

CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Money for nothing? – Is the Innovation fund the catapult to a new generation of integrated care concepts and a competitive market in health care in Germany?

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Introduction: In 2004 the German health legislation invented a couple of new and innovative care models in order to increase a more competitive care market and to improve the quality and efficiency of care provisions. More than ten years after this invention the market share of these new models are still only about 1% of the total health care market expenditures. To put the stalled project back on track last year the legislation abolished major bureaucratic hurdles, improved contracting conditions and invented a funding for innovative care concepts and care research on existing care models – the Innovations fund at the G-BA (Joint Federal Committee). The fund grants 300 Million Euro per year for innovative care concepts (225 Million Euro) and healthcare research (75 Million Euro) between 2017 – 2019. There is a formal tender application process for which eligible applicants can apply. Even that it was not intended initially the application process became highly competitive finally.

Methods: A descriptive analysis of the first three waves of applications to the Innovation fund regarding timing, requirements (funding criteria), quantity of applications, funding volume and period has been done. The analysis was based on a systematically reviewing process of published press releases, presentation of official representatives and professional and lay press publications.

Results: In total, there have been three bidding waves by the Innovation Fund until autumn 2016 which resulted in a total of 541 applications. Applications can be made topic-specific, then topics have been defined by the Innovation Fund. Applications can also be made topic-open, meaning that the applicant can freely propose a project topic. For healthcare research the total 296 applications can be split in open-topic (93) and topic-specific (203); for new care models in two waves 245 (107; 138) applications have been made. For the bids, different submission deadlines have been given. The Expert advisory board has to make their rapid-assessment within 6 weeks after submission due. The Innovation Fund has not defined any

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specific timelines for their decision. The submitted project proposals overall show - a high innovation potential, a high degree of inventiveness and innovative solutions for healthcare provisions. Due to the amount of applications and their high eligibility for funding, the funds for 2016 and 2017 are already oversubscribed - in total € 1,7 billions, more than the sixfold of the available funds. In total 29 new care model projects and 62 healthcare research projects submitted will be funded.

Conclusions: The Innovation committee has just made their first decisions for new care models; for healthcare research this is still awaited. The Innovation Fund announced to tender again early next year (2017) although the funds have already oversubscribed. Subject to criticism was that a potential “greyhound-race” lead to applicants losing out! But in fact there is a competition among the best proposals but not about who is the fastest. Still an open question is how the funds may be transferred beyond 2019, which might be solved in autumn 2017, by the new government.

Keywords: g-ba innovations fund; healthcare research; new and innovative care models; funding; germany
