



Agenda point: EC activities on COVID-19

Purpose and objectives

Purpose of this agenda point is to summarise recent COVID-19 related activities, both in terms of public health responses as in research investments, and to inform the Member States on the actions taken at the EU level.

Key issues and background

SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes the disease COVID19, has brought about one of the worst crises in recent history, with effects that are biological, social, political and economic. Most EU countries are again seeing increasing numbers of people with SARS CoV-2 infection. Whilst health measures remain a national competence, the Commission is undertaking various activities to help coordinate Member States and support them in their response to COVID-19:

- ◆ **Decision No 1082/2013/EU** lays down rules on epidemiological surveillance, monitoring, and early warning & response system (EWRS) on cross-border health threats, with a central role for the Health Security Committee. In addition, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) provides regular COVID-19 epidemiologic updates and technical guidance to governments, health professionals and the public.
- ◆ The Commission published a Communication in July 2020 on the [Short term EU health preparedness for COVID 19 outbreaks](#) to outline key measures for the coming months. Areas considered include testing, contact tracing and public health surveillance, medical countermeasures: smooth functioning of the single market and access to personal protective equipment, medicines and medical devices, non-pharmaceutical countermeasures, support to vulnerable groups and reducing the burden of seasonal influenza,
- ◆ The Commission has also proposed a bolstered EU4Health programme under which structural changes and health system resilience will be addressed. As the President announced during her State of the Union address, the Commission will propose, at the end of November, a package to reinforce our capacity to prevent and manage health threats at EU level.
- ◆ The [Emergency Support Instrument \(ESI\)](#) helps MS in their efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic. A significant part of the ESI budget is being used for the EU [vaccine strategy](#), which aims to secure the production of vaccines in the EU and sufficient supplies for its Member States through Advance Purchase Agreements with vaccine producers. The ESI has also funded the purchase and distribution of 30,000

treatment courses of Veklury (remdesivir) and the purchase and distribution of 10 million masks for healthcare workers.

◆ Given the importance of reliable research and evidence the Commission has generated new funding for Covid-19 research under Horizon 2020. The [ERAvsCorona Action Plan](#) is a rapid and novel way of coordinating EU action by Commission and MS, featuring 10 short-term research and innovation actions through Horizon 2020 to tackle the virus. They include providing financial support, creating new funding opportunities, extending clinical trials, refocusing existing projects, sharing data, and setting mechanisms to support innovative companies.

◆ A [portfolio analysis](#) of EU R&I actions shows that **dedicated COVID 19 H2020 calls** disbursed EUR 458.9 million to 103 projects (to Sept 2020). In addition, a total of **547 FP7 and H2020 funded projects were reoriented** to fight the COVID 19 emergency. The current challenge will be in maximising the uptake of these efforts ([see the HorizonResults Platform](#)) to focus at practical impact for prevention, care and policymaking.

Information on all R&I funding initiatives on the Coronavirus is available at a dedicated "[ERA Corona platform](#)".

◆ The key action of the ERAvsCorona Action Plan is to strengthen the EU response to COVID-19 in the years to come by setting up EU-wide clinical trial [networks](#) (notably EU-RESPONSE which builds on the DisCoVeRy trial originally initiated in France in coordination with the WHO Solidarity trial. The [SUPPORT-E](#) on convalescent plasma to treat COVID-19 will coordinate planning and implementation of large-scale clinical trials across the EU.

[Issues/specific questions for the SGPP and Shadow PC to consider at the meeting](#)

Member States delegates are asked to provide their responses on the following:

- What feedback do you have regarding the policy and research actions taken over the past months?