

## European Union and NIH Collaborate

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The National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the European Commission (EC) recently decided to reinforce our mutual interest in scientific collaboration. We believe that greater trans-Atlantic cooperation and smarter competition in science will lead to faster breakthroughs in health research, and ultimately to a better quality of life for the citizens of the world.

The NIH has a long tradition of funding collaborations between U.S. and European scientists. To this end, the NIH recently clarified its policies for funding global collaborations (1). And on 3 September 2008, the European Commission published a new call for proposals within the health theme of its Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Development (2). For the first time, the EC has announced that researchers working in U.S. institutions are eligible not only to participate in EC-supported research projects, but also to receive funds from the EC if they are part of a consortium with European Union (EU) investigators.

We live at a time of great scientific opportunity, where global collaborations are essential for facilitating scientific discoveries aimed at improving public health. As science has become more complex, so has the need for both specialization and multidisciplinary approaches to problem-solving. While discovery increasingly depends on a new level of collaboration, it also depends on expertise, which may not reside within one country or even within one continent. A prime example of global collaboration is the tremendously successful Human Genome Project, which reached its goals ahead of time and under budget. Similarly, global collaboration is essential to the conduct of clinical trials and genetic research, where disease prevalence in a given region enables research that could otherwise not be conducted in the confines of a single country.

We hope that our initiative, aimed at opening our research programs, will serve as a launch pad for wider and more intense U.S.-EU cooperation in health as well as in other areas of research. This is an historic step for our institutions today, and we are confident that it will also prove to be a significant step for the future of science.

### References

1. Updates and Reminders on NIH Policy Pertaining to Grants to Foreign Institutions, International Organizations and Domestic Grants with Foreign Components (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-09-010.html>).
2. Seventh Research Framework Programme (<http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm>).

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