

EU partners with pharmaceutical industry to fight Ebola

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The EU will partner with the European pharmaceutical industry to finance 215 million euros in research projects to fight Ebola, mainly to develop vaccines and diagnostic tests, it announced Friday.

The funds come on top of 24.4 million euros that the European Commission, the executive arm of the 28-nation EU, released in November to boost research for a vaccine and treatment for the deadly disease which has ravaged west Africa.

"Eight [research projects](#) to develop vaccines (and) rapid diagnostics tests are being funded with a total of 215 million euros," or \$247 million, the commission said in a statement.

The commission said it will contribute 114 million euros while the [pharmaceutical industry](#) will provide the other 101 million euros.

"There is no vaccine or treatment against Ebola as yet, so we must urgently step up our efforts in Ebola research," Carlos Moedas, European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, said in a statement.

The joint fund will lead to "speeding up the development of an Ebola vaccine as well as rapid [diagnostic tests](#) to aid heroic health workers," he said.

One test, led by the Grameen Foundation linked to Bangladesh Nobel

laureate Muhammad Yunus, involves mobile technology that reminds people when they need vaccine boosters and also collects health data.

The World Health Organization expressed optimism Thursday after fresh figures showed the three west African countries worst-hit by Ebola had all seen a clear drop in new cases of the deadly virus.

The latest numbers show that Liberia last week reported its lowest number of new cases since early June, while Guinea and Sierra Leone both saw the fewest new cases since August.

A total 21,296 people have so far been infected with Ebola since the outbreak began just over a year ago, and 8,429 of them have died, according to the latest figures.

The EU and member states have contributed around one billion euros to fight Ebola through epidemic surveillance, medical supplies, deployment and training of health workers and promotion of safe burials.

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