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COVID-19 and EU Funding

The recent outbreak of COVID-19 might have negative impact on the implementation of many EU projects and the preparation of new applications to Horizon 2020 and other calls. This website provides a useful overview of the main messages from the European Commission and other important information. It will be regularly updated with the latest information taken from our daily news articles.

European Commission Answers to Frequently Asked Questions on Horizon 2020 Projects

The European Commission has published answers to two Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on the COVID-19 outbreak and its impact on Horizon 2020 projects and calls for proposals:

Can the clause on “force majeure” in the Horizon 2020 grant agreement be invoked in relation to the COVID-19 outbreak?

"Article 51 of the H2020 MGA sets out the conditions in which the force majeure clause can be used. 'Force majeure' relates to an extraordinary and unforeseeable event or situation that is beyond the beneficiaries control and that prevents them from fulfilling their obligations under the action. If such a situation occurs, beneficiaries must immediately inform the Commission/Agency/Funding Body, which will examine on a case-by-case basis the possible application of the rules on force majeure. Moreover, beneficiaries must immediately take all the necessary steps to limit any

damage due to force majeure (e.g. try to cancel the flight ticket, claim the reimbursement from the cancellation insurance (if applicable)).

Costs will be eligible, if they fulfil the general eligibility conditions set out in Article 6 H2020 MGA like any other costs incurred under the action. For example, if a meeting/event cannot take place due to force majeure, travel and accommodation costs may still be charged to the H2020 action if they fulfil the cost eligibility conditions, even if the beneficiary did not travel and did not take part in the meeting/event. If force majeure entails extra costs for the implementation of the action, these costs may be eligible if necessary for the implementation for the action (e.g. a cancelled conference is reorganised at a later stage). However, the maximum grant amount cannot be increased."

Will the deadlines for Horizon 2020 calls be extended related to the COVID-19 outbreak?

"The recent escalation of restrictions related to the COVID-19 outbreak may hamper applicants' ability to prepare and finalise high-quality proposals. For this reason, for Horizon 2020 calls with original deadlines between now and 15 April, extensions will be applied. The precise new deadlines for each call and topic will be published on the call and topic pages on the Funding and Tenders Portal.

For the following two calls, no extension of deadline/cut-off date will apply:

- IMI2-2020-21-01
- EIC-SMEInst-2018-2020 [**IMPORTANT UPDATE:** The call cut-off date has now also been extended by 48 hours to Friday 20 March at 5pm CET]

In all cases, potential applicants are advised to prepare themselves as necessary, especially by establishing effective communication links for remote collaborative work, also anticipating possible further restrictions in the coming weeks."

Important Announcements: Horizon 2020

Research Executive Agency

On 18 March, the Research Executive Agency (REA), responsible for the implementation of several parts of Horizon 2020, **updated its pages**

on business continuity measures. In addition to earlier messages about extended Horizon 2020 call deadlines, new information on remote evaluation and grant management is now available. Evaluations of ongoing and upcoming proposals are being organised remotely. Furthermore, grant management activities are continuing, however REA response time may be affected due to IT constraints. Finally, beneficiaries are encouraged to follow [@REA_research](#) on Twitter, as decisions may change anytime due to exceptional circumstances.

European Research Council

The **ERC have posted a statement on their website** stating that they are doing their utmost to remain fully operational during this period, that grant management activities continue as normal (although technical issues may slow some processes down) and that panel evaluations are currently being organised remotely. They do not currently anticipate any delays to evaluations or application deadlines.

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

The **Research Executive Agency (REA) have released a statement** advising grantees and fellows to follow the travel advice provided by national authorities and to cancel or postpone all non-essential travel where possible. REA will adopt a flexible approach towards projects, which fail to meet grant agreement obligations due to the COVID-19 containment measures, and may apply the rules on force majeure, or extend the duration of projects. Projects will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and grantees and fellows should speak to their Project Officer if they require support.

Important Announcements: Other EU Programmes

Erasmus+

The **Commission has released a statement** explaining that it will apply maximum flexibility in the implementation of the programme, within the limits of the applicable legal framework. To deal with participants being unable to travel, or return home, due to COVID-19

restrictions, Erasmus+ National Agencies are now permitted to invoke force majeure clauses whereby they may accept additional costs up to a maximum grant amount. Planned activities may also be postponed by up to 12 months per project. Following the Commission's statement, the UK National Agency **has published dedicated travel advice** for regions affected by the COVID-19 outbreak.

Furthermore, the UK Government has issued its own **advice for UK education providers** regarding staff and student overseas travel and project participants are advised to speak to their providers about arrangements. Participants under 18 are advised against all overseas education trips, while those over 18 who are due to travel should consult their education institutions on whether the travel should continue as planned. For any UK participants already overseas, they should continue to monitor the **latest FCO travel advice** and comply with any COVID-19 control measures put in place in their current host nation.

Call Deadlines

The UK National Agency for Erasmus+ and the European Commission have announced an extension to the deadline for Strategic Partnerships, including KA203 (the Strategic Partnership for Higher Education). Originally planned for 24 March, the deadline has now been extended to 23 April 2020 (11am, UK time). Additionally, the deadline for applications for the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education has been extended to 26 May 2020 (4pm UK Time).

A **complete list of extended Erasmus+ deadlines** is available on the European Commission website.

Creative Europe

The **Commission has released a statement** saying that it understands that containment measures may have consequences for Creative Europe projects, and are adopting a position of maximum flexibility in regards to implementing the programme, while still working within the applicable legal framework. They are also in close communication with the national Creative Europe desks.

COST Actions

The **COST Association has recommended** that, from 13 March 2020 to 3 April 2020 (minimum), all physical meetings, Training Schools and Short-Term Scientific Missions be suspended or cancelled. They encourage participants to explore video conferencing and remote networking tools as an alternative. Any participants currently attending COST events should follow the instructions of the host country and host institution.

On 18 March, **the COST Association announced** that the 2020 COST Open Call (OC-2020-1) will be postponed by six months and will now close on Thursday 29 October instead of Wednesday 29 April.

Situation in Brussels and UKRO Services

UKRO is continuing its services in full, though with some adjustments to respect the **recent advice on COVID-19 provided by Belgian authorities** and with a view to travel restrictions more globally. On 18 March, the Federal Government of Belgium **introduced new measures** (website in French/Dutch) to stop the spread of the disease, essentially putting the country on lockdown until 5 April.

In Brussels, offices and businesses - including the European Commission - have moved to home working, and events and meetings are cancelled until early April. The majority of our team is currently working remotely to ensure we can continue to provide our usual services - with the following adjustments, or points to note:

- If you would like to speak to your European Advisor, please arrange an online call rather than a phone call, as most of the team is currently working from home. Our email query service continues as normal.
- The same applies to our **NCP helpdesk services**.
- If you have an UKRO visit planned in the coming two or three weeks, your European Advisor will contact you to agree the best way forward.
- We have postponed our **New ELO training** in Brussels and our **ELO Catch-up** in London; both were due to take place this month.
- Until we can find a new date for our events, we are in looking into organising webinars and online meetings where possible. More details will be communicated in due course.
- As we have had many questions on how Horizon 2020 projects and deadlines for current calls will be affected, we are gathering

information and will keep subscribers updated on the UKRO Portal with regular articles.

- We currently cannot take bookings for our meeting room here in Brussels.

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