

VIDEO CONFERENCE OF THE R&I DGs ON R&I ACTIONS ON COVID19

24 MARCH 2020

SUMMARY RECORD BY THE COMMISSION SERVICES

On 24 March, Jean-Eric Paquet, Director- General of DG Research and Innovation of the Commission organised a video –conference with the R&I DGs of the national administrations to discuss the coordination of R&I actions on COVID19.

Barbara Kerstiens (DG R&I) underlined that joint effort should be made to avoid fragmentation and duplication. In a first Horizon 2020 COVID call, 17 projects were already selected at fast pace for funding in different relevant fields (vaccines, epidemiology, treatments etc.). Apart from the Framework Programme, DG R&I is seeking cooperation with the Member States and other Commission services. EU-wide action is needed e.g. in conducting more clinical trials in additional sites in order to draw the right conclusions. Furthermore, top-up funding for running projects should be considered, as well as targeted collaboration in international initiatives (e.g. Coalition for Preparedness Innovation, Bill & Melinda Gates initiative on treatment accelerators). She also informed Member States about a dedicated space on the Health Policy Platform (HPP) for research teams to share information; Member States were invited to nominate interested research groups.

Martin Seychell (DG SANTE) informed the Member States about the establishment of an ad hoc Working Group on Clinical Case Management (including diagnosis; treatment etc.) under the auspices of the Health Security Committee. The first meeting took place on 23 March, but Member States can still nominate representatives. An important factor is the launch of a platform for the exchange between clinicians, including very practical exchange of clinical data.

Kostas Glinos (DG R&I) stressed that the open and rapid sharing of data accelerates scientific discovery, which is why fast actions are needed to encourage immediate open access to publications including the underlying data on COVID-19. Together with EMBL/EBI, the Commission is working on a European Data Platform, which will include all kinds of data and should be linked to national data stored in the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC). This should be further elaborated at a meeting of the EOSC Governing Board on 25 March. Furthermore, the Commission wants to bring together research infrastructures in the life sciences and in high performance computing. Cooperation with OPEN-AIRE should ensure the fast aggregation of data.

After these introductory presentations by the Commission (presentations are attached), Member States exchanged views on the possibility of coordinated R&I actions. The discussion was centred around three questions on the priorities for EU coordinated R&I action on COVID19 in the short (6 months) and medium term (12 months) and beyond; how Member States and the Commission can best maximise funding by topping up existing calls or co-funding and how to mobilise State long-term investors, given the possibility of co-investment offered by EIC and IDFF.

Most Member States highlighted the need to work together in R&I responses to COVID19 for drugs, vaccines, clinical trials, treatments etc. Many Member States indicated that they would appreciate a Commission led platform where all R&I calls on COVID19 at national and EU level are shared and where researchers and innovators can find each other. National contact points should to be established. Many underlined the importance of open access and open science, to have data sharing portals. The European Open Science Cloud will be instrumental. Member States highlighted the need, more than ever, for evidence-based policy making. The targeted use/mobilisation of Research Infrastructures was mentioned by many Member States for joined-up research. Many Member States referred to the need for synergies and complementarity between Horizon Europe and other European programs (especially ESIF/Structural Funds) rapidly and in a simple and efficient way. Others referred to the importance of a coordinated approach of Member States participation in international fora (e.g. CEPI). A Ministerial meeting should be convened in the next two weeks, to send a strong signal to the Research Community and to the public. Annex I provides a summary overview of different priority actions proposed by Member States. The written contributions shared by Member States after the meeting are attached in Annex II.

In his concluding remarks, Jean-Eric Paquet thanked the Member States for the rich exchange of views and ideas on how to address the Corona crisis in the spirit of European cooperation. He took note of the need for coordinated efforts, mentioned by all Member States. He announced he would follow-up on the discussion and will be in contact with the HR PCY to see what makes sense between now and the Ministerial meeting, to make it operational and impactful. He noted the Member States' expectations on the IMI call. He announced that the Commission services will summarise the discussion and that the Commission will come back to the R&I DGs with recommendations for operational next steps to facilitate and coordinate further actions against COVID-19. On the ERA Communication, he mentioned that the Commission will be in touch to see how we can replace the ERA Tour des Capitaux to ensure that the timing of the communication is not impacted too much; as we need to move ambitiously also on that front. Jean-Eric Paquet suggested creating a common label for all our actions, for example "ERA4 corona" to provide powerful framework around what was discussed. On Horizon 2020, he underlined that the Commission is showing maximum flexibility to help our researchers to deal with the challenging circumstances. The Commission will circulate written guidance after this meeting.

ANNEX I

A list below includes some examples of actions suggested by Member States without prejudice to detail description of all suggestions presented at the meeting and/or submitted in written contributions as included in annex II.

- A call for more coordinated activities at EU level like **setting up fora/platforms/mechanisms/task forces etc.** to coordinate R&I activities and national and EU level in general and/or specific areas like e.g. vaccines, clinical trials, treatments as well as **mapping** of ongoing activities and researchers groups and helping researchers and innovators to find each other.
- A call for stepping up efforts regarding **research data** e.g. in framework of EOSC and **open access**.
- Importance of targeted use/mobilisation of **research infrastructure**.
- A number of actions under **Horizon 2020** which includes e.g. postponing the deadlines, better communication, redirecting the funding, adjusting Green Deal call, reorientation of ongoing projects, opening-up consortia (also in case of national projects), financing more projects above the threshold, flexibility of rules.
- A number of actions addressed to **private sector** also in framework of **EIC**, e.g. speeding up evaluation process, opening the cut-off date in May for projects on Covid 19, joining forces with Member States in financing at national level projects not funded at EU level.
- Suggestions for **topics in the future calls** in a short, medium and long term varying for example from fast diagnosis, virology, epidemiology, robotics, remote solutions, to social aspects of the pandemic and isolation and other SSH related aspects.
- Importance of cooperation at **global level**, e.g. via support to CEPI and cooperation with GloPID-R.
- A call to use **evidence policy making better** and strengthen what research can bring to policy makers; Improve **foresight** activities to anticipate problematic situation; Investigate why **different countries** have chosen **different strategies** to control COVID-19 transmission and outbreak, as well as to analyse the outcome of those strategies, including ethical and legal aspects.
- A need to deal with different scientific opinions and **fake news**.
- Importance of support to Pre-Commercial Procurement (PCP) and **Public Procurement of Innovative** solutions (PPI).
- Importance of **synergies** with other European Funds, in particular Structural Funds.
- Importance of looking at **regulatory environment, standards and procedures**.
- Suggestions for actions linked with **Horizon Europe** mainly regarding partnerships and missions.