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European Research Area

Health & life sciences

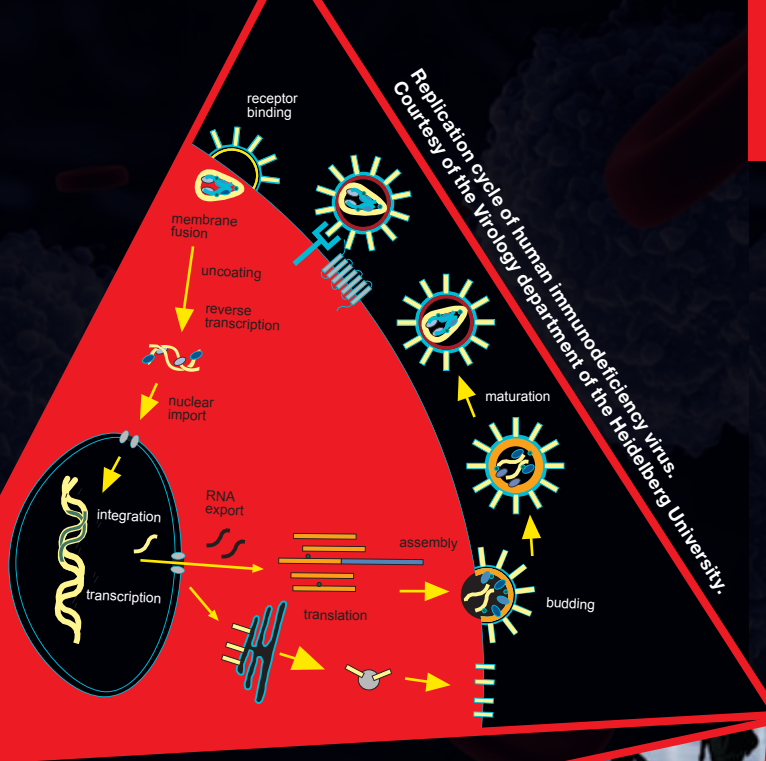
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The Infectious Diseases in FP7

Infectious diseases research (IDR) is part of the Health Theme in the FP7 Cooperation programme. The core task of IDR is to implement translational research in infectious diseases with emphasis on: 1) antimicrobial drug resistance; 2) Poverty-related diseases (PRD); 3) emerging epidemics and; 4) neglected infectious diseases.

The strategic objective of PRD research is to confront HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis in Europe and the rest of the world on broad fronts and in a multidisciplinary approach.

In addition, Infectious Disease Research supports the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP), which is a unique European/African collaboration programme of the European Union for phase II and III clinical evaluation of vaccines and drugs against PRDs and capacity building in Africa.



Additional information and references:

FP7 in general:

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html

Health Research:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/health/index_en.html

HIV/AIDS research:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/health/infectious-diseases/poverty-diseases/index_en.html

EDCTP web site:

<http://www.edctp.org>

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Publications Office

European research on HIV/AIDS

PRACTICAL INFORMATION



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The burden of the HIV/AIDS pandemic

Since its identification in 1983 the HIV virus, the causative agent of AIDS, has spread globally, reaching pandemic proportions with over 20 million people killed so far. According to the new data in the *2009 AIDS epidemic update* from UNAIDS, in 2008 more than 33.4 million people were living with HIV worldwide and approximately 2.7 million people were newly infected. Over 2 million people died of AIDS-related illnesses in 2008. Despite significant progress being made in improving tools to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS, this effort has not been sufficient to halt the spread of the virus or to find a definitive cure and new infections and deaths are likely to increase. Consequently there is a critical need for additional research in the field for new preventive and therapeutic options.

European research on HIV/AIDS

In response to this need the European Union (EU) has considered research on HIV/AIDS a top priority. The overall aim of the HIV/AIDS programme has been to structure and integrate European research into a pipeline of projects ranging from early discovery to phase I human trials. Under the Sixth Framework Programme (FP6) a community contribution of over EUR 130 million was allocated to research in HIV/AIDS, a significant budget increase in comparison to the previous programme. Support was given to explore novel therapeutic approaches and effective preventive strategies for the development of efficient microbicides and vaccines. Studies on clinical investigations were also central to the FP6.

The political commitment

In the past decade, the political support to research on HIV/AIDS has been significant within the European Union. In 2005 the Commission issued a Communication (COM (2005) 179) on "A European programme for Action to Confront HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis through External Action (2007-2011)" which led to the adoption in 2009 of Council conclusions on progress on the European programme for Action (SEC (2009) 748). Furthermore, to underline the importance of a political commitment in the fight against HIV/AIDS, in 2009 the Commission issued a second Communication (COM (2009) 569) on "Combating HIV/AIDS in the European Union and the Neighbouring Countries" with an action plan for 2009-2013. The strategic approach adopted by DG Research is fully integrated with the Development and Health policies of the European Union.

Research priorities

Anti-retroviral treatment in HIV-infected patients remains at this stage the only efficient way to control viral infection and represents a great success of modern medicine, resulting so far in dramatic reduction in AIDS mortalities and HIV-associated morbidity. However, current treatments are complex and require long-term administration with undesired consequences, namely drug resistance and acute and long-term toxicity. Novel drugs and therapeutic interventions are needed to overcome these consequences. Furthermore, current treatments do not eradicate the virus and research should also focus on the elimination of viral latency and associated reservoirs of persistent infection.

There is also a critical need for additional HIV prevention options. The development of a safe and effective vaccine will provide the ultimate tool for the future control of the AIDS pandemic. Expectations have not been fulfilled so far and despite over 25 years of vaccine research a protective vaccine against HIV remains evasive. Vaccine development still faces many scientific challenges, prompting a renewed emphasis on basic research on the mechanism of pathogenesis and immune responses.

In addition, about 60% of the people in sub-Saharan Africa living with HIV are women and according to a recent report from the World Health Organization on "women and health" HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death among women of reproductive age globally. Therefore, research on efficient microbicides remains a high priority for HIV research.

European Research in the 7th Framework Programme

Under the **Seventh Framework Programme** (FP7) the European Commission is pursuing the priorities identified in previous programmes to improve the prevention of future infections and the treatment of people living with HIV/AIDS. The aim is also to cover priority aspects of the infection/disease and to fill existing gaps, which were not previously addressed. During the first 3 years of FP7, a budget of approximately EUR 70 million has been committed to promote collaborative translational research on HIV/AIDS.

EC-funded collaborative research projects in FP7 cover:

- a) Development of new **vaccines candidates**. Two large projects cover basic and preclinical research up to early human testing.
- b) Discovery and development of new **microbicides** from basic research up to phase I clinical trial. (one large project)
- c) Drug discovery and preclinical development of new **anti-HIV drugs**. Three small projects include basic and/or preclinical research.
- d) A network for surveillance and research on **HIV and anti-HIV drug resistance**. (one large project)

Other EU-funded collaborative research addresses aspects such as: treatment of HIV infected children, treatment of HIV and HIV co-infections specific for low and middle income countries, and a platform to support harmonization of vaccine adjuvant testing. (four projects)

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Infected cells with budding HIV