

EUHA POSITION PAPER

Recommendations for the 10th Framework
Programme (FP10)



Full Title: European University Hospital Alliance (EUHA). Recommendations for the 10th Framework Programme (FP10).

This paper was developed based on discussions of the EUHA Research Leads Network and the EUHA Policy Working Group, consisting of the people listed below.

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Introduction

The **European University Hospital Alliance (EUHA)** welcomes EU Commission President von der Leyen's commitment to maintain Horizon Europe as a self-standing programme that will be tightly connected to the Competitiveness Fund. We agree with the need for 'a seamless flow from fundamental research to applied research to start-ups to scale-up'.

EUHA endorses the fundamental role of research and innovation (R&I) in addressing the EU's current challenges, including strategic autonomy, competitiveness and the innovation gap, fragmented health systems, workforce shortages in healthcare, and an ageing population. Life sciences and healthcare-related R&I are crucial for enhancing EU competitiveness, with university and research hospitals being key players.

EUHA recommends the EU to support the development and growth of the entire R&I pipeline, emphasizing that both blue sky research and innovation-oriented actions should play a pivotal role in the next FP. Furthermore, EUHA considers that due importance should be given to actions targeted at implementation of results and incremental innovation, ensuring a substantial support to technology readiness levels (TRLs) research higher than level 3. Indeed, only by investing in all these key areas, can the EU ensure the sustainability of R&I results, achieving a truly competitive role in the global landscape.

The Role of University Hospitals in Innovation

EUHA is concerned about the challenges in healthcare, recognizing its essential role in a democratic society. Large university hospitals are ideal environments for developing effective innovation hubs, combining research, training, and patient care. University hospitals provide access to expertise in engineering, social sciences, and economics through linked universities and research institutes. For MedTech and BioTech sectors, they offer the necessary environment for innovation and implementation, including regulatory sandboxes for testing new products. Their extensive networks of collaborating hospitals, primary and social care facilities help to facilitate the testing and implementation of innovations, and their training functions promote the acceptance and spread of innovations. University hospitals also play a critical role in health emergency preparedness and security. They are pivotal in managing health emergencies, leveraging advanced medical care and innovative public health surveillance systems to respond effectively. The university hospitals provide specialized training in emergency preparedness, ensuring staff are equipped with cutting-edge knowledge and skills to handle crises. Additionally, university hospitals possess state-of-the-art infrastructure and capacity, including advanced intensive care units and emergency departments, to manage large-scale emergencies.

Funding and Support for Innovation

Structural and long-term funding is crucial for creating ecosystems where university research groups and hospitals collaborate with BioTech and MedTech companies, facilitating the transition from fundamental research to clinical implementation. This includes assistance, guidance, and access to funding for start-up companies. Defining key performance indicators to measure innovation performance without adding administrative complexity is essential for focusing on societal and economic value. An independent EU-level organism focused on healthcare innovation is warranted given the complexity and urgency of the situation.

University hospitals play a significant role in the successful implementation of current EU regulations contributing to a competitive Europe such as the European Health Data Space (EHDS), where they are crucial health data holders and as such early adopters to ensure the success of EHDS. This emphasizes university hospitals as key hubs for BioTech and MedTech innovation, contributing to European medical R&I.

Key Recommendations for FP10

1 **Balanced Funding Across TRLs**

EUHA emphasizes the need for balanced funding across all TRLs to maintain a continuous pipeline of groundbreaking discoveries, preventing an imbalance between basic and applied research. Future EU programs should fund both fundamental research and its application in real-world healthcare settings, including early innovation phases, prototyping, and validation. Creating safe sandboxes within public institutions will provide controlled environments for early business modeling, prototyping, and validation in collaboration with industries and small and medium sized enterprises.

2 **Structural Funding for University Hospitals for Strengthened Cross-Sectorial Public-Private Collaborations**

Europe should provide dedicated innovation funds to university hospitals as these are key hubs in the development of bio clusters where medical and health centers, academia, industry, patients and regulators collaborate to drive innovation and bridge the gap between basic research and clinical application. Investing in health innovation hubs will foster an environment conducive to innovation. Collaborative research and public-private partnerships are crucial for advancing medical research and innovation. FP10 should maintain and strengthen collaborative projects, supporting large-scale collaborations involving all key stakeholders to enhance EU competitiveness and accelerate the translation of innovations into healthcare solutions.

3 **Adequate and Stable Funding and a Focus on Impact and Sustainability of Health Initiatives**

Essential to meet the needs of patients and healthcare systems. FP10 should allocate a significant portion of its budget to health priorities, protecting this funding from cuts. Investing in larger-scale projects is needed to deliver on strategic priorities and achieve better outcomes for healthcare systems and patient care.

A stronger focus on the impact of health initiatives is necessary. Aligning innovation efforts with broader policy priorities will ensure that funding and regulatory reforms work in tandem. Projects should demonstrate clear benefits for patient outcomes and healthcare systems. Funding mechanisms must support the creation of new business models and the long-term sustainability of health initiatives.

4 **Embracing Flexibility and Reducing Administrative Burdens**

FP10 should adopt a flexible approach to funding and reduce administrative burdens to facilitate smoother collaboration.

Conclusion

Given the well-known challenges facing healthcare in Europe, it is essential to stimulate research into structures and measures that increase the resilience, security and sustainability of healthcare systems. Research on health system transformation, shifting from hospital care to out-of-hospital care, emphasizing public health and prevention, and transitioning from analogue to digital should receive higher priority. It is imperative that the financial resources allocated to university hospitals to achieve their ambitious goals and to deliver exceptional healthcare are sufficient to support these aspirations.

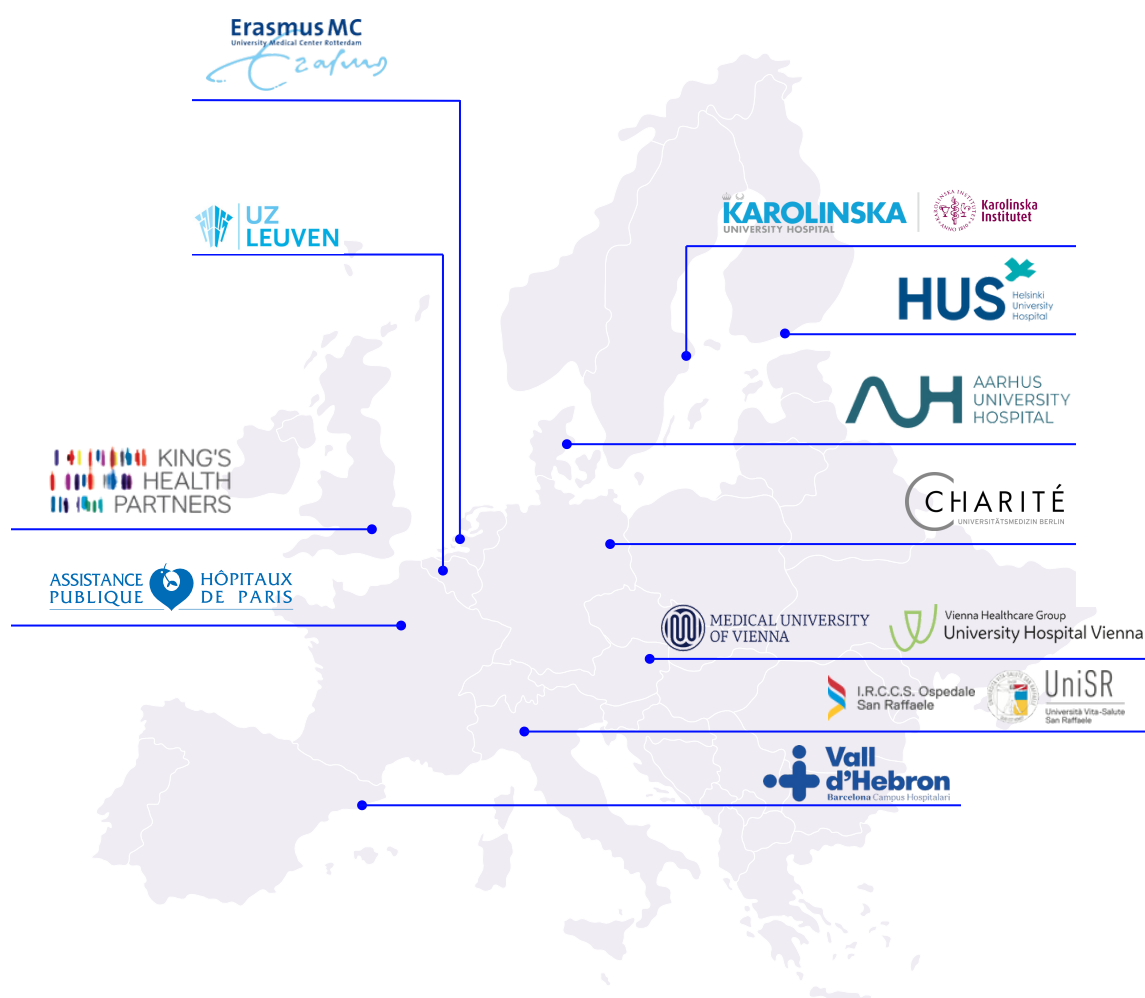
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About EUHA

The European University Hospital Alliance, founded in 2017, is formed of 11 leading European university hospitals. University hospitals play an essential role in healthcare systems and society, taking care of the most complex patients, performing research, pioneering healthcare and innovation, and training the next generation of healthcare professionals.



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