

EU R&I actions on COVID19 - Teleconference between Directors General of Member States and DG R&I - EE intervention

24.03.2020

1. What should in your view be the priorities for EU coordinated R&I action on COVID19 in the short (6 months) and medium term (12 months) and beyond?

Calls for proposals for research and innovation projects should be better coordinated and the deadlines of the calls as well as the extension of those deadlines should be considered carefully. To guarantee that everyone has the same information, it should be considered to coordinate all changes and special calls with the strategic programming committee or on the level of NCP coordination network. Coordination of information is also necessary in terms of finding solutions to problems and possible force majeure circumstances that may arise from the current emergency situation.

Calls for proposals for finding a treatment to and preventing the spread of the virus during the COVID outbreak should be kept open for a longer period, so that research institutions and SMEs have time to react. Instead of short deadlines, more frequent calls should be considered.

2. How could Member States and the European Commission best maximise funding eg to complement and expand the 17 Horizon 2020 COVID-19 projects and/or increase the national contributions to the EDCTP call?

More flexibility in the regulations as well as simplified procedures might be helpful. For example, creating more synergies between EU programmes so that they could contribute to fighting the virus. Applying certain exceptions for COVID-related calls might also be considered. Another option could be creating a possibility for COVID-related projects in the partnerships and/or working programmes of the framework programme.

3. How to mobilise State long-term investors, given the possibility of co-investment offered by EIC and IDFF? What other initiatives could be taken?

There are different ways to approach this situation. From a long term perspective, it is critical to analyse the risks we are facing and to act in Europe as a united front, which means that each Member State is ready to contribute to joint European action. This could mean jointly developing a treatment or a vaccine or jointly confronting some other crisis. If Member States are able to act in solidarity, private investors feel more secure to contribute to joint initiatives.

In today's situation where we need to react to the crisis locally and find solutions quickly, one way to alleviate the situation is to have open-to-all project calls with lower standards for participation where the Commission could give lump sum contributions. This approach would make it possible to find quick and flexible solutions in a situation where our societies need to adapt to new circumstances almost every day (for example, studying at home and via e-solutions, adapting to isolation etc). A good example of this is the HackTheCrisis movement that started in Estonia, as well as our e-learning solutions.