

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