# Newsletter

## Issue 7. December 2024



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## Finishing the work, thinking of the future: Letter from the project coordinator

**EU-Africa PerMed** started in February 2021 and is now coming to an end. Looking back at to when we started began, almost 4 years ago, I see a group of people, from different organisations, different countries, different professional backgrounds, but all engaged and committed to working together with the aim of contributing to create a stronger and more sustainable collaboration between Africa and Europe in Personalised Medicine (PM). Some had more experience and knowledge in PM, others brought their expertise in health research, in Science, Technology and Innovation policy and funding, knowledge in clinical trials, capacity building and even science diplomacy and project management.



The EU-Africa PerMed team during the onsite Consortium Meeting held in June 2024 at the Institute for Health Research, Epidemiological Surveillance and Training (IRESSEF) in Dakar, Senegal.

This group of people has become the EU-Africa PerMed family, and we are proud to say that we have successfully achieved the objectives set forth when we started, the major ones listed below:

- Three new African organisations are now full members of the ICPerMed international consortium: the South Africa Medical Research Council (SAMRC), the Egyptian Academy of Scientific Research and Technology and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of Tunisia, and our colleague, Rizwana Mia from the SAMRC, has been very recently nominated as ICPerMed Vicechair.
- We have recently launched the EU-Africa PerMed Action Plan, a document that presents 26 concrete recommendations for actions at research and policy level, responding to common health challenges and needs, identified through multiple exchanges with African and European stakeholders and that aim to facilitate, foster and promote collaboration in PM between Africa and Europe.
- Personalised/Precision Medicine is now in the AU-EU Innovation Agenda, as one of the Actions in Public Health cooperation. This Agenda represent the mainstay of the cooperation on Science, Technology and Innovation between Africa and Europe, for the next decade. It is thus important that PM is part of this policy agenda.
- We launched the Dakar Declaration for a stronger and more Sustainable Cooperation between Africa and Europe in Personalised Medicine in June 2024, that summarises a shared message from the project and all the stakeholders that participated in the 3RD. Stakeholder workshop (26-27 June 2024, Dakar, Senegal). It highlights the importance of international collaboration for advancing PM and presents key points for policy action considered to be relevant for a stronger and more sustainable collaboration between Africa and Europe in the field of PM research, innovation and implementation.
- More than 1500 people have participated in our events, stakeholder workshops and training activities, creating links and networks that will most probably facilitate future projects and collaborations.
- The project has supported and encouraged the setting up of regional PM stakeholder groups in Southern, East, North and West-Central Africa, working towards advancing the PM agenda in the regions, raising awareness and facilitating the collaboration within countries/regions and internationally.

PM requires international collaboration to advance towards being a reality in healthcare practice. EU-Africa PerMed has worked towards this and with the aim of integrating Africa in the Global PM agenda. The project will finish but the EU-Africa PerMed legacy will continue.

Thank you all for following and supporting us in this mission. Merci à tous de nous suivre et de nous soutenir dans cette mission.





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## **Our Action Plan has been published**



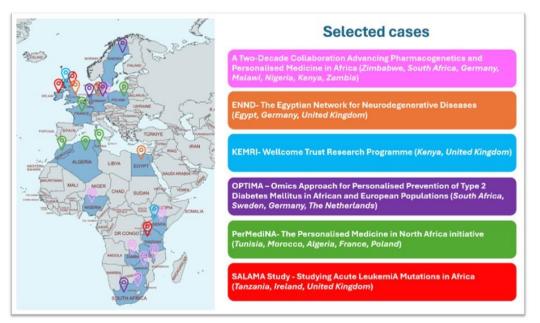
The **EU-Africa PerMed** project has developed an **Action Plan** to facilitate, foster, and promote collaboration in Personalised Medicine between Africa and Europe.

Developed through extensive input from Consortium members and the Advisory Board, the Action Plan outlines a set of PM research activities and supporting activities, presented as recommendations for implementation by various stakeholders at different levels to achieve the roadmap's objectives. It has been prepared based on the findings from the project work, mainly the mapping activities, gaps and needs analysis and stakeholder engagement, with discussions with both African and European experts. More information

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## Success stories of Africa-Europe Research Collaboration in Personalised Medicine

EU-Africa PerMed has undertaken an initiative to identify and showcase **Success Stories of Africa-Europe Research Collaboration in Personalised Medicine**. Through real case examples, we aim to present compelling narratives that illustrate the tangible benefits of international collaboration in this field, offering valuable insights to policymakers, patients, clinicians, and the general public on why such collaborations are essential to support.



Through these success stories, we aim to inspire further international collaboration and greater support for advancing research in Personalised Medicine. More information about each success story can be found below.

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# A Two-Decade Collaboration Advancing Pharmacogenetics and Personalised Medicine in Africa

A Two-Decade Collaboration Advancing Pharmacogenetics and Personalised Medicine in Africa 20 Years of Enduring Africa-Europe Partnership for Better Health The African European pharmacogenetics partnership has advanced Personalised Medicine Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi. Key initiatives, such as CPA and CPA Plus, identify genetic variations to

improve drug therapies and reduce side effects. The collaboration, now expanding to Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa, strengthens research capacity and tackles drug resistance in Africa. **Learn more about this success story here.** 

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#### The Egyptian Network for Neurodegenerative Diseases



Founded in December 2013, the Egyptian Network for Neurodegenerative Diseases (ENND) began as a visionary collaboration among neurology and neuroscience units across Egypt. Partnering with the Technical University of Munich (TUM) and the German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases (DZNE), ENND focused on capacity building and knowledge exchange. Its efforts led to the Egyptian Reference Genome. Learn more about this success story here.

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#### **KEMRI- Wellcome Trust Research Programme**

## KEMRI | Wellcome Trust

The KEMRI Wellcome Trust Research Programme (KWTRP) is a world-renowned health research unit of excellence based within the Kenya

Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) Centre for Geographic Medical Research in Kenya. Established in 1989 and initially focused on malaria, it now supports control efforts in 14 countries and conducts genomics research to study disease spread and resistance, informing outbreak control and treatments. **Learn more about this success story here**.

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#### **OPTIMA** project

**OPTIMA** Omics Approach for Personalised Prevention of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus for African and European Populations The **OPTIMA project** is at the forefront of innovative research aimed at improving the personalised prevention of type 2 diabetes (T2D). OPTIMA aims to establish ethnic- and sex-specific biomarkers linked

to dietary patterns, creating culturally adapted prototypes for T2D prevention. It identifies and validates metabolites and proteins through prospective studies of incident T2D in two African cohorts (South Africa and Ghana) and one European cohort (Sweden).

#### Learn more about this success story here.

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#### PerMediNA- Personalized Medicine in North Africa



**PerMediNA** is a successful cross-country collaboration involving the Pasteur Institutes of Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, alongside research institutions in France and Poland. Together, they are advancing Personalised Medicine in North Africa through scientific research and clinical practice. The initiative began with a regional situation analysis and PM

readiness assessment, followed by three Precision Oncology pilot projects. Learn more about this success story here.

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#### SALAMA- Studying Acute Leukaemia Mutations in Africa

The SALAMA Study: Studying Acute LeukaemiA Mutations in Africa The **SALAMA study** is a collaboration between research groups in Europe and Africa to improve the diagnosis and treatment of pediatric acute leukemia through personalised medicine. Specifically, the collaboration focuses on studying

the genetic landscape of childhood blood cancers in Tanzania. The partnership, which took off in 2018 has contributed to the overall improvement of various pediatric oncology conditions.

#### Learn more about this success story here.

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## Coming up in the next weeks

## EU-Africa PerMed Policy Brief: Sustainable European and African collaboration in PM

The upcoming **Policy Brief on Sustainable European and African collaboration in Personalised Medicine** will share key recommendations and lessons from the four-year EU-Africa PerMed project, focusing on:

- $\circ$   $\:$  Securing sustainable funding for PM collaborations.
- Fostering a supportive PM research environment.
- Developing PM policies.
- $\circ$  Promoting collaboration at multiple levels.

Stay tuned for updates on our website and social media

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Final Webinar: Advancing PM collabaration between Europe and Africa through the Action Plan

Our final webinar entitled **"Strengthening Africa-Europe Collaboration: Advancing Personalised Medicine through a Unified Action Plan"** will take place next **20 January 2025 at 13:00 CET**, and will:

- $\circ$   $\;$  Highlight the Action Plan's key goals and strategies, tailored to African healthcare needs.
- Explore opportunities for Africa-Europe collaboration in PM, focusing on capacity-building, funding, and sustainability.
- Facilitate discussions on challenges, priorities, and opportunities for PM implementation in Africa.

Stay tuned for updates on our website and social media

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## EU-Africa PerMed held its 3<sup>rd</sup> Stakeholder Workshop last June in Dakar, Senegal

The EU-Africa PerMed project held its **3rd Stakeholder Workshop** on June 26-27, 2024, in Dakar, Senegal, hosted by IRESSEF in a hybrid format with 78 onsite and 47 online participants. The workshop gathered diverse stakeholders, including policymakers, researchers, and industry innovators, to discuss key findings, recommendations, and the EU-Africa PerMed Action Plan, which outlines steps to strengthen Africa-Europe collaboration in Personalised Medicine.



Group photo from the 3rd Stakeholder Workshop held in Dakar, Senegal.

Highlights included panel discussions on genomics, data sharing, training, and ethics, alongside keynote lectures on international collaboration and cancer research. The event launched the Dakar Declaration on Europe-Africa collaboration in PM and announced Tunisia's upcoming membership in ICPerMed, marking a milestone for African representation. The workshop also explored strategies to sustain collaboration beyond the project's timeline.

The report, agenda, speakers presentations and additional event details can be found here.

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## Dakar Declaration on Europe- Africa collaboration in Personalised Medicine

At the closing ceremony of our 3rd Stakeholder Workshop, EU-Africa PerMed presented the **Dakar Declaration on Europe-Africa Collaboration in Personalised Medicine.** This Declaration is available in **English** and **French**.



Presentation of the Dakar Declaration at the Closing Ceremony of t3rd Stakeholder Workshop: Prof. Patrice Debre (Inserm, France), Dr. Ibrahima Sy (Senegalese Ministry of Health and Social Action), Mr. Stephane Devaux (Head of Cooperation, EU Delegation in Senegal), Prof. Soleymane Mboup (IRESSEF, Senegal), Dr. Erika Sela Andres (EU-Africa PerMed Coordinator, Spain), Dr. Ousmane Kane (ANSTS, Senegal), and Dr. Badara Cisse (IRESSEF, Senegal).

The **Dakar Declaration** emphasizes the critical role of Personalised Medicine in improving healthcare outcomes for various diseases such as cancer, infectious diseases, diabetes, metabolic

disorders, cardiovascular diseases, and mental health. The declaration highlights the importance of supporting research, fostering regional collaborations, and promoting technological innovations. It underscores the necessity for active communication and capacity building to ensure the effective implementation of Personalised Medicine, benefiting both European and African populations through enhanced prevention, diagnosis, and treatment strategies.

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## The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of Tunisia joins ICPerMed

The **Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MHESR) of Tunisia** has joined the **International Consortium for Personalised Medicine (ICPerMed)**.



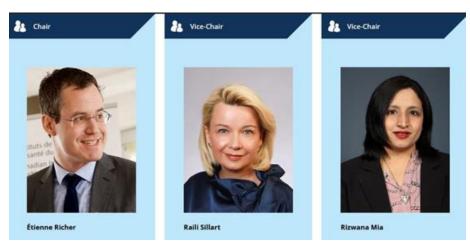
The MHESR manages research and innovation projects funded through Horizon Europe and plays a key role in advancing Tunisia's R&I ecosystem, facilitating partnerships, and promoting the exchange of expertise. This marks the first Tunisian organisation to join ICPerMed and the third from Africa, after the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) and the Academy of Scientific Research and Technology (ASRT) from Egypt.

As **EU-Africa PerMed** is committed to supporting the integration of African organisations into ICPerMed as one of its main objectives, this marks a significant milestone for our project. This will also contribute to the successful implementation of Personalised Medicine globally, helping to reduce health disparities between countries and regions and providing African countries with access to new tools and technologies that have the potential to make healthcare more efficient and equitable. More information

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## Dr. Rizwana Mia from the SAMRC has been selected as Vice-Chair of ICPerMed

**Dr. Rizwana Mia**, Senior Programme Manager at the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) and South African lead in the EU-Africa PerMed Project Consortium, **has been elected Vice-Chair of ICPerMed**.



This is a significant achievement for both Rizwana and the African research community, for both Dr. Mia and the African research community, as SAMRC became the first African organisation to join ICPerMed in October 2022.

With over 16 years of experience, Rizwana Mia has spearheaded important initiatives, including the South African Precision Medicine Program, the SAMRC Genomics Centre, and the South African 110,000 Human Genome Program. Her leadership in advancing personalised medicine extends across national, regional, and international platforms, with a strong focus on fostering meaningful collaborations. More information

At the final meeting of the **PerMediNA project**, held in Tunis on 17-18 September 2024, our project coordinator, Erika Sela, represented EU-Africa PerMed and presented our initiative during the session on "International Cooperation and Continuity Planning".



EU-Africa PerMed coordinator, Erika Sela, receiving the award for our project contribution to PerMediNA.

In recognition of EU-Africa PerMed's contributions to the PerMediNA project, Erika Sela received an award for her leadership and for the project's significant significant contributions to the PerMediNA project, focused on advancing personalised medicine in North Africa. Further details about this event can be found here.

More information about PerMediNA can be found in this article.

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## 2<sup>nd</sup> Summer School held in May in Nairobi, Kenya

The **2nd EU-Africa PerMed Summer School**, held on May 21–23, 2024, at the KCB Leadership Centre in Nairobi, Kenya, brought together junior researchers, policymakers, and healthcare professionals from 25 European and African countries. Participants, selected through a competitive process, included 13 travel grant recipients for onsite attendance.



Group picture of the 2nd Summer School participants in Nairobi, Kenya in May 2024

Focused on the *Implementation of Personalised Medicine Research*, the event featured 18 expertled sessions on topics such as infectious diseases, non-communicable diseses, genetics, clinical trials, international collaboration and ethics. Speakers highlighted key collaborations in PM research between Africa and Europe, equipping attendees with essential knowledge to advance PM initiatives and translational research. With 67 participants joining both online and onsite, the Summer School provided a platform for networking, knowledge exchange, and fostering future research collaborations. The event **report**, **final agenda** and further details can be found **here**.

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#### Videos of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Summer School

Following the 2<sup>nd</sup> Summer School, EU-Africa PerMed produced a **general video** capturing reflections from speakers and students on the importance of PM across diverse fields and

highlighting how this event promoted collaboration, networking, and the creation of new research opportunities between Africa and Europe. **Watch this video here.** 



Additionally, we conducted **interviews** with seven participants—both speakers and students—from diverse African regions and Europe:

- Guiseppina Sgandurra, Associate Professor at the University of Pisa and clinician at the Scientific Institute for Child and Adolescent Neuropsychiatry (IRCCS Fondazione Stella Maris) in Italy. Interview video here.
- Mohamed Zahir Alimohamed, Molecular Geneticist, Genetic Counselor, Research Scientist and Lecturer at Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences, Tanzania. Interview video here.
- Abbas Abel Anzaku, Senior Programme Officer at the Institute of Human Virology, Nigeria. Interview video here.
- **Debora Traversa**, Health Researcher at the Giovanni Paolo II Cancer Institute in Italy. Interview video here.
- Marwa Mahdouani, Scientific Researcher at Farhat Hached University Hospital in Tunisia. Interview video here.
- *Mebrathu Eyasu*, Assistant Professor at Saint Paul's Hospital Millennium Medical College in Ethiopia. Interview video here.
- **Safiatou Coulibaly,** Coordinator of the Genetics and Cancer Laboratory at the Institut Pasteur de Côte d'Ivoire. **Interview video here.**

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## Participation in external events

**EU-Africa PerMed participated in the Innovation Agenda Workshop on Public Health Innovations** 

EU-Africa PerMed participated in the AU-EU Innovation Agenda Workshop on Public Health Innovations, held on 3rd December 2024 in hybrid mode in Pretoria, South Africa, and online.



The project was actively represented by Rizwana Mia in Pretoria and Erika Sela and Badara Cisse online, who shared their insights in the main session. They also participated in the discussions of the Breakout Room 3 on "Precision/Personalised Medicine -What's Ahead for Europe-Africa Cooperation?". It was a significant achievement to see Personalised Medicine as a key topic in one of the breakout sessions.

The workshop focused on various topics, including infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases, personalised medicine, and health systems strengthening. It also addressed capacity-building opportunities and the development of the African Medicines Agency.

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At the last **ICPerMed Family Meeting** titled "*A New Phase for PerMed*" and held on 28th November 2024, the EU-Africa PerMed team updated participants on recent activities and project outcomes.



Our project coordinator, Erika Sela, shared key milestones from the past year, including the successful inclusion of 3 African organisations in ICPerMed. Monika Frenzel introduced the EU-Africa PerMed Action Plan, a set of 26 recommendations aimed at promoting research collaboration between Africa and Europe in PM. Luciana Gine presented our initiative to document Success Stories of Africa-Europe research collaboration in PM. This event

was also joined by our project partner from South Africa Medical Research Council, Rizwana Mia, who has recently been elected as the new ICPerMed Vice-Chair.

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#### Dr. Angela Brand Represents EU-Africa PerMed at the World Health Summit



Dr. Angela Brand, an Advisory Board member of the EU-Africa PerMed Project, recently represented the project at the **World Health Summit** in Berlin (13-15 October 2024).

During a workshop on the AU-EU Innovation Agenda titled *"Reflecting on the AU-EU Innovation Agenda – How Far Have We Come?"*, Dr. Brand shared key insights into the progress of EU-Africa PerMed. She emphasised the importance of collaboration between Africa and Europe in personalised medicine research, highlighting the mutual learning opportunities between the two regions. Angela that EU-Africa PerMed is "a success story which has already made significant contributions to the Agenda in recent years".

#### Watch this Workshop and her full presentation here.

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## **Recent EU-Africa PerMed webinars**

#### Unlocking the secrets of Functional Genomics and its application in PM

On 18th July 2024, the PerMediNA project, in collaboration with the EU-Africa PerMed Project and the African Population and Health Research Center, hosted an insightful webinar entitled "Unlocking the secrets of Functional Genomics and its application in Personalised Medicine".



The session brought together distinguished experts to discuss the latest research, technologies, and practical applications of functional genomics. They explored how advancements in genomics are reshaping our understanding of human health and enabling tailored medical treatments for individual patients. This webinar highlighted the critical role of functional genomics in paving the way for more precise, effective, and personalised healthcare solutions. **The recording of this webinar is available here.** 

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Genetic Counseling in Africa and Europe: Challenges, Innovations and Future Directions

In the webinar "Genetic Counseling in Africa and Europe: Challenges, Innovations and Future Directions" held on 2 September 2024, we learned about the significant global disparities in the



availability of genetic counselors and the work that remains in many countries and regions. South Africa and Ghana are leading the way in genetic counseling training in Africa. We also gained insights from both African and European perspectives on genetic counseling, with a roundtable discussion highlighting the differences, similarities, and the essence of this profession across various regions. **The recording of this webinar is available here.** 

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#### **Enhancing Patient Involvement in PM**



In this webinar, entitled "Enhancing Patient Involvement in Personalised Medicine -Lessons from Nigeria, Hungary, and a European Perspective", held on 29 October 2024, we explored practical outcomes that enhance Personalised Medicine at the point of care, featuring case studies from the From Testing to Targeted Treatments (FT3) pilots in Nigeria and Hungary. We also discussed with Cancer Patients Europe - CPE the balance between

diverse healthcare systems, equitable access, and reimbursement policies. The recording of this webinar is available here.

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#### Our network continues to grow: Celebrating +1000 followers on our LinkedIn page



The EU-Africa PerMed Project has surpassed **1,000 followers** on LinkedIn—and we're now approaching **1,300**.

This milestone reflects the growing community of individuals, organisations, and initiatives supporting our mission to strengthen collaborations between Europe and Africa in the field of Personalised Medicine. It also highlights the dedication and hard work of our project team over the past four years. Thank you to everyone who has been part of this journey.

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## PM funding opportunities

## EP PerMed JTC 2025- Pharmacogenomic Strategies for PM Approaches

EP PerMed JTC2025

#PGxPM2025

Call Announcement Pharmacogenomic Strategies for Personalised Medicine Approaches (PGxPM2025) The European Partnership for Personalised Medicine, EP PerMed, has launched its second Joint Transnational Call (JTC2025) for proposals on "Pharmacogenomic strategies

for personalised medicine approaches (PGxPM2025)". In total, 35 funding organisations participate in this call with an available budget of over 36.5 Mio. € (approx.). The call will be implemented in two stages, i.e. a pre- and a full-proposal phase. The information day will be next 09 January 2025. Further details of this call can be found here.

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#### **EP PerMed- New Fast Track and Venture Creator Programmes**



EP PerMed European Partnership for Personalised Medicine



**EP PerMed** introduces two exciting opportunities for start-ups, researchers, and early-stage teams working on cutting-edge solutions in personalised medicine. These programmes aim to accelerate the development, validation, and market readiness of transformative innovations that enhance patient care. More information

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## EU4Health including a call on Personalised Cancer Medicine

#### EU4Health

## 2024 open calls Second wave

HaDEA has published calls for proposals on cancer, mental health, health promotion and disease prevention and the use of AI in health, under the EU4Health Annual Work Programme 2024, under the second wave of EU4Health calls 2024. This includes the call for proposals on Personalised Cancer Medicine. Deadline date: 22 January 2025. More information

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## External events

#### EP PerMed Conference on PM Research

EP PerMed Conference on Personalised Medicine Research 11 and 12 February 2025, Berlin, Germany

> EP PerMed European Partnership for Personalised Medicine

**EP PerMed** will organise its first **Conference on Personalised Medicine Research** on **11 and 12 February 2025** in Berlin (Germany). The 1 ½-day event will highlight advances inPM, focusing on methodologies for research and

clinical application, personalised prevention, and inclusiveness in women's and children's health. It will also address strategies to translate research into clinical practice. More information

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#### **EP PerMed Training on Scientific Integrity**

## 12th EDCTP Forum



EP PerMed will organise a **Workshop on Scientific Integrity** on **12-13 February 2025** in Berlin. The overall purpose of the workshop is to contribute to the dissemination of the notion that scientific research, once conducted ethically, accurately, and transparently, may

increase public, scientific peers, and policy makers' trust, reliability and accountability. More information

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The **12<sup>th</sup> EDCTP Forum** will take place on **15-20 June 2025** at the Kigali Convention Centre in Rwanda. Under the theme '*Better Health Through Global Research Partnerships*', the event will showcase two decades of EDCTP program impact and explore equitable partnerships, collaborative research, and innovation in sub-Saharan

Africa and Europe. More information

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## **External publications and news**

#### WHO Guidance for best practices for clinical trials



The WHO released updated **Guidance on Best practices for Clinical Trials** on 25 September 2024, addressing the need for high-quality evidence, improved research coordination, and efficiency. **More information** 

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#### WHO Guidance for human genome data collection, access, use and sharing



On 20 November 2024, the WHO released an updated **Guidance for human genome data collection, access, use and sharing.** This document provides globally applicable principles to promote transparency, safeguard rights, and support best practices in genomic research. **More information** 

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**Global Health EDCTP3 Work Programme 2025** 



The Global Health EDCTP3 Work Programme 2025 has been published. It is the largest and most ambitious Work Programme since the creation of the Joint Undertaking, in 2021. It includes four calls for proposals covering seven topics, for a total budget of EUR 214 million. More information

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## Publication on International Research Collaboration in PM between Europe and LAC

**JOURNAL ARTICLE** A recent analysis of research collaboration in PM between Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean identified key factors for successful

partnerships, such as partner profiles, funding sources, and barriers. The findings, based on a survey of over 1,800 researchers, provide valuable insights for shaping science policies and collaborative funding programs. The publication is available here.

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## SINO-EU PerMed Policy Brief on Ethical, Legal, and Societal Aspects of PM

精准 医疗 SINO-EU PerMed Cooperation between China and Europe in Personalised Medicine The **CSA SINO-EU PerMed** has published its second policy brief, "Ethical, Legal, and Societal Aspects of Personalised Medicine in a Sino-EU Context" (June 2024). The brief covers key topics such as the importance of ethical, legal, and societal considerations in personalised medicine and aims to

strengthen cooperation between China and the EU. Access the full policy brief here.

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## G7 agrees to strengthen open and safe international science cooperation



The **G7 Science and Technology Ministers' meeting**, held in Bologna and Forlì, Italy, from 9 to 11 July 2024, emphasized the critical role of science, technology, innovation, and higher education in achieving a sustainable future. A dedicated session focused on cooperation in research and innovation with Africa, a key priority for the EU. The Ministerial Declaration is available here.

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## To keep always updated on EU-Africa PerMed project activities, events and news:

Visit our website and follow us in our social media:

Website: https://www.euafrica-permed.eu

X Twitter: @EU\_AfricaPerMe

in LinkedIn: EU-AFRICA PerMed

Youtube: EU-AFRICA PerMed Project

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