

Netherlands

Written Comments R&I Action Plan COVID-19, 30 March 2020

Overall

NL welcomes the initiative of the European Commission.. NL finds it important to coordinate actions if- and where possible in order to create more impact. In current circumstances, Member States are fully engaged in managing the crisis nationally simultaneously. Therefore, we need find it important to prioritise the actions which actions are of most added value.

1. Establish new co-programmed partnership

At this point NL has some questions for further clarification of the proposed new co-programmed partnership. What would be the added value to the call the Commission has opened? Which budgetary source shall be used to finance this partnership? Will this partnership only run under Horizon 2020 or will it also continue under Horizon Europe? How does this partnership relate to the current partnership landscape? NL believes that for instance an extension of a current partnership might be most achievable and efficient in such a short term. Best candidate for this would be JPI antimicrobial resistance.

2. Establish a one stop shop for Corona R&I funding

NL strongly supports a one stop shop for Corona R&I funding. There are currently many questions from researchers and policy makers for such an overview. Establishing an ERA Corona Platform could address this. It is key that the platform is transparent. Member States and the Commission should use this platform for sharing their information on the calls they have opened and which projects that they have been granted.. Besides, an overview of the calls and projects that have been granted, the platform should have an overview on the calls that are currently open and eligible for researchers from other member states can subscribe.

3. Establish an ad-hoc High Level Expert Group on Corona

NL kindly requests additional information on the proposal to establish an ad-hoc High Level Expert Group on Corona to assess this proposal properly. Overall; given the fact that we already have several platforms where Member States can discuss issues (strategic Programme Committee , Health Programme Committee, Research Working Party), we need to ask ourselves whether we should aim at yet another group. Is this necessary given the current situation of crisis management in the Member States? What would be the added value of this structure compared to what we already have? What would be the level of representation required? Would it be representatives from member states or could it be representatives from the Permanent Representations or would it need to be (scientific) experts?

4. Mobilizing funding from other EU programmes to COVID-related R&I

NL is positive about redirecting not yet committed ERDF-funding to research and innovation actions towards COVID-19. In general, our point of view is that ERDF should be more focused on innovation. However, NL wonders if there will be budget for this purpose as it was already decided that the left ERDF-budget will be spent under the Corona Responsive Investment Initiative for urgent COVID-19 actions/measures. NL suggests to have a close look at the InnovFin Infectious Diseases instrument and the possibility to redirect budget to COVID-19 actions.

5. Establish a Coronavirus EIC Community Platform

NL support the establishment of a Coronavirus EIC Community platform. NL sees more opportunities for the Platform to contribute towards further coordination. Coordination is needed, not only between public and private parties, but also between companies, etc. NL recommends that this Platform is connected to the 'one stop shop for Corona R&I actions' (action 2).

6. New call 'Expression of interest' in Horizon2020 for innovative and rapid approaches for responding to COVID-19 and deliver quick results relevant to society

NL strongly supports the call NL believes that this type of multidisciplinary action is very useful. Especially, since this type of mainly SSH related research is not always taken into account. This type of research should also focus on results that are more broadly applicable for other epidemics and not only for COVID-19. Though, NL would like to know how this call relates to the previous call that the Commission has launched in February. An approach which could be considered is a proposal by EATRIS: please suggest to add another call for innovative approaches: "To assess the clinical utility of the various diagnostic kits currently being used in the

field, and to better understand the natural history of the disease, especially the immunological response to the disease." (There are a lot of small scale studies, but we need to bring this under a large trial to get a robust picture of the immunological response, and to know which kits are sensitive and specific enough to give a clear diagnostic picture.)

7. Mobilisation of citizens at EU level

Hackatons are an effective instrument to speed up innovative actions. In the Netherlands we have good experience with it. (Of course, depending on further expected impact and proposal, NL could support the action on a pan-European Hackaton.)

8. Access to Research Infrastructures (RIs)

The NLs welcomes the efforts of the Commission for providing extra funding to Horizon 2020 ongoing projects providing vital COVID-19 services and the coordinated providing of information on relevant services provided by research infrastructures on relevant Platforms. With regard to the repurposing of existing grants to Research Infrastructure projects we have some questions regarding the source of the funds:

- 1) is the budget used of the the Research Infrastructures Work Programme 2020 (so reshuffling) or is additional budget foreseen ;
- 2) are these 'extra' finances for existing projects or also for new projects?;
- 3) this action seems to focus on "new services and datasets" which should be covered by action 10. For researchers direct and easy ('free') access to facilities is much more important these days;
- 4) does "repurposing" also mean "redirecting of funds for the EOSC03 call towards COVID actions".

9. Coordination of clinical trials : NEW European 'virtual clinical trial network'

In general NL is positive on more coordination on clinical trials. It is important that these trials are open for all countries under similar conditions (therefore independent of member state status). In line with the response of EATRIS it is important to be able pool clinical data to understand the immune response and course of the disease, and to seek markers that will predict susceptibility to immune-response mediated duress (cytokine storm)"NL has some questions for clarification. Who would coordinate this network? Will it be ECRIN together with EATRIS? Without any additional information or knowledge on REMAP-CAP and DISCOVERY projects (notfound in the CORDIS database) NL advises to include the ECRIN (<https://www.ecrin.org/>) network on clinical trials.

Furthermore, NL would like to receive more clarity on the additional value of a 'virtual' network of the two mentioned projects compared to a distributed Research Infrastructure which is also a virtual network consisting of physical locations with facilities?

10. Research data sharing for SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19

NL appreciates the initiative for a European data exchange platform for SARCS-CoV-2 and COVID-19 related information exchange by EMBL/ELIXER, connected to the ESOC. However NL likes to emphasize that this specific initiative is just one of the pieces of this big, difficult puzzle. The whole puzzle consist of a broad spectrum of pieces (from the EU and far beyond) that are inclusive, accessible, cooperative, interoperable, scalable (to world level), flexible and can speed up their efforts. E.g. it is also important to share data on patient-level, for which other initiatives are more suitable.

NL therefore calls on the Commission to stimulate cooperation with all relevant pieces of the puzzle: beside EMBL/ELIXER also big established organizations like Géant, RDA, CODATA, WDS, but also connect new recent developed, innovative and fast growing networks all over Europe and the World. We should connect to clinical trial data as well as mentioned in action 9.

It seems comfortable to build on a party that is established and well organized, but ESFRIs should not develop into FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reproducible) data-silos. It is all about connection, cooperation and federation. That is why the use of the FAIR principles is crucial when developing an initiative like this. The FAIR principles are now lacking in this initiative.

Cooperative efforts in the context of the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) can be crucial in solving COVID-19 research questions in the medium and longer term, because EOSC federates data initiatives and research efforts.

So it is important for the EU and Member States to invest in optimal, modern, innovative conditions for researchers and companies to combat this crisis and to their work together based on the FAIR principles.

There also needs to be protection of intellectual property rights (IP). Normally these would be claimed through a patent or publication, but as both procedures would take too long, there needs to be a simple and safe solution for this.