

# briefing

November 2010 Issue 6

## Collaboration beyond borders

### European funding opportunities for the NHS

#### Key points

- The recent white paper, *Equity and excellence: liberating the NHS*, confirmed health research as NHS core business.
- The European Union provides a number of funding programmes designed to support health research and foster innovation.
- Many NHS organisations have benefitted from EU collaboration and there is scope for greater involvement.
- The NHS European Office provides advice on accessing EU funding opportunities.

The NHS has a strong international record in research and innovation. These areas are also priority areas for the European Union (EU) and are promoted via a range of funding opportunities for transnational projects.

This *Briefing* provides an overview of the health topics funded by the EU, discusses the benefits of engaging with an EU programme and gives advice on how NHS organisations can access these opportunities.

#### What kinds of topics and activities does the EU fund?

The EU funds research into areas which can provide an evidence base for policy-making, make the EU more competitive within the international marketplace and promote collaboration between member states.

Funded activities therefore cover a wide range of issues relevant to health systems and healthcare delivery, including:

- **specific disease areas** such as cancer, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and rare diseases

- **healthcare delivery** including quality and patient safety, cost benefit and financing models
- **public health** such as reducing health inequalities, health promotion and lifestyle-related issues such as obesity, smoking and alcohol
- **technological developments** including e-health, information and communication technologies (ICT) and energy efficiency in buildings.



The European Commission supports many different types of activities, including:

- carrying out **collaborative research**
- developing **networks** between European countries
- **exchanging expertise and practices** between organisations across Europe
- **testing** the use of new or existing research models or technology
- carrying out **pilot studies**.

### What are the benefits for NHS organisations of participating in EU projects?

The benefits of participating in a European project are wide-ranging. Participation in a project can:

- **complement local NHS initiatives** with European Commission match-funding
- **improve** service delivery through information-sharing and the exchange of good practice with European partners
- **develop** pan-European research networks
- **benchmark** and compare NHS practice with partners from other EU member states
- **showcase** the organisation's achievements in a specific field or topic to international colleagues
- **profile** local, regional and national NHS innovations at international events
- **attract** world-class researchers to the organisation.

Across the UK there has been a strengthening of collaborations between NHS organisations and other local partners; such as universities and local industry. The emergence of Academic Health Science Centres (AHSCs), Health Innovation and Education Clusters (HIECs) and Collaborations for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRCs) have demonstrated how research, health and education institutes can work together.

Participation in a European project can allow these partnerships to grow further by:

- **strengthening** the link between hospitals and universities in the local area
- **assisting** researchers to develop their ideas
- **empowering** NHS organisations to work with researchers and organisations across Europe.

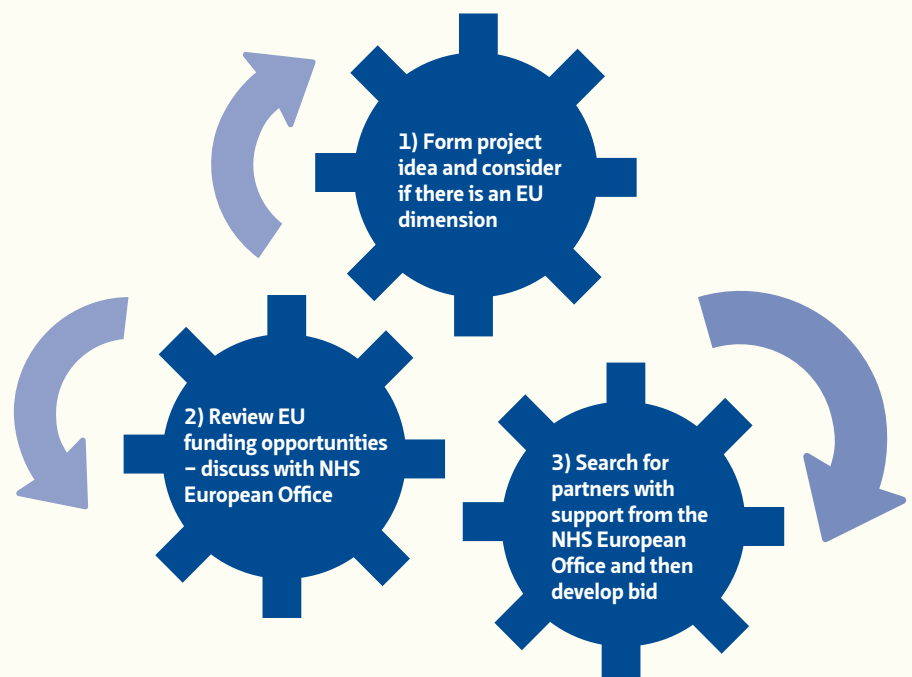
### Deciding whether your project is suitable for EU funding

NHS organisations hoping to access EU funding will need to go through three key processes, as shown in figure 1 below.

At the first stage, NHS organisations should consider whether involvement in a project will help them achieve their local priorities and whether there could be a 'European dimension' to the work they want to carry out. Some key questions to consider include:

- what would you like to achieve through EU funding?
- is an EU dimension appropriate?
- what capacity do you have for partnership working in your region, nationally and with other EU partners?
- could regionally/nationally allocated funds be more appropriate?

Figure 1: Process to access EU funding



It is also important to consider whether your organisation can commit the time and resources required, as many European programmes require a degree of co-funding. This means that you will need to be able to invest resources (this may be in the form of personnel or funding) in the project.

### Which EU funding programme is right for me?

EU funding programmes vary in size, the type of project they support and the proportion of funding available. You will therefore need to consider which EU funding streams may be relevant to you and what their application criteria are.

This *Briefing* focuses on three programmes that are of particular relevance to the NHS, although opportunities do arise through other sources. The European funding programmes most applicable to the NHS are:

- The Seventh Research Framework Programme (FP7)
- The Public Health Programme (also known as the Health Programme)
- The Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP).

Information on these programmes and their relevant calls for proposals can be found at [www.nhsconfed.org/europe](http://www.nhsconfed.org/europe)

The European Commission advertises opportunities to apply for EU funding primarily through **calls for proposals**. These can be published at any time throughout the year and each call relates to a specific programme.

The NHS European Office can assist you in liaising with the European Commission to confirm that your project meets their requirements. You can also discuss your proposal with the UK's National Contact Point (NCP) or National Focal Point (NFP) for the relevant programme. They are funded by the UK Government and are a helpful advisory resource.

### The Seventh Framework Programme



The EU's research and innovation activities are grouped into an overarching Research Framework Programme. The Seventh Framework Programme (or FP7) has funds in excess of €50 billion between 2007 and 2013. This is the EU's main instrument for funding research and is highly relevant for NHS organisations.

Projects under this programme can be very large in scale, with a significant budget (up to €30 million) and include many research partners.

The Research Framework Programme aims to consolidate the EU's position as a world leader in research and to facilitate competitiveness within the EU's internal market. To achieve this

**"Our successful bids for EU Research Framework funding have proved very beneficial, enabling us to continue our fetal exposure research. We have established widespread European networks and ongoing collaborations, providing a solid platform from which to further develop new research areas."**

*Dr Margaret Saunders,  
Consultant Clinical Scientist,  
Head of Biophysics Research  
Unit, University Hospitals Bristol  
NHS Foundation Trust*

objective, the programme is divided into four main strands covering the following areas:

- **cooperation:** funding for collaborative research projects on certain themes such as health, biotechnology, ICT and energy
- **ideas:** funding for the European Research Council (an independent scientific council)
- **people:** funding for actions which focus on the training and mobility of researchers
- **capacities:** funding for projects on research infrastructures, research for the benefit of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and initiatives aiming to strengthen the research potential of European regions.

The **cooperation strand** is most relevant to the NHS, and has been allocated funds of €32.4 billion for the period 2007 to 2013. A number of NHS organisations have already been successful in applying for match-funding across the various themes under this strand.

Within cooperation itself, there are ten different themes (see figure 2). Health is the second largest theme of the cooperation strand and has been allocated over €6 billion for the duration of FP7.

The range of project areas within the health theme includes specific disease areas, emerging epidemics, diagnostics, health promotion and the delivery of health services. Not all topics are included in each call as priorities change yearly.

Other themes, including ICT, energy, food and environment have funding available for projects that may be relevant to NHS activity.

### FP7 case study

The ReMINE Project (high performances prediction, detection and monitoring platform for patient safety and risk management)

**Who:** Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust, with the support of Sheffield Hallam University and further partners from the public sector, regional organisations and industry across Europe.

**What:** This project aims to develop a management process for the early identification and effective prevention of risk against patient safety.

**Budget:** €7.73 million.

ReMINE is co-funded by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Programme.

**Find out more:**

[www.remine-project.eu](http://www.remine-project.eu)

### Further information

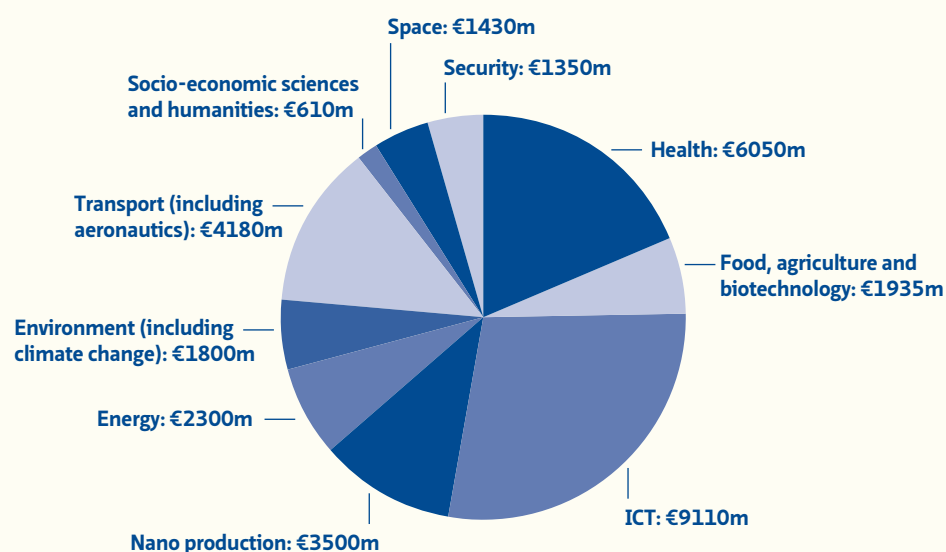
- <http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/cooperation>
- You can search for previously funded projects at [www.healthcompetence.eu](http://www.healthcompetence.eu)

**“Participation in the ReMINE project is a great step forward for us in our aim to become a key player in applied health related research. The project has developed our capacity and capability and the interactions with our partner organisations have demonstrated the value of integrating talents and techniques from across Europe to address common issues we all face.”**

*Mike Pinkerton, Executive Director, The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust*

- Details of the UK’s National Contact Points (NCPs) for FP7 (different NCPs cover the different themes) can be accessed at [http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ncp\\_en.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ncp_en.html)

**Figure 2: The ten thematic areas of the cooperation block**



### The Public Health Programme



This programme plays a central part in the delivery of the EU’s public health strategy and runs from 2008 to 2013 with a total budget of €321.5million. Although a small programme in comparison with FP7, it is highly relevant and therefore popular with NHS organisations. The programme aims to complement initiatives being undertaken in EU countries by providing co-financing for innovative projects, conferences and specialised networks or bodies in the field of public health.

More specifically, the programme supports initiatives that seek to:

- improve the level of physical and mental health and well-being of EU citizens
- reduce health inequalities across the EU
- support health-promotion and preventative actions that address health determinants such as nutrition, physical activity and smoking.

Calls for proposals under the Public Health Programme are published annually.

## Public Health Programme case study

### Working with communities to reduce health inequalities: protecting children and young people from tobacco

**Who:** The project involves 12 associated partners from ten member states. Liverpool Primary Care Trust is the project coordinator, with fellow UK involvement from NHS Manchester.

**What:** The objective of the project is to develop effective methods of engaging local communities and peer groups to bring about lifestyle changes that generate positive health outcomes and reduce health inequalities.

**Budget:** €390,000 over two years. This project is co-funded (60 per cent) by the European Commission under the Public Health Programme.

**Find out more:** <http://www.ensp.org/node/57>

### Further information

- <http://ec.europa.eu/eahc>
- You can search for previously

funded projects at <http://ec.europa.eu/eahc/projects/database.html>

- Details of the UK's National Focal Point are available at [http://ec.europa.eu/health/programme/application/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/programme/application/index_en.htm)

## The Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP)



The EU's Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP) aims to encourage greater use of information and communication technologies (ICT), assist the development of the 'information society' and promote the increased use of renewable energies and energy efficiency.

It has an overall budget of €3.6 billion and runs from 2007 to 2013.

The CIP is divided into three strands: the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme (EIP), the Information and Communication Technologies Policy Support Programme (ICT PSP) and Intelligent Energy Europe (IEE). Of the three strands, the latter two offer the greatest opportunity for NHS involvement.

- The ICT PSP aims to stimulate innovation and competitiveness through a wider uptake of ICT

**"Working with European colleagues has been fascinating and motivating, and the learning we have gained has been invaluable. Our understanding of how other cultures tackle tobacco issues and sharing knowledge regarding what works can only benefit local people."**

*Susie Gardiner, Public Health Strategic Lead, Liverpool Primary Care Trust*

by citizens, governments and businesses. In particular it intends to overcome existing challenges obstructing the effective widespread application of ICT in sectors of public interest such as health services, social inclusion and public administrations.

- The IEE programme focuses on fostering energy efficiency and the rational use of energy, promoting new and renewable energy sources and energy diversification.

## CIP case study

### 'epSOS' (European Patient: Smart Open Services)

**Who:** The Department of Health is the UK partner in the epSOS project.

**What:** A large-scale pilot project designed to develop, test and validate specifications for interoperability of patient summaries and e-prescriptions between EU countries. It involves 27 beneficiaries from 12 EU countries, including ministries of health and industry. The project is based on existing national solutions and investigates the applications of individual health data in international settings.

**Budget:** €22 million. This project is co-funded (50 per cent) by the European Commission via CIP.

Find out more:

<http://www.epsos.eu>

**Further information**

- <http://ec.europa.eu/cip/>
- You can search for previously funded IEE projects (not currently available for ICT PSP) at <http://ieea.erba.hu/ieea/page/Page.jsp>
- Details of the UK's National Contact Point for ICT PSP are available at [http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/activities/ict\\_psp/contacts/ncp/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/ict_psp/contacts/ncp/index_en.htm)

- Details of the UK's National Contact Point for IEE are available at [http://ec.europa.eu/energy/intelligent/contact/national\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/energy/intelligent/contact/national_en.htm)

**Other European funding programmes potentially of interest to the NHS**

There are a number of other funding programmes that may be of interest to the NHS as illustrated in figure 3.

**Developing your application and finding partners**

Once you have identified your project, established that it has a European dimension, and

identified a suitable funding stream, you are now in a position to develop your application. You may find it helpful to review what activities or projects are already underway at a European level in your field of interest.

European funding applications require a significant amount of time to develop and the process can be challenging and competition strong (for example, approximately only 20 per cent of FP7 health theme applications are successful).

If this is your first European project, you may like us to assist you in finding an existing partnership to join as a participant, rather than the lead.

**Figure 3: Other EU funding streams of potential interest to the NHS**

Pharmaceuticals	ICT	Skills, employment and social affairs	Collaborations	EU structural funds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Innovative Medicines Initiative</b> to promote the discovery and development of medicines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ambient Assisted Living Joint Programme</b> to enhance the quality of life of older people through the use of ICT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Progress</b> to support employment, social inclusion and positive working conditions</li> <li>• <b>Youth in Action</b> to support youth development and inclusion</li> <li>• <b>Daphne III</b> to combat violence against high risk populations, including women and children</li> <li>• <b>Leonardo da Vinci</b> for vocational training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cost</b> (European Cooperation in Science and Technology), providing a platform for European scientists to exchange expertise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ESF (European Social Fund)</b> to promote skills and employment</li> <li>• <b>ERDF (European Regional Development Fund)</b> to promote regional development</li> </ul>

Further information on these funding programmes is available on our website: [www.nhsconfed.org/europe](http://www.nhsconfed.org/europe)



Whether leading or participating in a project, a key activity in developing your application is to identify suitable partners. Building international partnerships is a significant dimension of taking part in EU projects, and while membership requirements do vary between projects, generally a minimum of three partners from different member states is required.

The recommendations and minimum criteria in the associated programme's explanatory document will determine the type of optimal partnership and also clearly define the role of each partner.

The NHS European Office is a member of a number of European networks and we can assist in finding partners. There are also online facilities to help you to find partners. For example, there is an official partner search facility available for FP7 ([http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/partners\\_en.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/partners_en.html)), as shown in figure 4.

If you need to find a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) to join your collaboration, you can utilise the 'SMEs Go Health' partner search facility at [www.smesgohealth.org/common/Participate.asp](http://www.smesgohealth.org/common/Participate.asp)

## Submitting your application

The application requirements for your project, such as the submission deadline and the type of information required, will be specified in the call fiche. Some project calls will specify that the application process is in two stages – this means full details of the application are only required if the project is successful following an initial shortlisting process.

## Support from the NHS European Office

The NHS European Office monitors funding opportunities and publicises these at [www.nhsconfed.org/europe](http://www.nhsconfed.org/europe)

You may wish to register for the NHS European Office's bulletin where funding opportunities are advertised. Please email [european.office@nhsconfed.org](mailto:european.office@nhsconfed.org) to join the distribution list.

The NHS European Office can be contacted on 0032 (0)2 227 6440 and will be pleased to offer further assistance to enable you to access EU funding opportunities.

Figure 4: Screenshot of CORDIS FP7 partner search

European Commission  
CORDIS

European Commission > CORDIS > FP7

Home News Funding Results Themes Go local Look it up Interact Help

Seventh Framework Programme (FP7)

Find project partners

Building international partnerships is part of taking part in EU research programmes. CORDIS has a specialised service for FP7, fostering public-private partnerships to design, propose and manage projects. You can use the search facilities to find international partners with the complementary expertise you are looking for.

Enter search term(s):

EU funded collaboration

Profile Type\*: Project Proposal  
Company Expertise

Programme\*: FP7  
FP7-CAPACITIES  
FP7-COOPERATION  
FP7-COORDINATION

Country\*: Any Country  
AUSTRIA  
BELGIUM  
BULGARIA  
CYPRUS  
CZECH REPUBLIC  
DENMARK  
ESTONIA

\* Keep the control key pressed to make more than one selection  
\*\* As defined by UNSC resolution 1244 of 10 June 1999

Search Clear

## The NHS European Office

The NHS European Office has been established to represent NHS organisations in England to EU decision-makers. The office is funded by the strategic health authorities and is part of the NHS Confederation. EU policy and legislation have an increasing impact on the NHS as a provider and commissioner of healthcare, as a business and as a major employer in the EU.

Our work includes:

- monitoring EU developments which have an impact on the NHS
- informing NHS organisations of EU affairs
- promoting the priorities and interests of the NHS to European institutions
- advising NHS organisations of EU funding opportunities.

## Further information

The NHS Confederation is the only independent membership body for the full range of organisations that make up today's NHS. Our ambition is a health system that delivers first-class services and improved health for all.

We work with our members to ensure that we are an independent driving force for positive change by:

- influencing policy, implementation and the public debate
- supporting leaders through networking, sharing information and learning
- promoting excellence in employment.

### Further copies or alternative formats can be requested from:

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