



HORIZON 2020

Policy Brief with the conclusions of the conference

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Executive summary (or abstract) of the report	This policy brief summarizes the main findings, results and conclusions of the project, which were presented at the Final Conference of the project (Brussels, 20 October 2016), titled “ <i>Bridging the Divide in European Health Research and Innovation</i> ”. It also includes a series of policy messages and recommendations to deal with main barriers to bridge the divide in health R&I in Europe.
RegHealth-RI	<p>The European Regions Network for Health Research & Innovation (RegHealth-RI) is a 2-year project funded by EU under the Horizon 2020 framework aimed at analysing, discussing and improving the performance of health research & innovation across the different EU regions.</p> <p>The final goal of the RegHealth-RI project is to contribute in a significant way to three key Horizon 2020 goals, namely:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reducing the gaps in health R&I across the EU regions 2. Widening the participation in H2020 3. Facilitating synergies between H2020 and Structural Funds.
RegHealth-RI partner organisations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sociedad para el Fomento de la Innovación Tecnológica (INNOVATEC). Spain. [<i>Coordinator</i>]. 2. European Regional and Local Health Authorities (EUREGHA). Europe. 3. University of Trieste (UNITS). Italy.
Website	http://rhing-net.eu/reghealth-ri/

Final Conference of RegHealth-RI: “Bridging the Divide in European Health Research and Innovation”

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

RegHealth-RI Project Aim

The “European Regions Network for Health Research & Innovation” (RegHealth-RI) is a Horizon 2020 funded project aimed at proposing new approaches and valuable initiatives to EU, national and regional policy and decision makers for:

- Improving the situation and reducing the gaps in Health research and innovation across the EU regions
- Widening the participation of less-performing EU regions and countries in Horizon 2020 research programme
- Facilitating the implementation of synergies between Horizon 2020 (H2020) and European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs)

To achieve these three aims, the project has planned different tasks, including an in-depth analysis of the state of the art of health R&I in EU regions and countries, and networking activities, mainly three thematic workshops (Madrid, Trieste, and Zagreb) and a Final Conference in Brussels.

RegHealth-RI Consortium

RegHealth-RI Project Consortium is formed by 3 core partners:

1. Sociedad para el Fomento de la Innovación Tecnológica – INNOVATEC (ES)
2. European Regional and Local Health Authorities – EUREGHA (EU)
3. University of Trieste – UNITS (IT)

The project has engaged more than 20 Associate Partners representing research centres, universities, business/industry and regional and national authorities from 15 EU Member States. Furthermore, the collaboration of External Experts has been requested in different project activities. Finally, a high-level Advisory Board has also participated in the development, implementation and assessment of health R&I strategies. Its members include representatives from:

1. Association of the Research-based Pharmaceutical Manufacturers (BG)
2. University of Tartu (EE)
3. Ministry of Finance and Competitiveness (ES)
4. DIU Libertas International University (HR)
5. Nencki Institute of Experimental Biology (PL)
6. Health Cluster Net and INTEGRATE (UK)

Members of RegHealth-RI Consortium, Advisory Board, Associate Partners and External Experts, have generated RHInG-Net, a specialized network to analyse and discuss on the divide in Health R&I. It is expected that members of RHInG-Net work jointly to find out and propose potential measures to reduce the disparities in Health R&I performance across EU regions/countries.

Project Funding



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CREDITS

This Policy Brief is linked to the *Final Conference of RegHealth-RI* (Brussels, 20 October 2016). The Policy Brief has been created by Antonio J. Gómez Núñez (Innovatec) based on previous finding and results coming from presentations and discussions carried out during the conference as well as other materials generated by the project.

1. THE FINAL CONFERENCE OF REGHEALTH-RI PROJECT: OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTION

The Final conference of RegHealth-RI in Brussels was titled “Bridging the Divide in European Health Research and Innovation” and was thought as an essential tool for presentation and discussion of the main results and conclusions derived from the project. In addition, valuable and helpful recommendations aimed at supporting policy and decision makers in charge of the design and implementation of future R&I policies and actions in Europe were provided. As detailed below, results and discussions were mainly focused on the identification of factors or barriers delaying the three H2020 objectives analysed by the project together with potential policy recommendations to overcome them. The conference was attended by over 75 project stakeholders and experts (with an in-depth knowledge and background of the topics being addressed) from organizations of different sectors and areas of a bunch of EU regions/countries.

1. Low participation (more concretely, low success rate) of EU less-performing regions/countries in H2020

Causes	Policy recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty to get funding because of the high number of applicants. • Discouragement derived from low success rate. • Insufficient expertise to prepare competitive proposals. • Large and complex topics more appropriate for top-ranked organizations from elite EU regions or countries. • Lack of specific support to prepare the proposals. • Low reward in relation to the effort of preparing a proposal or conduct a project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design programmes/actions like “Widening” or former FP7 “RegPot” specifically targeted on less-performing regions or countries. • Increase the budget for H2020 “Widening” programme. • Implement networking actions with leading organizations of elite leading regions/countries. • Provide additional support through external consultancy, guidance materials, etc. • Incentivize research organizations involved in the preparation of H2020 competitive proposals and obtaining high qualifications by means of bonuses, an increase of salaries, reduction of teaching time (in universities), etc.

2. Modest progress of health research and innovation EU less-performing countries/regions

Causes	Policy recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low awareness of R&I issues by policy and decision makers. • Scarce knowledge transfer from public research organizations to potential stakeholders. • Poor investment in public and, above all, in private research. • Insufficient collaboration with excellent organizations from advanced and leading EU regions/countries. • Brain drain in the field of health research in EU less-performing regions/countries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elaborate guides and organize meetings, webinars, etc., to better inform policy and decisions makers on R&I issues. • Design policies and actions trying to align R&I objectives to the needs of society. • Promote the uptake of Innovation Procurement by public administration. • Develop joint actions with reputed organizations of EU leading regions/countries and foster the mobility of researchers from and to leading regions/countries. • Collect specific data for analyzing brain drain carefully and, accordingly, implement actions fostering the return and establishment of active researchers in regions/countries.

3. Lack of synergies between Horizon 2020 and European Structural and Investment Funds

Causes	Policy recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The problem to obtain H2020 funding for organizations of EU less performing regions is probably the main trouble for reaching such synergies. It seems obvious that without H2020 funding there are not possibilities of synergies. • Significant conceptual and strategic differences between H2020 (excellent research) and ESIF (regional capacity building and overcome structural difference) make those synergies also difficult to achieve. • There are also important organizational and administrative differences between H2020 and ESIF in terms of timing, different cost definitions and financial management rules, etc., which makes synergies a rather complicated business. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide any kind of support (information, consultancy, training...) to research organizations of EU less-performing regions/countries trying to get funding from H2020. • Analyse H2020 and ESIFs bureaucratic and administrative procedures as well as their regulation in order to find out potential incompatibilities hampering the implementation of synergies between them. • Build a common framework to define H2020 and ESIFs particularities, commonalities, shared objectives, possible inconsistencies, overlapping, etc., to make easier the alignment of H2020 and ESIFs actions/policies.

2. FINAL CONFERENCE OF REGHEALTH-RI: FINAL KEY MESSAGES/RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, the Final Conference of RegHealth-RI was useful not only for widely disseminating the most significant results and findings derived from the project but also for refining and optimizing the final key messages and recommendations to be translated to policy and decision makers in charge of health R&I policies at regional, national and European level. Using a concise, straightforward and direct style, these policy messages and recommendations are displayed below according to the policy body and aggregation level which they have been targeted on.

Final key messages/policy recommendations

To DG Research & Innovation

Allocate a minimum of 5% of the H2020 “Health, Demographic Change and Well-being” budget to less performing EU regions/countries in order to reduce the increasing gap in health R&I in Europe.

To DG Regio

Design appropriate (i.e. more flexible) bureaucratic and administrative procedures of ESIFs funding in order to facilitate the synergies and the complementary use of different funding sources.

To Regional and National Health R&I Authorities

Improve the alignment and interlink between health research and health innovation policies.

Design R&I programmes aimed at fostering the stay/return of researchers in less performing regions/countries.