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PUBLIC HEALTH RESEARCH IN HORIZON 2020 RESULTS OF THE WORK OF INDEPENDENT EXPERT GROUP OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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ABSTRACT

The recommendations of Independent Expert Group of European Commission on the future public health research priorities for Horizon 2020 funding stream in 2014 – 2020 are herewith presented. The group was commissioned in September 2012 by DG Research & Innovation of (DG – RTD) of European Commission.

Key words: *European Commission, DG Research & Innovation, public health, research priorities, Horizon 2020*

In September 2012 the Directorate General for Research and Innovation (DG – RTD) of European Commission appointed Independent Expert Group to make recommendations on the future priority areas of European public health research in 2014 – 2020 for potential financing by the Horizon 2020 funding stream (1). The group consisted of 14 experts representing public health institutes and institutions in the following EU member countries: Denmark, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands, France, Germany, Sweden, Spain, Romania, Poland. Also the representative of big pharmaceutical firm and professor of public health of the University of Ottawa (Canada) were the members of this group. Poland was represented by Professor Mirosław J. Wysocki, Director of the National Institute of Public Health – NIH in Warsaw. The chairman of this group became Professor Thorkild J. Sorensen, University of Copenhagen and rapporteur Professor John Browne of Cork University, Ireland.

The group was asked to address the four following questions:

1. What should the thematic priorities for EU-funded public health research under Horizon 2020 be?
2. How to best structure European Public Health Research in the future?
3. How to develop stronger links and synergies between EU-funded research and national research activities, EU policy agendas and national policy agendas?
4. How to improve the uptake of evidence generated from public health research in the development of public health policy?

The group expressed the view that EU public health research funding must meet the criteria of EU-added value, which refers to a scientific necessity and advantage of conducting the research in European rather than national setting. Also the projects qualified for funding should demonstrate a potential for knowledge translation and legislative policy uptake which will benefit the health of EU citizens. Multidisciplinary projects addressing the issue of social determinants of health and their impact on health situation and wellbeing of people will be recommended.

Addressing the question 1 Expert Group identified specific research priorities in four fields:

1. Health promotion field where we need to deepen our understanding of the barriers to the adoption of healthy lifestyles and use of this understanding to develop innovative interventions;
2. Disease prevention where we need to continue funding cutting-edge research on the causes and management of disease but also pay more attention to the „deprogramming” of interventions that are not cost-effective;
3. Health services research where we recommend a focus on innovations that improve the humanity (responsiveness), quality, safety, equity, and efficiency of care and encourage an emphasis on prevention;
4. Health policy where we have to focus on the major policy challenges for public health in the coming decades.

In addition, the group recommended that funding may be available for methodological research and for the studies of knowledge translation.

More detailed description of the proposed research priorities in these fields, may be found in the „Report of the Independent Expert Group on the Future of the European Public Health Research” Brussels, March 2013 (2), and will be presented in the next publication. Report is available only in the internet version.

Referring to the question 2 on the European public health research structure the group stated that the approach of single project financing which is used at present is an obstacle to the strategic coordination of research. That’s why DG-RTD to achieve incremental progress should begin to support Research Networks, and these activities should be coordinated by a newly appointed Board of Public Health Research.

Referring to the question 3 Expert Group defined the areas of cooperation and synergy between European mechanisms of public health research financing, activities of policy makers and health-related agencies as for example WHO. European Parliament should be informed by the European Commission about the plans for the new EU health and health research strategy identifying common public health challenges and responses across the member states. Separately DG-RTD should inform academia, policy makers and the general public about public health research funding activities

and possibilities. In reply to question 4 Expert Group formulated recommendations of how DG-RTD can improve the extent to which public health research is translated into practice. These recommendations will be discussed in detail in the next publication.

The author would like to stress, that preparing this paper he used the contents of the Independent Group Report as well as the summary of it included in the Editorial written by the chairman and rapporteur of the group published on 18 July 2013 in the European Journal of Public Health (3).

REFERENCES

1. Horizon 2020 – the Framework for Research and Innovation, Brussels, 2013; (<http://ec.europa.eu/research/horizon2020>).
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