



Opportunities for SMEs in Health Research

Research-intensive SMEs are the main economic drivers of healthcare, biotechnology and medical technologies. Recognising their innovative potential, EU-supported research actively seeks SME participation.

Inclusion of high tech SMEs in the health and biotechnology sectors has gained momentum during FP6 and an even more prominent role is therefore expected for SMEs in FP7. In addition, SMEs providing a service, e.g. management or intellectual property expertise, are also eligible to participate.

FP7

Out of the €6 billion dedicated to the Health Theme in the Seventh Framework Programme (2007-2013), **the share going to SMEs is expected to be at least 15%, or €900 million.**

A priority of the Health Theme is the inclusion of 'high-tech' SMEs in most projects throughout the work-programme.

However, SME inputs in research and innovation are particularly encouraged in certain specific topics¹ for Collaborative Projects (small or medium-scale focused research projects) targeted to SMEs. The expected results of these projects should clearly be of interest and potential benefit to SME(s). The relevant consortia should have at least 40% of the requested EC contribution going to SMEs (those projects should not necessarily be co-ordinated by the participating SME(s)).

1. In the first work-programme see topics HEALTH-2007-1.1-4, HEALTH-2007-2.3.3-4 and HEALTH-2007-2.4.3-6 ([HTTP://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/cooperation/health_en.htm](http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/cooperation/health_en.htm))

FP7 IS MORE FAVORABLE TO SME PARTICIPATION

FP7 has a **broader approach to health research** than FP6, covering also new areas, such as medical technologies and public health... Furthermore, it is a **7 year programme**, with long term continuity of structure, rules and procedures.

Better funding

FP7 'rules of participation' allows **funding of up to 75%** for research and development activities of SMEs, rather than the 50% of the previous framework programme. Management and training activities are funded up to 100%.

Better protection of intellectual property

The rules governing intellectual property in EU-funded projects have been greatly improved in the last framework programmes. **Clearer IPR rules are designed with more attention to the special needs of SMEs.**

Reduced need for financial checks and bank guarantees

In FP7, a **guarantee fund** replaces the 'collective financial responsibility'. This fund is set up to cover the financial risks of defaulting project participants.

More information on 7th Framework Programme

<http://cordis.europa.eu/fr/home.html>

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7>

WHERE TO GET HELP TO PREPARE A PROPOSAL

Dedicated local support is available through SME-go-Health, an EU-funded project, specifically supporting the participation of SMEs and SME groupings in Health-oriented projects. They provide several services, including a matchmaking database for proposals preparation.

Contact them at
<http://www.smesgohealth.org/>
 (you may also see: <http://www.smesgolifesciences.be>)

The network of **National Contact Points** in the Member States and Associated States, provides guidance, practical information and assistance on all aspects of participation in the Framework Programmes.

Contact your NCP at
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ncp_en.html

The SME Contact Officer in the Health Directorate is **Ludovica Serafini**, e-mail: ludovica.serafini@ec.europa.eu

Other Support Services

New support services designed for the industrial and scientific community in Health will be funded through appropriate Coordination and Support Actions² during FP7

A number of other support services related to innovation are available:

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/get-support_en.html

In addition to FP7, other forms of support for innovation will be funded through other EU institutions, in particular the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) financed by DG Enterprise.

(<http://cordis.europa.eu/innovation/en/policy/cip.htm>)

The European Medicine Agency (EMA) has established an 'SME Office', which is dedicated to addressing the particular needs of smaller companies

(<http://www.emea.eu.int/SME/SMEoverview.htm>)

2. In the first workprogramme see topics: HEALTH-2007-4.1-2 and HEALTH-2007-4.1-3, call FP7-HEALTH-2007-A (http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/cooperation/health_en.html)

SME participation in FP6: € 350 million

In the Sixth Framework Programme (2002-2006), the Thematic Priority 1 'life sciences, genomics and biotechnology for Health' encouraged SMEs to participate in all activity areas and projects, with several topics of special interest for SMEs being included throughout the programme. Furthermore, a very successful 'SME-call' (the FP6-2005-LIFESCIHEALTH-7 call) was published at the end of the programme. This call was particularly aimed at establishing projects with high number of research-intensive SMEs; from a total budget of €200 million, more than 40% was allocated to about 270 SMEs.

Overall, of the €2.39 billion of the total FP6 available budget for 'health', some €350 million are for SMEs.

During FP6, research intensive SMEs in the health and biotech sector gained a pivotal role as key players and driving forces in the research activities of several small and large EU-funded projects. The scientific involvement ranged from activities such as identification of biomarkers, elucidation of candidate genes and their role, providing microRNA discovery and validation platforms or bioinformatics and transcriptomic analysis, developing photonic and electro-optics, designing microchip or magnetic phase platforms, etc. Specialised SMEs with expertise in intellectual property management, technology transfer, project management or training activities also participated actively in some EU-funded projects.

SME Definition

- less than 250 employees
- annual turnover less or equal to 50 million € and balance sheet less or equal to 43 million €
- the company has to be 'independent'

For more details see

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise_policy/sme_definition/index_en.htm

