



fighting heart disease
and stroke
european heart network

The future for CVD research after BREXIT

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Introduction

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the first cause of death in the EU. Close to half of all deaths in the EU are caused by CVD, which accounts for over 1.8 million deaths per year. Almost 49 million people live with CVD in the EU, and around 6 million new CVD cases occur each year. The total cost of CVD to the EU amounts to EUR 210 billion on an annual basis.¹

EU-funded CVD Research

Research to prevent, diagnose and treat CVD has greatly benefitted from EU funding. From EUR 50 million granted by the EU to CVD research projects in the 5th Research Framework (1998-2002) to more than EUR 1 billion from 2007-2018, the EU has helped research into fighting coronary artery disease, heart failure, arrhythmias, aortic and vascular diseases. It has also helped to advance the prevention and management of CVD, including by creating large population cohorts in order to improve the management of sudden cardiac arrest, develop new technologies such as implantable cardioverter defibrillators, and improve the understanding of the impact of risk factors such as tobacco use.²

To date, the current Research Framework Programme “Horizon 2020” has funded 312 research projects, involving more than a thousand participants from 43 countries. In the proposal for the future “Horizon Europe” Programme (2021-2027), EUR 7.7 billion are earmarked for health research. Additional funding is foreseen for scientific excellence, the stimulation of market-creating breakthroughs and specific missions for relating EU’s research and innovation to society and citizens’ needs.³ In addition to the EU Research Framework Programme, CVD research is supported by the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI), the EU public health programme and EU Structural & Investment Funds.

UK Participation in EU research

The UK is a highly valued partner in EU research. So far, the UK has contributed €10 billion to the EU 2014-2020 budget and has received nearly 15% of all Horizon 2020 grants awarded to date.⁴

¹ Wilkins E., et al. European Cardiovascular Disease Statistics, 2017 Edition. European Heart Network. 2017. Available at: <http://www.ehnheart.org/images/CVD-statistics-report-August-2017.pdf>

² More information on EU CVD Research Projects available at: <https://cordis.europa.eu>

³ European Commission (2018) *Commission Proposal for Horizon Europe: The Next EU Research & Innovation Programme (2021-2027)*. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/horizon-europe-presentation_2018_en.pdf

⁴ European Commission (2018) *Horizon 2020 Interactive data*. Available at: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/dashboard/hub/stream/aacc8d41-5201-43ab-809f-3063750dfafd>

UK scientists provide invaluable insights and contribute cutting-edge research in fighting CVD. The current BigData@Heart project, funded by the EU's IMI, is one of several examples where UK-based scientists make a significant contribution. The BigData@Heart project aims to develop a data-driven translational research platform towards improving patient outcomes and therefore reducing the societal burden of Atrial Fibrillation, Acute Coronary Syndrome and Heart Failure in Europe.

Need for continued co-operation

For the post-Brexit relationship on health innovation & research, it should be clear that the close ties which have developed over the past thirty years, and which have benefitted patients across Europe, must not be severed. Instead, different rules for funding caps and ceilings need to be applied for health to ensure that patients can continue to benefit from the close co-operation and interchange between UK and EU CVD researchers as the UK develops a new relationship with the EU.



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