

ABSTRACT

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Endowment Funds in France: a new tool for Medical Research since 2008

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Abstract:

Endowment funds ('fonds de dotation') were created in 2008 by the Law of Modernization of the Economy. The goal was to introduce a new legal form easier to handle, less demanding in terms of authorizations, governance (compared to public interest foundations), but still being a legal entity (compared to sheltered foundations). In particular, no initial funding was required - this disposition was cancelled after a while to avoid the overgrowth of 'ghost' funds, without ressources nor funding capacities.

What conclusions can be drawn after almost ten years? A case study on funds in medical research allows us to observe different situations: ghost funds with no practical activity (but willing to stay 'open' in case someone, someday, tries to make the organization take off) ; small entities struggling to raise funds and maintain a modest activity (a few thousand euros spent on research projects each year) ; funds associated with teaching hospitals to benefit from public generosity (hospitals themselves cannot ask for donations) ; or created by patients or their families to award grants to projects on the disease they suffer from ; or by practitioners and researchers willing to find other sources of funding for their work.

What do these examples tell us? That the situation of French medical research, in matter of funding, is more and more complex, with many actors in the field. A department head in medicine, beside initial fundind from their hospital and the French Institute of Health and Medical Research Inserm (assuming they got the label), can go to learned societies, to the French National Research Agency ANR, to the European Union ('Europe 2020' Program), to foundations, and now to

endowment funds. This brings constraints (department heads feel like they spend their time asking for money, knocking at doors and submitting files) as well as opportunities.

Most important references:

This work is mainly based on personal investigations, on interviews. That said, a few studies and reports, from the French Foundation Center (CFF) and the 'Fondation de France' mostly, will be mentioned. In particular:

- Fondation de France, 'Funds and Foundations in France from 2001 to 2014', 22/07/2015