

COVID-19 and EU Funding

UKRO webinar update for subscribers

3 April 2020

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UKRO webinars – housekeeping

- All participants will be **muted** for the duration of the webinar.
- **Q&A function available** should be used to submit questions.
- Presentation slides will be available on the UKRO Portal later today; **the webinar is not recorded.**
- **Email with links to slides and feedback questionnaire** will be sent after the webinar.

Contents

1. UKRO's activities and services/Situation in Brussels

2. Impact on Horizon 2020

- Ongoing Horizon 2020 projects
- Calls for proposals/targeted calls
- Other EU programmes

3. Future programmes

4. Other considerations

- Fast Track access to Research Infrastructures
- UK Entry Visa Extensions

UKRO's activities

Situation in Brussels and our services

Situation in Brussels

- UKRO is continuing its services in full, though with some adjustments
- Belgium in lockdown until 19 April currently
- European institutions, stakeholder offices etc. have moved to home working

UKRO services

- **Stay in touch with your European Advisor:**
 - arrange an online call/UK phone numbers now also available.
 - Email query services continue as normal.
- **UKRO MSCA/ERC NCPs:**
 - Email query service continues and online calls can be arranged.
 - NCP events planned (online) in April/May
- **UKRO visit: For UKRO visits in the coming weeks, your EA will contact you to discuss alternatives**
 - UKRO has started delivering “online visits” (with adjusted times and agendas).
 - You can also postpone your visit.

UKRO services

UKRO European Liaison Officer Online Catch-up

📅 07 APRIL 2020 📍 UK RESEARCH OFFICE (UKRO)

Not registered for this event

UKRO is pleased to announce that we will be holding an online European Liaison Officer Catch-up on **7 April 2020**.

The catch-up was originally planned as a full day event to allow ELOs to discuss a range of relevant issues, to network and to exchange best practice. Due to current circumstances regarding Covid-19, the event programme has been adapted to an online format. The agenda will include information sessions with the UKRO Team, as well as UKRI and BEIS colleagues. ELOs will have the opportunity to raise questions through the webinar 'chat' function and key points from the day will be shared with subscribers through the UKRO Portal.

We are also exploring options for holding the interactive sessions and exchange of best practice online and we will keep subscribers informed at a later stage.

Programme outline

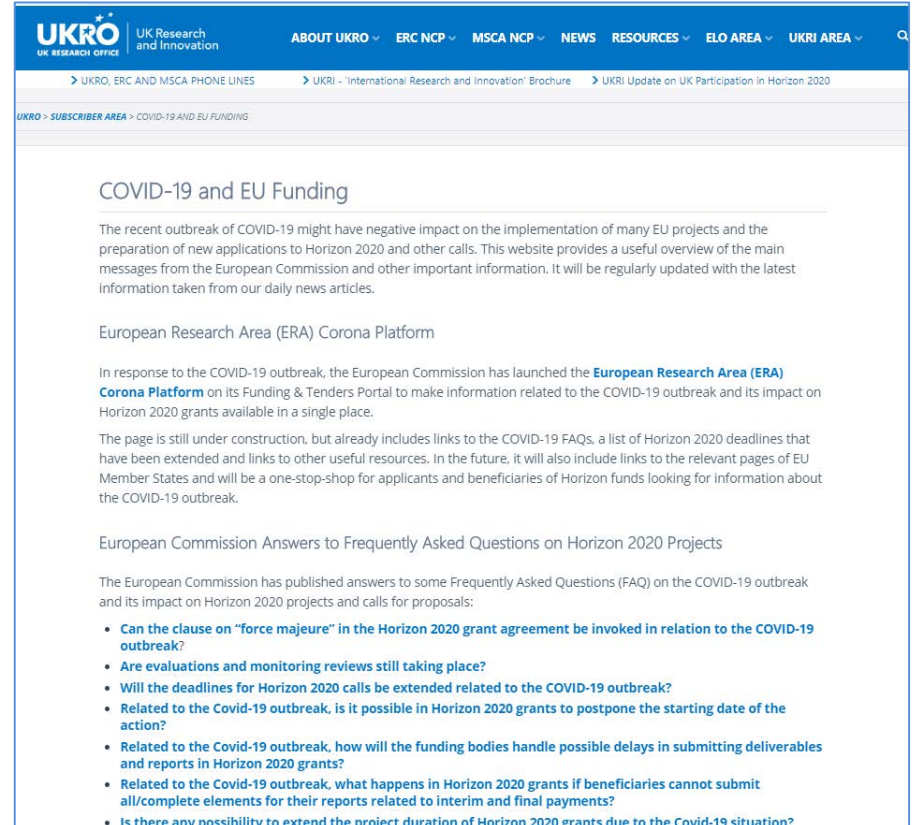
The event will start at **10.15** (UK time) and will finish by **13:00** (UK time). The agenda will include two key sessions, with UKRI and BEIS representatives, around the following areas:

- Horizon Europe - update and Q&A
- Global Talent Visas - focus on MSCA, ERC & H2020 collaborative projects with Q&A

- UKRO events and training: Webinar schedule intensified, online alternatives
 - ELO Catch up now online on **7 April**
 - New ELO training postponed (one to one sessions possible)

UKRO services

- EU funding questions (COVID):
 - UKRO is gathering information from subscribers
 - Keep subscribers updated on the UKRO Portal with regular articles and a COVID update page:
<https://www.ukro.ac.uk/subscriber/Pages/covid-19.aspx>



The screenshot shows the UKRO website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the UKRO logo and 'UK Research and Innovation' text. Below the navigation bar, there are several menu items: 'ABOUT UKRO', 'ERC NCP', 'MSCA NCP', 'NEWS', 'RESOURCES', 'ELO AREA', and 'UKRI AREA'. A breadcrumb trail indicates the current page is 'UKRO > SUBSCRIBER AREA > COVID-19 AND EU FUNDING'. The main content area is titled 'COVID-19 and EU Funding' and contains several paragraphs of text. The first paragraph discusses the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on EU projects and the preparation of new applications. The second paragraph mentions the 'European Research Area (ERA) Corona Platform' and states that the European Commission has launched it to provide information related to the COVID-19 outbreak. The third paragraph notes that the page is still under construction but includes links to COVID-19 FAQs and Horizon 2020 deadlines. The fourth paragraph is titled 'European Commission Answers to Frequently Asked Questions on Horizon 2020 Projects' and lists several questions related to the COVID-19 outbreak, such as 'Can the clause on "force majeure" in the Horizon 2020 grant agreement be invoked in relation to the COVID-19 outbreak?' and 'Are evaluations and monitoring reviews still taking place?'. The fifth paragraph is titled 'The European Commission has published answers to some Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on the COVID-19 outbreak and its impact on Horizon 2020 projects and calls for proposals:' and lists several questions related to the COVID-19 outbreak, such as 'Will the deadlines for Horizon 2020 calls be extended related to the COVID-19 outbreak?' and 'Related to the Covid-19 outbreak, what happens in Horizon 2020 grants if beneficiaries cannot submit all/complete elements for their reports related to interim and final payments?'. The sixth paragraph is titled 'Is there any possibility to extend the project duration of Horizon 2020 grants due to the Covid-19 situation?'.

Impact on Horizon 2020

Ongoing projects

Force Majeure

- Situations that are unforeseeable/exceptional/beyond control
- Not due to error/inevitable in spite of exercising due diligence



The screenshot shows a webpage from the UK Research Office (UKRO) with the following content:

UKRO UK RESEARCH OFFICE | UK Research and Innovation

ABOUT UKRO ▾ ERC NCP ▾ MSCA NCP ▾ NEWS RESOURCES ▾ ELO AREA ▾ UKRI AREA ▾

UKRO, ERC AND MSCA PHONE LINES | UKRI - 'International Research and Innovation' Brochure | UKRI Update on UK Participation in Horizon 2020

UKRO > SUBSCRIBER AREA > ARTICLES > H2020 NEWS > ARTICLE

Claiming Costs Under the 'Force Majeure' Clause

01 APRIL 2020 - H2020 NEWS, RESEARCHER Print

Due to the current COVID-19 control measures put in place across the world, many Horizon 2020 projects have had to cancel activities that they have already committed funding to. In situations such as this, where the reasons for these cancellations are extraordinary, unforeseeable and beyond the beneficiaries' control, these costs can be still be claimed using the *force majeure* clause.

"Force majeure" refers to a clause (**Article 51**) in the Model Grant Agreement for Horizon 2020, applying to situations which:

- Were unforeseeable, exceptional and beyond the parties' control;
- Prevent either party from fulfilling their obligations under the Grant Agreement;
- Were not due to error or negligence on the part of the parties of the Agreement or any third parties involved in the action; and
- Prove to be inevitable in spite of exercising all due diligence.

Beneficiaries must formally notify the Commission (via their Project Officer) about the nature, likely duration and foreseeable effects of the situation, insofar as they can predict them, and must take all steps to minimise damage and resume implementation as soon as possible. Beneficiaries failing to fulfil their obligations due to Force majeure are not considered in breach of their Grant Agreement.

- COVID-19 relevant examples: travel costs, event costs
- Notify the project officer
- Take steps to minimize damage
- Ensure you have documentation of cancellations, refunds, insurance claims for an audit
- **Maximum grant amount cannot be increased**

Flexibility on implementation and costs

- Maximum flexibility will be given in relation to the action implementation.
- Whenever possible beneficiaries are encouraged to telework or to use other forms of remote working.
- Teleworking costs will be accepted as eligible under the confinement period even if it is not the beneficiary's usual practice to telework.
- Beneficiaries are also highly encouraged to shift their tasks whenever possible (e.g. postpone lab work where possible and prioritise desk based work)
- **Questions on staff hired on grant contracts still open**
- **Also: questions on timesheets**

Specific Commission advice on MSCA

- Periods in which a researcher was absent for 30 consecutive days or less (for reasons other than normal annual leave) can **STILL** be charged to the action and the costs will be eligible.
- Research, training and networking unit costs should be used primarily for the research, training and networking activities but **beneficiaries may allocate some of these amounts to help maintaining the salary of the researchers that are prevented from implementing the action due to the Covid-19 situation.**

The screenshot shows the UKRO website header with navigation links: ABOUT UKRO, ERC NCP, MSCA NCP, NEWS, RESOURCES, ELO AREA, and UKRI AREA. Below the header, there are breadcrumb links: UKRO > SUBSCRIBER AREA > ARTICLES > H2020 NEWS > ARTICLE. The main content area features the article title 'When and How to Suspend a Horizon 2020 Project?' dated 31 MARCH 2020, categorized as H2020 NEWS, RESEARCHER, with a Print button. The article text discusses exceptional circumstances that may prevent project activities, the need to discuss suspension with the project officer, and a clarification section titled 'Who can Request a Suspension?'.

Project suspension

- Exceptional circumstances arise (beyond control) which prevent activities being carried out as set out in the grant agreement
- Coordinator can request a suspension
- COVID-19 relevant examples: essential lab facilities cannot be accessed, essential staff cannot work on the project.
- Notify and discuss with the project officer
- **Costs become ineligible during the suspension**
- **Maximum grant amount cannot be increased**

Project extension

- Beneficiaries may request an amendment for an extension of up to 6 months of initial project duration due to the Covid-19 situation
- Commission states that requests will be handled favorably and in a speedy manner
- Longer extensions on case-by-case assessment
- **Maximum grant amount cannot be increased**

Deliverables and reporting

- Full flexibility will be given on scheduled due dates for **deliverables, milestones and reports** whose performance was impacted by the confinement measures
- **Reports linked to payments:** flexibility will be allowed as regards the 60 days period for the submission of the report but any late report linked to payment will subsequently lead to later payment.
- **For final payments:**
 - Given the Covid 19 situation, the funding bodies will make the final payment even if the beneficiaries are unable to submit the Certificate on Financial Statements ('CFS') (but capped at the threshold required for CFS of EUR 324.999) – complementary payment of the balance once CFS is submitted.
 - For other delays of a final report, coordinators can request an extension for up to 6 months.

Other FAQs related to COVID-19

- All evaluations are carried out remotely using video or web-conference facilities
- **Postponing a project start date**
 - Possible for grant agreements about to be signed and already signed but where the work as not started.
 - Will delay pre-financing payment

Re-directing project work to help tackle COVID-19?

- In principle, amendments should not change the project fundamentally (as it was awarded).
- Commission will assess reorienting of projects on a case-by case basis, and such amendments could exceptionally be granted.

Impact on Horizon 2020

Upcoming calls for proposals

Frequently Asked Questions on Horizon 2020 Projects

[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..."*

Deadlines

▸ UKRO, ERC AND MSCA PHONE LINES ▸ UKRI - 'International Research and Innovation' Brochure ▸ UKRI Update on UK Participation in Horizon 2020

- **What happens to costs in Horizon 2020 grants when there are difficulties in implementing the action due to the Covid-19 situation?**
- **Is there any possibility to rapidly re-direct work in on-going Horizon 2020 projects to help tackling the Covid-19 outbreak?**

Confirmed New Deadlines for Horizon 2020 Calls

The following new deadlines have now been confirmed on the Funding and Tenders Portal:

- H2020-INFRAIA-2018-2020 – Deadline moved from 17 March 2020 to **14 May 2020**
- H2020-INFRAINNOV-2019-2020 – Deadline moved from 17 March 2020 to **14 May 2020**
- H2020-INFRASUPP-2018-2020 – Deadline moved from 17 March 2020 to **14 May 2020**
- H2020-LC-SC3-2018-2019-2020 – Deadline moved from 26 March 2020 to **21 April 2020**
- H2020-NSUP-2020 – Deadline moved from 26 March 2020 to **2 April 2020**
- H2020-INNOV-SUP-2018-2020 – Deadline moved from 2 April 2020 to **15 April 2020**
- H2020-SC1-BHC-2018-2020 – Deadline moved from 7 April 2020 to **4 June 2020**
- H2020-SC1-DTH-2018-2020 – Deadline moved from 7 April 2020 to **18 June 2020**
- H2020-SC1-FA-DTS-2018-2020 – Deadline moved from 7 April 2020 to **18 June 2020**
- H2020-SwafS-2018-2020 – Deadline moved from 15 April 2020 to **23 April 2020**
- H2020-S2RJU-2020 – Deadline moved from 21 April 2020 to **27 May 2020**
- H2020-SESAR-2020-1; H2020-SESAR-2020-2 – Deadline moved from 24 April 2020 to **16 June 2020**
- Horizon Impact Award 2020 – Deadline moved from 2 April 2020 to **15 April 2020**

All deadlines are at 17:00 CET (Brussels time) and are provided by UKRO for information only. For legally binding information on call deadlines, please, visit the Funding and Tenders Portal.

Other updates

Horizon 2020 and COVID-19

COVID-19 calls/ongoing projects

- SC1 emergency funding:
 - 18 projects shortlisted in epidemiology, modelling, diagnostics, treatment and vaccines
- IMI 2 fast track call on COVID-19 (€45 million) closed on 31 March: development of treatments and diagnostic tests
 - Several IMI projects are contributing to relevant research

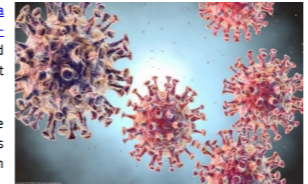


New research projects on Coronavirus (March 2020)

Outcome of emergency funding action for coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 outbreak: 18 new projects

On 30 January 2020, the European Commission launched a [request for expressions of interest entitled "SC1-PHE-CORONAVIRUS-2020: Advancing knowledge for the clinical and public health response to the \[COVID-19\] epidemic"](#) with a budget of €10 million subsequently increased up to €48.5 million.

Such rapid reaction is made possible by the standing budget line for emergency research funds that the Commission maintains as part of the **Horizon 2020** annual work programmes for Health research.



[This enabled 17 projects to be short-listed for funding as the EC announced on 6 March 2020](#), to which an 18th project was added in late March¹. In total, the 18 projects involve 140 research teams from across the EU and beyond who will work on:

- **Improving epidemiology and public health, including our preparedness and response to outbreaks.** These projects will help develop better monitoring systems in order to effectively prevent and control the spread of the virus, as well as contribute to the assessment of social dynamics.
- **Rapid point-of-care diagnostic tests.** Increased efforts will concentrate on enabling front-line health workers to make the diagnosis more quickly and more accurately, which will in turn reduce the risk of further spread of the virus.
- **New treatments**, in which a dual approach will be adopted. Firstly, accelerating the development of new treatments currently in the pipeline (including therapeutic peptides, monoclonal antibodies and broad-spectrum antivirals), and secondly, screening and identifying molecules that could work against the virus, using advanced modelling and computing techniques.
- **Development of new vaccines.** The research will focus on developing a prophylactic vaccine and a therapeutic vaccine, which will be used for prevention and treatment respectively.

The projects are listed below. Disclaimer: For each project, funding and composition of the consortium is subject to final European Commission decision and signature of Horizon 2020 Grant Agreement.

Research Executive Agency

- On 18 March, the Research Executive Agency (REA) [updated its pages](#) on business continuity measures.
- **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 and that panel evaluations are currently being organised remotely.**
- Currently no delays to evaluations or application deadlines anticipated.
- Starting grant interviews possibly done online (tbc later this month).

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.

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

- Fellows and remote working: Anecdotal evidence suggests **that REA are being flexible on the mobility rule during this period** – i.e. remote working from country of origin, or for recruitment where starting dates have to be changed.
- Discuss with your project officer – and let UKRO know!
- MSCA RISE: letter of commitment signature

MSCA RISE: Clarification on Signature Required for Letter of Commitment

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Print

UKRO understands that as a result of COVID-19 containment measures, the Research Executive Agency (REA) will accept a Letter of Commitment signed by any authorising person within a Third Country partner organisation for the open **2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA) Research and Innovation Staff Exchange Scheme (RISE)** call with a deadline of 28 April 2020. In the case the proposal is funded, a scanned original would then be requested. Normally REA requests that the letter be signed by the organisations' legal representative and that the original is submitted.

The letter must be included in Section 8 of the Part B and follow the template set out in Annex 6 of the **Guide for Applicants**.

The letter must include:

- an explicit reference to the proposal (call and acronym); and

• a commitment to implement the agreed dates proposed in the proposal.

Impact on future EU programmes

State of play

COVID-19 impact on progress

- Delay/meeting cancellations on all levels in EU institutions
- Questions over delay of MFF (to be seen)
 - EP has requested that the Commission submits a proposal for an MFF contingency plan to provide a safety net to protect the beneficiaries of Union programmes (by 15 June)
- Horizon 2020 and Europe Programme Committees in March and April were cancelled – but expected to be organised as online meetings
- Work on Horizon Europe Strategic Plan continues
- UKRO understands that some Mission Boards are also continuing their work (e.g. Cancer).
- Work on partnerships also continues.

Impact on other EU programmes

Erasmus+

Erasmus+

- [Commission statement](#): will apply maximum flexibility on the implementation of the programme
- 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/may accept additional costs up to a maximum grant amount.
- Planned activities may also be postponed by up to 12 months per project.

The screenshot shows the Erasmus+ website interface. At the top is a dark blue header with the Erasmus+ logo and a navigation menu: Home, About Erasmus+, Opportunities, Resources and Tools, News and Events, Contact, Help. Below the header is a sidebar menu with the following items: Programme guide, Distance calculator, Documents -, Videos, Platforms and networks, Online linguistic support, Registration of organisations, Coronavirus impact (highlighted with a dark blue background and a downward arrow), and VET Mobility Charters. The main content area is titled 'Coronavirus impact' and contains a 'Q&A concerning Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps activities in light of the COVID-19 pandemic' section. This section includes a text block stating that the COVID-19 outbreak negatively affects ongoing or planned activities, followed by a paragraph about the European Commission's objective to ensure safety and protection of participants. Below this is a 'Frequently asked questions' section with three expandable questions, each with a plus sign icon on the right. The first question is 'Where should I turn with my questions about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Erasmus+ or European Solidarity Corps activities?'. The second is 'I was on Erasmus+ or European Solidarity Corps mobility in another country, but had to return home. Do I get to keep my grant?'. The third is 'I was on Erasmus+ in another country, but my course was cancelled because the institution closed. I decided to stay in my destination country. Do I get to keep my grant?'.

Erasmus+ call deadlines and FAQs

- 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).
- A [complete list of extended Erasmus+ deadlines](#) is available on the European Commission website.
- [List of FAQ and official responses](#) regarding the effects of COVID-19 restrictions on Erasmus+ actions.

Impact on other EU programmes

COST, Creative Europe

COST and Creative Europe

- [**COST Association has recommended**](#) that all physical meetings are cancelled and to explore video conferencing and remote working for all actions.
- The 2020 COST Open Call postponed by six months to 29 October 2020.
- The [**Commission has released a statement**](#) saying that it understands that containment measures may have consequences for Creative Europe projects.
- Are adopting a position of maximum flexibility in regards to implementing the programme.

Other considerations

Research Infrastructures, immigration

Fast track Access to Research Infrastructures

- **Several research infrastructures have set up specific services** (e.g. rapid, or fast track access) to allow researchers to obtain results as soon as possible.
- A list of relevant research infrastructures, along with the resources available for researchers and labs working on COVID-19, is [available on a dedicated webpage](#), (compiled with support from the ERIC Forum).
- The Association of European-Level Research Infrastructures is collecting relevant information via [a brief questionnaire](#).

UK Entry Visa Extensions

- UK Government has [announcement](#): individuals who are currently unable to return home at the end of their UK entry visa, as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, will be able to extend their visa until 31 May 2020.
- Extension applies to **anyone whose leave expired after 24 January 2020 and who is unable to leave the country because of travel restrictions or self-isolation.**
- UK Visa and Immigration has set up a dedicated COVID-19 immigration team to assist with the extension process (advice is to contact HR departments in the first instance).



Questions?

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