



The German Research Platform for Zoonoses – One Health, One Research Community

The German Research Platform for Zoonoses, a central information and service network for German researchers working in the field of zoonoses has joined as a new partner of the One Health Coalition. The following provides an overview of the activities, services and organizational structure of the platform.

Who are we?

The German Research Platform for Zoonoses is a central information and service network for German researchers in the field of zoonotic diseases and the umbrella organization for all research networks on zoonoses in Germany. In March 2006, the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL), the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Federal Ministry of Health (BMG) of Germany signed a research agreement on zoonotic diseases. The aim of this agreement was to improve on the long run and on scientific basis the prevention, diagnosis and therapy of zoonoses and thus protect the health of humans and animals alike. As a result, the German Research Platform for Zoonoses was founded, with the objective to promote the exchange of expertise at national and international levels and thus speed up research activities in the field of zoonoses; in addition, the widespread horizontal cross-linking of human and veterinary medicine as well as other relevant sciences was to be pursued.

Reflecting the diversity of the platform, our office is organized in a decentralized form located at three different sites with intertwined activities:

- The Muenster site at the Institute of Molecular Virology (IMV) is responsible for workshop organization, and provides support in questions of research funding and in the initiation of national and international research cooperations.
- The Riems site at the Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut (FLI) is set on the veterinary aspects of zoonotic disease research, the furtherance of young scientists by organizing and hosting events and activities specifically tailored to their needs as well as the management of the online database portal (DIP).
- The Berlin site at the Technology and Methods platform for medical research networks (TMF e.V.) is responsible for support and administration of pilot projects and cross-sectional projects, for members affairs, administrative support for the advisory board and for office infrastructures



Facts & Figures

- Established in 2009
- Germany's main contact for zoonoses research
- More than 700 members
- Cooperation with >50 major zoonotic disease research institutions in Germany
- Open to all disciplines of zoonoses research
- Operated by:
 - The Institute of Molecular Virology, Münster
 - The Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut, Riems
 - The TMF e.V., Berlin

What do we do?

The German Research Platform for Zoonoses has successfully created and further supports an interdisciplinary network of all disciplines involved in zoonoses research in Germany. These objectives were achieved by the following ongoing measures:

☆ International One Health Coalition: Partners in the Spotlight.

- Organization and realization of joint events that support interdisciplinary exchange and interaction. This includes the annual National Symposium on Zoonoses Research with more than 300 participants as well as various workshops organized in collaboration with established scientific institutions.
- Encouragement of communication as well as national, European and international collaboration.
- The furtherance of young scientists on an early stage of their individual careers. This includes the organization of several events tailored to the needs and requests of young scientists (Junior Scientist Zoonoses Meeting, Young Scientist Workshop and Young Scientist Breakfast).
- Registration, harmonization and standardization of existing resources, including the setting up and maintenance of a database internet portal.
- Providing information about zoonotic infectious diseases for the general public
- Initiation and realization of innovative and interdisciplinary pilot projects and cross-sectional projects.
- Support and counseling for the design and implementation of zoonotic funding schemes.

All in all, the German Research Platform for Zoonoses acts as a central service point and provides fact-oriented, transparent information relating to research on zoonoses for researchers, politics and the general public. Furthermore, it promotes a continuous and intensive exchange of expertise between scientists from all over the world.

What have we achieved?

Since its official start in 2009, the German Research Platform for Zoonoses has attracted more than 700 members. These members represent the broad spectrum of disciplines in zoonoses research in Germany. Among them are veterinarians, physicians, biologists and ecologists working in the fields of virology, bacteriology, mycology, prions, epidemiology, agriculture, geo-ecology and other relevant disciplines. They are experienced in interacting and cooperating beyond scientific borders, academic disciplines and among universities and other scientific institutes.

This large spectrum of scientific knowledge strengthens the research on zoonotic infectious diseases in Germany to make it flexible and powerful for future implementations

Since 2009, we have successfully hosted eight consecutive National Symposia for Zoonoses Research, each with over 300 participants, 18 young scientist furtherance events and more than 25 workshops dealing with specific pathogen research, new research technologies, national and international networking as well as topical subjects such as Dual Use, grant application strategies or data management and building a basis for following research activities such as the Priority Programme “Ecology and species barriers in emerging viral diseases” supported by the German Research Foundation (DFG). So far, 71 applications for innovative pilot projects and interdisciplinary cross-sectional projects have been submitted to the German Research Platform for Zoonoses for funding, of which 27 have been approved, resulting in new data and sample collections, new diagnosis, prophylaxis and treatment technologies and more efficient research networks beyond disciplines and institutions.

All in all, the BMBF has invested 3.2 million euros in the platform activities over a time span of 7 years, and about additional 3 million euros on seed project funding invested by the BMBF, BMEL and BMG, respectively.

Within recent years, growing emphasis has been set on translating scientific research into practical use by promoting the collaboration between scientists and Public Health representatives. The success of

the National Symposium on Zoonoses Research in 2015 with a special focus on Public Health issues indicates the necessity of this effort. Furthermore, internationalization has been advanced in the form of international organizational collaborations (Joint Conference - German Symposium on Zoonoses Research 2014 and 7th International Conference on Emerging Zoonoses) as well as research collaborations and will be furthered in the future.

What's up next?

The ongoing success of the German Research Platform for Zoonoses wasn't to be left unnoticed by the government, as on January 29, 2016, the original joint research agreement on Zoonoses has been renewed. As a new partner, the Federal Ministry of Defense (BMVg) has joined the initiative. A fundamental basis for the renewal of the research agreement was the consequent strengthening of the holistic multidisciplinary “One Health” approach, which considers the relationship between humans, animals and the environment in the development and spread of diseases. Based on the current research agreement, new research initiatives with advanced thematic orientations are to be started by the participating ministries. The aim is to support research and development closely based on practical requirements of the field. In particular, research in the fields of diagnostics and the therapy of zoonoses, prevention (including vaccination), epidemiology, surveillance and pathogenesis research are funded. These programs are coordinated between the ministries and complement each other thematically.

Since its start more than seven years ago, the German Research Platform for Zoonoses has managed to establish and maintain a functioning network for all disciplines of zoonoses research in Germany, thereby furthering the efficiency of this scientific branch. With the renewal of the research agreement and the prospect of a future collaboration partnership with the One Health Platform, the German Research Platform for Zoonoses is well prepared to face the challenges of the future of zoonoses research in Germany and Europe, which will include the furtherance of increased interaction and collaboration both on national (in particular in the Public Health sector) and international level, stronger public presentation of the German Research Platform for Zoonoses as the embodiment of zoonotic disease networking and main national contact for the public, GOs and NGOs as well as new options to increase the interdisciplinary collaboration in the sense of One Health.

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