

ERA-NET PathoGenoMics: 13 new European consortia begin work

Second funding round with focus on applied research

Thanks to modern genomics, proteomics and metabolomics technologies researchers are more and more able to identify potential therapeutic targets against infectious diseases. This was one conclusion of the recent status seminar of the transnational network ERA-NET PathoGenoMics, that was held in May at the Villa Vigoni, Italy, with around 60 European experts in the field of pathogenomics.

The main focus of the conference was the presentation of the new transnational consortia from eight countries (Germany, Austria, Finland, France, Hungary, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain), that have started work this year under the roof of the ERA-NET. The 13 research networks are focusing on specific groups of pathogenic microorganisms, including the bacterial genera *Neisseria*, *Pseudomonas*, *Clostridium*, *Helicobacter*, *Escherichia*, *Streptococcus* or *Chlamydia* as well as the fungal genera *Aspergillus*. Regardless if bacteria or fungi are the disease causing agents – the scientists are unified by the search for new therapies or diagnostics. This focus to applied research was the explicit goal of the second funding round initiated in 2008 by the ERA-NET partners. For this, the countries will allocate a total of 17 million euros during the next three years.

„In the field of pathogenomics, basic researchers too often work isolated within their networks, although the contact with clinicians and companies is extremely important. Only through cooperation, we will be able to bring results from bench to bedside“, says Julio Barbas from the Spanish Ministry for Science and Innovation. „We are very lucky, that a range of consortia have positioned themselves in that direction“, points out Marion Karrasch from the German funding agency PTJ, which is coordinating the ERA-NET PathoGenoMics.

For example, one of the newly funded projects is a consortium, that is working together with British pharma company GlaxoSmithKline to lay the ground for new vaccines against infections caused by the bacteria *Neisseria meningitis*. Another consortium cooperates with the pharma industry to examine the reasons of therapeutic resistance of the fungus *Aspergillus fumigatus*. „All projects in the second round are taking interesting approaches. We are awaiting exciting results“, says Guido Grandi from Novartis Vaccines, one of the experts in the scientific advisory board of the ERA-NET PathoGenoMics.

More information: www.pathogemonics-era.net

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About the ERA-NET PathoGenomics

The ERA-NET PathoGenoMics network was initiated in 2004 and is one of around 80 ERA-NET networks aimed at counteracting the fragmentation of the European Research Area. The ERA-NET scheme is a funding instrument of the European Commission, first introduced in the Sixth Framework Programme. The underlying intention is to step up the cooperation associated with research activities carried out at a national or regional level in the member states. The ERA-NET PathoGenoMics was initiated by a group of research ministries and funding agencies from ten different countries to promote genomic research on pathogenic microorganisms (pathogenomics) in Europe. Today, 15 partners from Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Latvia, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain are cooperating under this single umbrella.