

ARVO International Advocacy Toolkit: France

1. Which organization(s) are significant sources of research funding? (e.g., national/local governments; private funding/foundations/charity groups; large non-governmental organizations (NGOs); industry/pharmaceutical companies)

European Funding Opportunities

Horizon Europe

Horizon Europe is the EU's chief funding program for research and innovation with a budget of €95.5 billion (US\$97.5 billion), available until 2027. It is committed to the achievement of the EU's priorities by fostering partnerships between national institutions, the private sector, and other entities from the EU.

https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en

European Research Council (ERC)

Early-career scientists who are aspiring research leaders and are ready to work independently can apply for an ERC Starting Grant. Scientists of any nationality with 2-7 years of experience since completing their PhD are eligible. Additionally, any field of research is acceptable so long as it's conducted at a European Host Institution. Starting grants may be awarded up to €1.5 million (US\$1.5 million) for a period of 5 years.

<https://erc.europa.eu/funding/starting-grants>

National

Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR)

The Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR) is the principal source of funding for all research conducted in France, not only in the field of life science but also for human sciences, environmental research, physics, and more. They fund public and private scientific teams, striving to foster public-private and academic scientific partnerships. They are also the national operator of France 2030.

<https://anr.fr/>

Local

Programme Hospitalier de Recherche Clinique (PHRC)

The Programme Hospitalier de Recherche Clinique (PHRC, Clinical Research Hospital Program) is the main source of funding for clinical research, or medical research related to

care, in France for more than 25 years (€90 million/year [US\$92 million]). It is funded by the ministry and includes 3 calls for projects:

- For the national clinical research hospital program (PHRC-N)
- For the national clinical cancer research hospital program (PHRC-K)
- For the interregional clinical research hospital program (PHRC-I)

<https://solidarites-sante.gouv.fr/systeme-de-sante-et-medico-social/recherche-et-innovation/l-innovation-et-la-recherche-clinique/appels-a-projets/programmes-recherche>

French National Institute of Health and Medical Research (Inserm) Transfert

The French National Institute of Health and Medical Research (Inserm) is a public technological and scientific institution committed to medical and biological research and to human health. Inserm Transfert is a private subsidiary of Inserm and oversees promoting biomedical innovations from their research laboratories and supports researchers in setting up and managing European and international projects. It aims to support researchers and clinicians on subjects related with translational/clinical research.

<https://www.inserm-transfert.fr/> & <https://www.inserm.fr/>

Groupements interrégionaux pour la recherche Clinique et l'innovation (GIRCI)

There are 7 interregional groups for clinical research and innovation (GIRCI) and are federal “umbrella structures”. They counsel project leaders and support applied health research activities coordinated by health institutions or city medicine structures in their respective region.

<https://solidarites-sante.gouv.fr/systeme-de-sante-et-medico-social/recherche-et-innovation/l-innovation-et-la-recherche-clinique/article/groupements-interregionaux-pour-la-recherche-clinique-et-l-innovation-girci>

- GIRCI Est. <https://girci-est.fr>
- GIRCI Nord-Ouest. <https://www.girci-no.fr>
- GIRCI Grand Ouest. <https://www.girci-go.org>
- GIRCI Île-de-France. <https://girci-idf.fr>
- GIRCI Auvergne Rhône-Alpes. <https://www.girci-aura.fr/>
- GIRCI Méditerranée. <https://gircimediterranee.fr/>
- GIRCI Sud-Ouest Outre-Mer Hospitalier. <https://www.girci-soho.fr/>

Non-government organizations (NGOs)

Fondation Visio

The VISIO Foundation supports research, implementation, and promotion of scientific projects that aid visually impaired and blind individuals. Projects that are supported by the Foundation encompass:

- Innovation to optimize existing technical aids

- Research into new technical means of aid and assistance
- Visual impairment pathologies
- New therapeutics

Funding amount can be up to €50,000 (US\$50,558).

<https://www.fondation-visio.org/fr>

Fondation de France

The Fondation de France supports research in ophthalmology: the biology, physiology of the eye and the treatment of eye diseases. Also, they support research in the sciences of vision, particularly the study of neurological mechanisms in relation to ocular functions.

They offer grants to young researchers and doctors.

<https://www.fondationdefrance.org/fr/maladies-de-l-oeil>

Fondation de l'Avenir

The Foundation de l'Avenir (the Future Foundation) supports applied medical research projects with the objective of advancing medical progress and patient care. The Foundation assists researchers at all stages of their professional life. The research grants are available to doctoral and post-doctoral students in neurology, oncology, ophthalmology and medical research.

<https://www.fondationdelavenir.org/>

Association Française des Amblyopes Unilatéraux (AFAU)

The French Association of Unilateral Amblyopes annually awards a grant to researchers in the ophthalmological field.

<https://www.afau.asso.fr/index.html>

Retina France

Retina France, also known as Association Retina France, provides funding to research programs focused on fundamental or applied studies. Selected projects are funded for one or two years.

<https://www.retina.fr/>

2. What does the normal science funding/policy decision-making process look like?

Which group/committee/person within the funding/policy organization makes the decisions?

Each funding opportunity will have its own policies and pathways for approval. For example, the ANR has grouped most of their research fundings into a single

organization. The process is based on a letter of intention, then about 25-30% of projects can be fully submitted. The projects are reviewed by independent reviewers. Then, there is a commission that selects the projects based on the evaluation of the scientific strategic priorities. The most radical solution would be to set up a single call for clinical research projects, fed by the conjunction of all the sources of 'research', health' and 'industry and partnerships' funding.

What are the criteria the funding/policy organization(s) use to make their decisions?

Peer review is the common practice for most funding opportunities. Other criteria can be strategic health priorities, funding sources, the quality of the project, the potential of the applicant and the team, the scientific environment, the feasibility, and the number of previous publications. Now, there is an incentive for valorization and collaboration with private companies or start-ups. Additionally, depending on the calls, international collaborations can be an added value.

3. Which patient advocacy groups, if any, are active in the area?

- Union Nationale des Aveugles et Déficience Visuelle (UNADEV). <https://www.unadev.com/>
- Fédération des Aveugles et handicapés visuel (Fédération des Aveugles de France). <https://aveuglesdefrance.org/>
- Association Française des Amblyopes Unilatéraux. <https://www.afau.asso.fr/>
- Retina France. <https://www.retina.fr/>
- Fédération France Macula (FFM). <http://www.ffmacula.fr/>

4. Are there existing national/regional organizations that work towards improving research funding/policy?

- Aviesan: Alliance Nationale pour les sciences de la vie et de la santé (National Alliance for Life and Health Sciences). <https://aviesan.fr/>
- Inserm, CNRS and universities are state research institutes. They work to increase research funding by the French government.

5. How do scientists currently contribute to the existing funding/policymaking/advocacy process, if at all?

- Some researchers are involved in the state institute governance. They also are part of ANR and participate in the policymaking of the organization.
- Some researchers are deputies, and they lobby in parliament.

6. When are science funding/policy decisions made?

- Recently, the government has established a law to orient research. The duration of the plan is ten years. The plan has given clear research funding priorities. https://www.senat.fr/rap/r20-770/r20-770_mono.html#toc52
- Specific research institutes have been created to push artificial intelligence and new energy sources.
- There has also been an incentive for research in mental diseases.

7. What kinds of opportunities exist for scientists to interact with funders and policymakers?

Can scientists invite decision makers to their lab/institution to see their work firsthand?

Very recently, the director of Inserm has invited senators to visit laboratories and discuss with researchers. This is very recent, and we hope it will help.

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