Infectious disease research potential in Latvia contributes to solutions of global challenges

Infectious diseases remain a major threat to human health and are responsible for 17% of global deaths. Study of infectious diseases has been traditional major field of science in Latvia and has a high potential of further development, benefitting the regional, European and global community.

A. Kirchenstein Institute of Microbiology and Virology has been a major player in Latvian R&I system for more than 70 years. Unlocking the potential in Infectious diseases research has significant socio-economic impact by creating a regional knowledge hub for research on infectious diseases, remaining a very important cause of morbidity and mortality.

The EU-founded *BALTINFECT* project (Unlocking infectious diseases research potential at Rīga Stradiņš University) fosters a centre of excellence in infectious diseases research via intense collaboration and networking with leading entities of infectious diseases research in Europe.

Two new laboratories have been established and integrated into institutional landscape: Laboratory of Digital Immunological Visualization and Laboratory of Infectious Diseases Modelling by providing equipment and software. 3 experienced researchers have been recruited in the fields of immunovisualization, infectious disease research and advancements in IT, modelling and bioinformatics and continue their work in Latvia also beyond the project's completion.

Project has achieved increase in competitiveness of RSU. 8 new partnerships were established benefiting RSU integration into ERA. 51 peer-reviewed papers are published; 12 proposals have been submitted to H2020, 3rd Health programme, ERA-NET JPI-EC-AMR on antimicrobial resistance, HIV-ERA, Transcan2, and E-Rare; 6 patent applications and 4 commercialisation proposals elaborated, an International conference and five workshops/seminars organized.

Upgrading research capacity and reducing the limitations of research potential in Latvia is a valuable contribution to the EU research competitiveness and scope. By synergistically joining resources, smart specialisation areas can progress EU convergence regions. Infectious diseases – their impact on global health and uneven sharing of the burden between countries – makes research a driving force for achieving more equal access to care, delivering prompt responses to new challenges and opening new research fields.