

Selected R&D demonstration projects disappointing: Innovation models with new incentive mechanisms needed

by TESSEL MELLEMA

✘ The World Health Organization Executive Board adopted a draft decision to begin the implementation of eight rather meager research and development (R&D) demonstration projects last week, despite hearing critical [interventions](#) from Health Action International (HAI, with Knowledge Ecology International) and Medicus Mundi (with the People's Health Movement), as well as [Médecins Sans Frontières](#).

Needless to say, HAI is extremely disappointed with the outcome.

These projects, chosen by an Experts Group and selected Member States at a closed meeting last December, will do little, if anything, to divert from the current R&D model in which R&D costs are recouped through high (often unaffordable) drug prices and not transparent. Although innovative proposals that would disrupt the R&D status quo did actually make the 22-proposal shortlist, they were eliminated in the final selection exercise in Geneva and did not go forward. This is a shame because new innovation models that delink R&D costs from product prices by using alternative incentives to the current monopoly-driven model are sorely needed.

The demonstration projects will now go to the World Health Assembly (WHA) in May for ratification. We strongly urge the WHA to reconsider all 22 demonstration project proposals that were supported by the regional groups, together with the specific recommendations of the Experts Group, and to support the inclusion of at least one project that concretely tests new incentive mechanisms. We also call on Member States to start formulating, as soon as possible and no later than the set deadline of 2016, a sustainable framework that tackles ongoing R&D challenges for diseases that are so negatively impacting developing countries around the globe.

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