

Prodi underlines Commission's commitment to tackling HIV/AIDS

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Framework programme for research, FP6.

'We have succeeded in raising the international profile of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis,' President Prodi said. 'We will step up our work and improve our performance. This year alone, 5 million people are infected with HIV. 40 million people are living with HIV/AIDS, 28.1 million people in Africa. We must not abandon those suffering or at risk from life-threatening communicable diseases.'

Research Commissioner Philippe Busquin has stressed the importance of cooperating with doctors and scientists from the developing world in order to combat poverty-related diseases such as AIDS. Between 1998 and the present day, European Union research programmes have contributed 130 million euro of funding to projects to combat AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

Mr Busquin also wants to improve research and development in this area through better European coordination, in line with the objectives of the European research area, as well as the encouragement of private investment and ensuring the participation of developing countries at all stages of the research process. The 'clinical trials platform,' for example, will be one of the keystones of research on

communicable diseases linked to poverty under FP6. It aims to boost clinical trials and treatment for HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis in collaboration with scientists and doctors from developing countries.

In February this year, the European Commission adopted an action programme targeting HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis in developing countries. Under the programme, the Commission has been working with developing countries, the pharmaceutical industry and civil society on ways to reach an agreement on the supply of affordable medicines to developing countries and to strengthen health policies and systems in poorer countries. Preparations for a global fund to fight HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis are also underway.

The EU's first 'Europe against AIDS' programme was adopted in 1991. Since then, around 100 million euro has been spent on the surveillance and prevention of HIV/AIDS, including information distribution, support for those living with the disease and measures to tackle discrimination. One of the main achievements of the programme has been the EuroHIV project, which monitors the epidemic in Europe and assists the World Health Organisation (WHO) in coordinating its global strategy.

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