



New European Commission Funding for Avian and Pandemic Flu Research Projects

The European Commission recently announced €28.3 million in funding for new avian and pandemic influenza projects. The Commission selected seventeen projects from a special call for proposals under the European Union's Sixth Framework Programme for Research and Development (FP6). The Framework Programme is the EU's main instrument for funding research in Europe.¹ Proposed by the European Commission and adopted by the Council and Parliament in co-decision, it is open to all public and private entities, large or small. The Framework Programme serves two main strategic objectives: Strengthening the scientific and technological bases of industry and encouraging international competitiveness while promoting research activities in support of other EU policies. These two objectives are setting the general scene for choosing priorities and instruments. Each Framework Programme covers a four year period with budget to fund research projects. Similar to a Fiscal Year, when one Framework Programme ends, a new Framework Programme begins with a new budget. The Sixth Framework Programme covers a four-year period, 2003-2006, with an overall budget of €17.5 billion. The FP6 Budget represents a 17% increase from the Fifth Research Programme (1999-2002). The Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) will fund projects from 2007-2013, with an estimated budget of €67.8 billion with €1.9 billion set aside specifically for collaborative research in biotechnology.²

The chosen projects cover both human and animal health and address the research needs identified by organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The €28.3 million in funding dedicated to these new projects is in addition to the €21 million that has already been made available through previous Sixth Framework Programme allocations.

The allocated money is evenly divided between human and animal health projects. On the human side, the projects will cover research to better understand the influenza virus: how the virus works, clinical research and vaccine development.

Of the seventeen projects selected, nine include partners from outside the European Union. Janez Potočnik, European Science and Research Commissioner indicated, "It is important that the EU is able to target its research program to meet new needs that arise; the involvement of so many international partners shows that Europe is leading the global fight against avian and pandemic flu." There are several small and medium-sized companies involved from countries all over the world including: Russia, China, Vietnam, Australia, the United States, Switzerland, Canada and Croatia.

The following briefly describes the new human health projects receiving the European Commission funding.³

- **EUROFLU** - Molecular Factors and Mechanisms of Transmission and Pathogenicity of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Virus
 - Duration: 3 years
 - EU Contribution: €1.4 million
 - Partners: Germany, Spain, Israel, Slovakia, Greece

- **FLUINNATE** - Innate Immunity in Influenza Virus Infection of Mammalian Airways
 - Duration: 3 years
 - EU Contribution: €1.4 million

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- Partners: Germany, Italy, Belgium, United Kingdom, China
- FLUPOL - Host-specific Variants of the Influenza Virus Replication Machinery
 - Duration: 3 years
 - EU Contribution: €2.0 million
 - Partners: Germany, France, Spain, United Kingdom
- FluVac - Dose Sparing and Increased Immunogenicity for Vaccination Against Pandemic Influenza with a Two-Component Adjuvant, IC31TM
 - Duration: 4 years
 - EU Contribution: €3.5 million
 - Partners: Austria, Netherlands, Iceland, United Kingdom
- Intranasal H5 Vaccine - Immunogenicity and Protective Efficacy of Intranasal deINS1 (H5N1) Influenza Vaccine
 - Duration: 3 years
 - EU Contribution: €2.7 million
 - Partners: Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, United Kingdom, Russia
- PANFLUVAC - Efficacious Vaccine Formulation System for Prophylactic Control of Influenza Pandemics
 - Duration: 4 years
 - EU Contribution: €3.3
 - Partners: Switzerland, Italy, United Kingdom, Norway, Germany

In conclusion, if Europe sees itself as “leading the global fight” against influenza, and is willing to fund these projects at the end of their Sixth Framework Programme cycle, what does this mean for the Seventh Programme and the future? Clearly, the European Union is attempting to strengthen its involvement in influenza, which in turn will have the potential to open up a new strategic marketplace for bio companies. McKenna Long & Aldridge LLP will continue to monitor developments in the EU. Please contact us for additional information on FP6 and FP7.

¹ European Commission, Directorate-general for Research: “New Programme Launched: A Fact Sheet”
http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp6/pdf/facts_en.pdf

² “EU research – Building Knowledge Europe: The EU’s new Research Framework Programme 2007-2013”
<http://ec.europa.eu/research/press/2005/pr0704-2en.cfm>

³ European Union: Référence MEMO/06/381, Date: 17/10/2006, Details of New Avian and Pandemic Flu Research Projects.
<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/06/381&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=fr>

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