

FP 6

EU's top 10 health research clusters

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▶ European countries should “develop common research priorities” and “avoid wasteful duplication”, according to European Commissioner for Science and Research Janez Potočnik. By carrying out an analysis of all 680 FP6 projects (€2.5bn) in health research^[1] that received EU-funding from 2003-2006 (including projects in international cooperation related to health and policy support for health), we have identified the top 10 European health clusters and their expertise and research activities, and discovered that they all share common research interests. Further analyses of the €6bn FP7 programme (2007-2013) will examine the research priorities within the different clusters in more detail. The HEALTH programme is based on the premise that increased knowledge transfer and better communication will immensely enhance research management as well as innovation in European health research.



List of the top 10 EU health clusters funded through FP6 from 2003-2006

For the identification of the top 10 clusters within the EU Health programme, we used the www.lifecompetence.eu database, which has had more than 1 million pageviews and 250,000 visitors since its launch at BIO San Diego (US) in June of 2008. Shortly, it will be complement-

ed by the www.healthcompetence.eu FP7 database.

Europe's top 10 health clusters

Taking into account the success criteria for clusters outlined in a report by Lord Sains-

bury^[2], we pinpointed Europe's top-funded clusters (see Figure).

At the top, there are very strong individual research organisations, such as French INSERM and CNRS for the cluster “Grand Paris”, University College London, MRC and Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine for the cluster “Central London”, and the Karolinska Institute for the cluster “Stockholm/Uppsala”. It is worth mentioning that the competition among clusters at the end of the list is so intense that even clusters such as Berlin or Vienna just barely missed making it into the rankings.

A further study will analyse the networking between the different types of organisations in the cluster, among them universities, hospitals, industry and SMEs.

Research priorities

We analysed in which areas of health research the clusters primarily participated, and unexpectedly discovered that all 10 specialised in the same 4 major research areas – cancer, systems biology & computational genomics, vaccines & therapeutic solutions, and therapeutics for cardiovascular, diabetes & rare diseases. Incidentally, these are also among the largest funded research areas in the FP6 Health programme.

Some clusters worked extensively on specific topics, e.g. in “*in vitro* tests” in Stockholm/Uppsala, Madrid, Rome and Barcelona, while Grand Paris, Medicon Valley and Madrid were very active in the area of “drug resistance”. Heidelberg focussed on comparative and structural genomics, and Munich took part in all 6 funded projects of “gene expression and proteomics”.

References

- [1] EuroBiotechNews (2008) 7(7-8): 8.
[2] www.berr.gov.uk/files/file28706.pdf

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