



Ebola research set to receive EUR 24.4 mn as EU activates emergency procedure

Five Ebola research projects, including a large-scale clinical trial of a potential vaccine, will receive EUR 24.4 million funding as the European Commission activates an emergency fast-track procedure that enables it to release research cash in urgent situations, such as an epidemic.

23 October 2014 – By JOANNA ROBERTS

José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, said: ‘We’re in a race against time on Ebola, and we must address both the emergency situation and at the same time have a long-term response.’

In addition to the Ebola vaccine trial, which will receive EUR 15 million, funding has been allocated to a study into how the Ebola virus interacts with its host, as well as research into potential treatments stemming from an influenza antiviral drug, antibodies from horses, and blood and serum from survivors.

The projects were selected following proposals from research teams inside and outside the EU, and were evaluated by an independent group of experts.

‘We need to step up medical research on Ebola,’ said EU Research, Innovation and Science Commissioner Máire Geoghegan-Quinn. ‘These projects enlist the best academic researchers and industry to take the fight to this deadly disease.’

The Commission has asked the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) – which was set up in 2003 to accelerate the development of vaccines and treatments for HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria – to widen its remit to include emerging epidemics of concern to Africa, such as Ebola.

This will allow the EDCTP to fund clinical trials on drugs, vaccines and diagnostics for Ebola.

The Commission is also working with industry on the further development of vaccines, drugs and diagnostics for Ebola and other haemorrhagic diseases within the Innovative Medicines Initiative, a public-private partnership that aims to speed up the development of better and safer medicines for patients.

The announcement comes as the World Health Organization (WHO) hosts a high-level meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, where representatives from the international community and industry will discuss access to near-term vaccines, the financing of vaccine and immunisation campaigns and the design, production capacity, regulation and indemnity of clinical trials.

Largest outbreak

The current Ebola outbreak in West Africa has claimed the lives of nearly 5 000 people since the first cases were discovered in March this year. It is the largest and most complex outbreak of the disease since the virus was first discovered in 1976.

The European Union has been active from the early stages, with the European Commission alone having already pledged EUR 180 million of humanitarian and development aid to help the countries affected by the epidemic. This includes the provision of immediate healthcare to affected communities and help in containing the spread of the epidemic through rapid diagnosis and disease awareness campaigns.

The EU is also contributing to fight the epidemic with experts' presence on the ground and coordination for the delivery of supplies and possible evacuations.

Under its previous funding programme, the Commission is already funding Ebola research into the development of new antiviral drugs, how to link up high-security laboratories, the clinical management of patients, particularly in Europe, and solutions to ethical, administrative, regulatory and logistical bottlenecks that prevent a rapid research response.

More info

[European Commission press release](#)

[European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership \(EDCTP\)](#)

[Innovative Medicines Initiative](#)