ITALY

This information on national public-health research structures has been gained from country key informants and internet searches for STEPS (Strengthening Engagement in Public Health Research www.steps-ph.eu), a project funded by the European Commission Seventh Framework Research Programme. It builds on the country profiles and reports from Ministries of Health and Ministries of Science that were created previously for SPHERE (http://www.ucl.ac.uk/public-health/sphere/sphereprofiles.htm).

The organogram shows the structure for managing and providing public-health research from the perspective of financial flows. The main organisations are also briefly described, with their URLs, and other relevant national documents and information on public-health research.

Note: ‘Public-health research’ includes all health research at population, organisation and system level broadly relevant to health and health-care policy and practice. It excludes clinical and laboratory (biomedical) research.

1. Organogram
2. Research Commissioners
The Research in the Health Sector is under control of the Minister of Education, University and Research and the Ministry of Health.

The fund of the Ministry of Health is a part of the Budget of the National Health Service (NHS) and one of the providers for this fund is the National Institute for Health (ISS, Istituto Superiore di Sanità).

2.2. Ministry of Science
The fund of the Ministry of Education, University and Research is defined yearly in the National Budget Law and the Research providers for this fund are the National Research Center (CNR) and the Universities.

2.3. Other ministries
2.4. Regions
2.5. Foundations

3. Research Performers

3.1. State Institutes

3.1.1. ISPESL, the Institute for Occupational Safety and Prevention (ISPESL Istituto Superiore Prevenzione e Sicurezza sul Lavoro, www.ispelsl.it/), is a technical-scientific body in the National Health Service and reports to the Ministry of Health as regards all aspects of occupational safety, health and prevention. Research activities are the most important part of the institutional responsibilities and are characterized by ISPESL multidisciplinary and continuous updating based on priorities and emerging risks. Injury prevention, workplace safety, protection of life and health at work, training and safety culture are the major issues upon which the research projects are funded by the Institute.

3.1.2. The National Institute of Health (ISS, Istituto Superiore di Sanità, http://www.iss.it/chis/?lang=2), is the leading technical and scientific public body of the Italian National Health Service. Its activities include research, control, training and consultation in the interest of public health protection. The Institute conducts scientific research in a wide variety of fields, from cutting-edge molecular and genetic research to population-based studies of risk factors for disease and disability. Research priorities are based on those set forth in the National Health Plan (1). It is supervised by the General Directorate for scientific and technological research (Direzione generale della ricerca scientifica e tecnologica) within the Health Ministry (Source: http://www.salute.gov.it/ministero/sezMinistero.jsp?label=ssn, http://www.salute.gov.it/ministero/sezMinistero.jsp?label=ded&id=313, assessed in June 2010

3.3. Regional agencies
The National Agency for Regional Healthcare (AGENAS, Agenzia nazionale per i servizi sanitari regionali, http://www.agenas.it/), carries out its activities in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health and with the regions and participates in research programs funded by the Ministry of Health. The AGENAS activities include Health Technology Assessment, patient safety and clinical and organizational guidelines. There are regional agencies that perform public health research. For example, the Agency for Regional Health Care Services from the Emilia Romagna Region (ASSR Regione Emilia Romagna, Agenzia Sanitaria e Sociale Regione Emilia Romagna, http://asr.regione.emilia-romagna.it/) is an agency of technical support and regulation of the health region of Emilia Romagna. It works on the integration of assistance, research and training. Another example from the same region is the Centre for Evaluation of Health Services Effectiveness (CeVEAS, Centro per la Valutazione dell’Efficacia Dell’ Assistenza Sanitaria http://www.ceveas.it/).

3.2. Mixed organizations

3.2.1. The National Research Council (CNR, Consiglio nazionale delle ricerche, http://www.cnr.it/sitocnr/Englishversion/Englishversion.html) is the greatest research public body of the country. Its duty is to carry out, promote, spread, transfer and improve research activities.
CNR is distributed all over Italy through a network of institutes (almost 100 Institutes) aiming at promoting a wide diffusion of its competences throughout the national territory and at facilitating contacts and cooperation with local firms and organizations.
Thematic project oriented research is accompanied by "curiosity driven" research which is evaluated through a peer review system. On the basis of the new funding mechanism 15% of the budget is allocated to spontaneous, free theme, curiosity driven research; another 15% to the development of new research capabilities, while 70% is allocated to strategic themes set by the Italian National Research Program for Research and Development (refer to 4.1). The activities of the organization are divided into macro areas of interdisciplinary scientific and technological research and are performed in cooperation with universities, other research institutions and industrial companies. In particular, 20,5% of the funds is allocated to Earth & Environment; 5% to Energy & Transportation; 7% to Agriculture & Food; 15% to Medicine; 5% to Life Sciences. Moreover, 9% of the funds is allocated to Molecular Design; 19% to Materials & Devices; 6% to Advanced Manufacturing Systems; 7% to Information & Communication Technologies; 4% to Cultural Identity; 3% to Cultural Heritage. In 2008 CNR budget was € 565.942.751.

3.3. Universities
In Italy there are 83 universities (4 polytechnics), of which 63 are public. The overall mission of the universities in Italy balances educational activities and research ones. As to the funding sources, 69% of the total university funding comes from the State while 31% comes from non-governmental sources including student fees (10%) and private sector (21%).

3.4. Health Services

3.5. Independent organizations

4. Research Strategies

4.1. The Ministry of Education, University and Research defined the National programme of Research (Programma Nazionale di Ricerca) 2010-2012, draft version
Under the chapter of needs in research and development, “health and life sciences” is one of the topics. It is acknowledge the need for further investment in biomedical research (page 39). It is stated that the biomedical research has three objectives: i) production and scientific advances with high-impact and international prestige ii) improving the care and health of citizens, introducing protocols and methods developed and maintained by iii) the consequences in terms of progress of the pharmaceutical industry and national biomedical technologies.
The strategic areas identified in the plan include: cardiovascular; mother and child health; neurosciences; oncology; endocrinology and metabolism immune and infectious diseases. (Available at: http://www.miur.it/0003Ricerc/0477Docume/8095Progra_cf3.htm, assessed in June 2010)

4.2. The Ministry of Health defines every three years the general strategies for the Health Research in the National Health System (NHS). This programme is developed by the National Commission for the Health Research. Every year the Ministry of Health lunches a specific Call for the Researchers of the NHS (actually around 100 million of euros). In this call there are same part of the budget allocated in some areas according specific national law (e.g.: rare diseases, stem cell, food security, ISS etc.). For the other part of the budget there aren’t limits of areas and the financing depends only of the common ranking defined in the International evaluation procedure according the rules of the Peer-Review derivated from similar rules of the US NIH-CSR.

5. Programmes and calls

6. European contacts

6.1. National FP7 Contact point (Health area)¹

6.1.1. Nicola Bergonzi (APRE - Agenzia per la Promozione della Ricerca Europea, http://www.apre.it/)
6.1.2. Caterina Buonocore (APRE - Agenzia per la Promozione della Ricerca Europea)

6.2. National DGSANCO- Programme Public Health Contact point²

6.2.1. Giovanni Nicoletti (Senior Medical Officer Ministry of Health, Department of Prevention and Communication), nfp_eahc@sanita.it

¹ Source: http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ncp_en.html, assessed in February 2010
² Source: http://ec.europa.eu/health/programme/policy/index_en.htm assessed in February 2010