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ASEF Public Health Network CALL FOR RESEARCH PROPOSALS

Joint Research on Regional Integration and Infectious Diseases in Asia and Europe

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) promotes greater mutual understanding between Asia and Europe through intellectual, cultural and people-to-people exchanges. Through ASEF, civil society concerns are included as a vital component of deliberations of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)¹. The membership has grown to 46 countries, plus the European Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat. Through conferences, workshops, and a diverse range of projects, ASEF seeks to promote mutual understanding, deeper engagement and continuing collaboration among the people of Asia and Europe through greater intellectual, cultural, and people-to-people exchanges between the two regions.

ASEF PUBLIC HEALTH NETWORK

Recent outbreaks of pandemic influenza including H5N1 and H1N1 demonstrated that infectious diseases do not respect national borders therefore no single country can manage infectious diseases alone. Cognisant of the urgent need to address this challenge concerning cross-border solutions and inter-regional cooperation, ASEM leaders at the 7th ASEM Summit (2008) stated their determination to contain and combat a possible human influenza pandemic. Reflecting this strong political statement, the Government of Japan expressed its willingness to take the lead on the issue by initiating the "ASEM Initiative for the Rapid Containment of Pandemic Influenza", which includes Network and Stockpile components. This commitment was further highlighted at the 9th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting in May 2009, where they officially launched the programme.

The ASEF Public Health Network aims to strengthen the coordination and collaboration between Asia and Europe on public health issues with a particular attention on pandemics and infectious diseases. The activities of the Network are articulated under three pillars: (a) experience and expertise sharing; (b) capacity building and research; and (c) communication and information dissemination. The Network involves a range of stakeholders from the public and private sectors, civil society as well as governments, working at the international, regional, national or local levels.

BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

One of the thematic areas that the ASEF Public Health Network focuses its activities on, is 'Regional Integration and Infectious Diseases'. The Network aims to promote the exchange of information and experiences as a key vehicle for regional cooperation, in order to deal with infectious diseases in Asia and Europe. Under this theme, in 2010 ASEF commissioned the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) to conduct a research study to identify the mechanisms and gaps in regional and inter-regional cooperation in the field of infectious disease control in Asia and Europe.

The research gave rise to a set of recommendations which affirmed the synergies of closer cooperation between the two regions on public health issues. The research study also addressed the

¹ The **Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)** is an informal process of dialogue and cooperation. It brings together Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vietnam, the ASEAN Secretariat and the European Commission. www.aseminfoboard.org

needs for long-term collaborations and initiatives to foster closer connections between the two regions.

Following these recommendations, ASEF aims to provide a platform to exchange information and experience between researchers from Asia and Europe, working in the field of infectious diseases with the perspective of regional integration.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of the joint research is to promote cooperation between Asia and Europe by engaging researchers in the field of regional integration and infectious diseases. ASEF expects that the policy-oriented research, based on quantitative and qualitative analysis, will address priority issues such as vaccination, risk communication strategies, interregional mobility, socio-economic aspects of infectious diseases, and the gender dimension in the prevention and management of infectious diseases. The research outcomes will combine the assessment of the existing situation with the analysis of critical gaps and challenges in both regions from social, economic and political perspectives. Eventually, the research will provide recommendations for possible Asia-Europe cooperation to address solutions to the identified issues.

TOPICS

Considering common challenges that Asia and Europe face and possible synergies for Asia-Europe collaboration on the prevention and control of infectious diseases, the Network has identified several topics, as follows:

- Vaccine strategies for disease prevention
 - Vaccine availability and mobilisation
 - Vaccine production (technologies and intellectual property rights issues)
 - Anti-viral and medical-counter measures on vaccination in Asia and Europe
- Communication strategy for outbreak occurrence
 - Mechanism of regional communication strategies
 - Media's involvement on managing outbreaks
 - Role of the research community in risk communication
- Interregional mobility across Asia and Europe, and its implications on the prevention and control of infectious diseases
 - Effects of mobility on the other region's health system (e.g. Asians who settle in Europe, Europeans' medical tourism in Asia, mobility of health workers)
- Socio-political aspects of infectious diseases/pandemics
 - Identification of driving forces that motivate multiple actors' involvement in dealing with emerging infectious diseases/pandemics
 - Review on the environment of generating issues on infectious diseases (e.g. are issues triggered by a sense of mandate, vulnerability, or any other element?)
- Gender dimension in the prevention and management of infectious diseases

Each research proposal should be based on one of the abovementioned topics.

RESEARCH PARAMETERS

Timeline

- Second week of April: notification of selection results
- April – October 2011: overall period of research
- End July 2011: delivery of the interim report
- Early September 2011: presentation of preliminary outcomes at the ASEF research workshop
- End October 2011: delivery of the final report

Available funding

One or more proposals may be selected to form the basis of a research project to be supported by ASEF. Terms of reference will be signed with the selected researchers/research institutes; the project will be implemented in close cooperation with ASEF. In addition to a maximum of USD 40,000 budget for direct research costs, ASEF may organise a workshop for interim results to be presented and discussed with a small group of experts and practitioners.

Methodology

The selected researchers/research institutes shall propose a research design including the articulation of a research question, objectives, outputs, and methods for data collection, taking into account a timeframe, resources available, and the available budget.

Geographical scope

The geographical scope of the research is limited to ASEM member countries.

Selection criteria

The following requirements should be met:

- Researchers should have a solid background, proven capacity and work experience in the fields of this research, proven by a list of relevant activities.
- The proposal should address questions relevant to the management, at the regional level, of infectious diseases in Asia and Europe; preference will be given to those proposals that respond to priority issues enumerated in section "TOPICS" above.
- Researchers should propose a comprehensive methodology to achieve the research objectives.
- The research team should have a balanced representation between Asian and European nationals. Non-ASEM nationals are not eligible.

The working language used by ASEM is English. Reference to the "Expert Meeting on Regional Integration and Infectious Diseases" is encouraged: <http://bit.ly/dJhUXe>.

APPLICATION AND CONTACT

Proposals should include the following documents:

- Completed application form
- Curriculum Vitae of researchers

The deadline for submission is 11:59 pm SST (Singapore Standard Time) on Friday, 8 April, 2011. Applicants are encouraged to submit proposals in advance of the deadline. Proposals must be submitted electronically.

Applications and enquires should be directed to:

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