

# ISERD Strengthens R&D Collaboration with Europe

The EU's seventh framework program for research and technological development paves the way to European markets for Israeli companies.

**F** P7's sixth call for health projects will be issued in July 2011 with the deadline for proposals submissions expected at the end of October 2011. The €620 million call will have a major emphasis on SMEs (small and medium-size enterprises), and in most of the topics, projects will only be selected if at least 30% of the grant for a consortium goes to SMEs. This should benefit Israel where nearly all industrial entities are SMEs. Topics being stressed in the sixth call include: rare diseases, data gathering, human development and ageing, developing personalized medicines approaches and more.

The Seventh EU Framework Program (FP7) operating from 2007-2013, has a budget of over €50 billion for the seven year period. FP7 is the world's largest program bringing together academia and industry. Israel is the only non-European nation out of 40 countries taking part in the Framework Program of the European Union.

FP7 Health theme calls have resulted, so far, in grants worth €37 million for Israeli industrial companies, universities and other organizations. This is just the tip of the iceberg: the overall value of projects with at least one Israeli entity, amounts to more than €728 million.

Marcel Shaton, Director General of ISERD – The Israeli Directorate for the EU's FPs, stresses that

the EU Framework Program provides a unique opportunity for cooperation between industrial companies, research centers and universities. Further it enables direct access to European markets.

"The fact that the structure of FP7 is more flexible than that of previous programs is benefitting Israeli entities," he explained. "Israel's strength is, that it provides platform technologies that have a wide array of applications. So, while there is obvious potential for Israel's life science sector in two of the FP7 themes - 'Health' and 'Food Agriculture, Biotechnology and Fisheries' - other themes such as Nano-Sciences, Environment, Security, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and in particular e-Health can also accommodate biomedical projects."

FP7 rests on four pillars: Cooperation through joint research (67% of budget); Ideas for very basic research (15%); People for mobility of researchers (9%); Capacities for strengthening infrastructure (9%).

ISERD – The Israel-EU R&D Directorate of EU FP - functions as Israel's National Contact Point for the EU Framework Programs, offering assistance, training and consulting services to interested parties as well as working on dissemination of information and raising awareness. ISERD is an inter-ministerial directorate, operated by a Steering Committee of

the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor, Ministry of Science, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Budgeting and Planning Committee of the Council for Higher Education.

Health, is one of the ten themes under the Cooperation pillar and has a budget of €6 billion for seven years. Health (Theme 1) is divided into 3 main areas: Biomedical Technologies and tools for human health; Research on specific Diseases; and Optimizing Delivery of health care to the citizen. These main areas of research will remain throughout FP7 while the specific topics will change.

"In previous Framework programs we mainly saw Israeli academia taking part with very few participants from the industry," observes Dr. Rami Kalfon, ISERD's Director of Health, Food, Biotechnology, Agriculture and Environment. "In FP7 we see a growing number of industrial companies successfully responding to calls for proposals and participating in projects."

FP7 emphasizes SME-driven-research. The goal of the Health theme is that at least 15% of the budget will be allocated to research intensive SME's but because FP7 has fallen short of this target, and the sixth call will stress 30% of budgets going to SMEs and many SME- targeted topics.

Examples of projects with Israeli SMEs participation that were very recently approved: Winzsoft Israel is leading a project, which deals with long-term risks assessment of erythropoietin treatment and its affect on tumor growth progression for cancer patients. AptaTeck bio is involved in a consortium that studies Intervention Strategies to deal with resistance in Gram-Negative Organisms.

"ISERD's participation in 'Fit For Health', an ongoing network of 27 national contact points, that developed a computerized system for matching partners in FP7 projects, is an additional tool promoting the participation of Israeli SMEs in the Framework Program," said Dr. Kalfon.

"In the Sixth Framework Program," Mr. Shaton notes, "Israel invested €190 million, while Israeli entities received research grants worth €204 million. The added-value of access to the results of the total research and the networking with major European companies, research centers and universities more than offset the investment.

The total research funding of all the consortia in which at least one Israeli industrial entity was a partner has been valued at €1.6 billion, and

conservative estimations value the contribution to the Israeli economy of about one third of this figure, or somewhere around €500 million. This is the figure to keep in mind."

In FP6 there were over 4,000 Israeli submissions of which 784 were successful. 209 of them were Israeli industrial companies most of them being SMEs. 35% of the grants were received by the industry with 55% going to academia and 10% to hospitals and government bodies. The program affords a marvelous opportunity for Israeli SMEs to become part of the globalization process in general and penetrate European markets in particular.

"ISERD opens the gates of Europe for Israel's scientific community," stresses Mr. Shaton. "It is up to them to take advantage of the opportunity and they are successfully seizing the chance."

The process of promoting joint Israeli-European R&D that started in August 1996 when Israel joined the Fourth Framework Program as an Associated Country, meaning that Israeli entities are fully entitled to participate in the FPs, has grown impressively. Today as we are in the midst of FP7, we can see that the breakthrough took place during the Fifth Framework Program, in which two important elements stood out.

First, Israeli industry, and especially its high-technology companies discovered the potential of the Framework Program. Second, this participation was very worthwhile, not only because of the financial element, but for networking and for providing access to European markets.

"Israeli bodies are advised to look at the subjects behind the headlines of the Work-programs of the various Themes," explained Dr. Kalfon. "An innovative miniature camera or a sensor may be found under the headline of Health Theme and not necessarily under the ICT Theme, while such subjects as e-health and telemedicine are included in the ICT Theme and not in the Health Theme.

Having gained major benefits from FP5 and FP6, Israel is now striving to play an even more significant role in FP7.

For more information contact:

**ISERD – Mrs. Adi Yaniv**

NCP for Health, Biotechnology,  
Food, Agriculture

E-Mail: [adi@iserd.org.il](mailto:adi@iserd.org.il)