

## Press release – COVID-19: research package welcomed, EU needs to be better equipped in future



“We applaud the measures taken by Commissioner Gabriel and the pooling of almost €140 million against COVID 19. The Commission was very fast in launching a special call for expressions of interest from Horizon 2020 and involving relevant stakeholders under the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI) public-private partnership”, said Horizon Europe rapporteur [Christian Ehler](#) (EPP, DE).

“Now, we have to start thinking ahead in order to be better equipped for the future. Research and development clearly have an important role to play in addressing global challenges. This is yet another reason to support our proposal for €120 billion for Horizon Europe.”, he added.

### **A test of our ability to work together**

“The health crisis posed by COVID-19 is focusing minds. The top priority now is to stem the spread of the virus. Behind the scenes, emergency research is working on finding a treatment and a vaccine. The virus’ extraordinary rate of contagion should make us aware that our interconnected world has shrunk considerably and that joint and coordinated action between states is the only way to deal with this crisis”, said Christian Ehler.

“This crisis is a test of our ability to work together on an emergency situation on the one hand, and to remain faithful to our long-term objectives on the other”, he said.

“When this crisis is over, we must immediately prepare for the next one. This means investing more in research and ensuring that programmes such as Horizon Europe do not become hostages to short-term squabbles between member states”, he concluded.

### **COVID-19: EU and industry to fund more research through Innovative Medicines Initiative**

The Innovative Medicines Initiative ([IMI](#)), a public-private partnership between the European Commission and the pharmaceutical industry, has today launched a fast-track call for research proposals to develop treatments and diagnostics in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. Up to €45 million of the funding will come from Horizon 2020, the EU research and innovation programme.

This call is part of the [coordinated EU response](#) to the public health threat of COVID-19 and complements the emergency research funding [already mobilised](#) recently under Horizon 2020. You can find more information about the IMI call [here](#), and the EU research actions on COVID-19 [here](#) (source : European Commission).

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## **[ESMA clarifies position on call taping under MiFID II](#)**

ESMA reminds firms of the MiFID II requirements in this area. ESMA also recognises that, considering the exceptional circumstances created by the COVID-19 outbreak, some scenarios may emerge where, notwithstanding steps taken by the firm, the recording of relevant conversations required by MiFID II may not be practicable. If firms, under these exceptional scenarios, are unable to record voice communications, ESMA expects them to consider what alternative steps they could take to mitigate the risks related to the lack of recording.

Firms are expected to deploy all possible efforts to ensure that the above measures remain temporary and that recording of telephone conversations is restored as soon as possible.

ESMA, in coordination with national competent authorities, continues to monitor developments in financial markets, including the application of relevant EU requirements by market participants, as a result of the COVID-19 situation and is prepared to use its powers to ensure financial stability, orderly functioning of EU markets and investor protection.

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# COVID-19: CoR President calls for an EU Health Emergency Mechanism to support regions and cities



*□Statement by the President of the European Committee of the Regions, Apostolos Tzitzikostas*

Every day across Europe, thousands local and regional leaders are leading the battle to limit the spread of the virus and manage its impact on the ground. As President of the European Committee of the Regions, and as Governor of the Region of Central Macedonia, I can see the professionalism, the dedication and the courage of all those who are leading the battle against COVID-19. We are mobilising our communities to protect the weakest citizens and ensure as much continuity as possible to our economies.

I pay a tribute to all those local and regional authorities on the frontline, and in particular to those paying a personal high price. Europe can rely on us. It can count on its Mayors, Presidents of Regions, Members of local and regional Assemblies, in leading the fight against the pandemic. At the same time, we need the EU to help our local communities at a time when they need Europe the most, by urgently putting the European Union's budget and intervention capacity at work for our citizens and business.

The efforts put in place by the European Commission and by the Council of the EU are heading in the right direction. Flexibility of Stability and Growth Pact and State Aid rules are crucial, as it is simplifying and accelerating the use of cohesion policy funding. Also the mobilisation of the European Investment Bank as well as of important tools such as the European Solidarity Fund and the European Globalisation Fund can benefit our local communities. But, in light of my direct experience and of the feedback I'm receiving from my colleagues and CoR members, I believe that the EU must go further by launching an EU Health Emergency Mechanism aimed at better supporting the thousands of regional and local leaders who are struggling to provide health services locally.

The Health Mechanism should help cities and regions across Europe to urgently hire additional medical staff, buy more medical devices, support intensive care services, and provide sanitation tools and material to hospitals and schools. It should streamline and make financial resources more readily available from regional, national and EU budgets for public health services. We need to invest more to save lives today and increase our resilience for tomorrow. The Mechanism should be funded through existing national and regional resources, available EU Structural and Investment Funds reoriented to the urgent needs, and new resources, up to 10 billion euro, from the current EU Budget's margins.

We also need the European Commission to further increase and simplify access to available resources under the EU's cohesion policy, to speed-up the funds' use by the local communities who are struggling to manage the pandemic. Cohesion policy funds are proving, once again, to be a vital lifeline to those facing unprecedented challenges on the ground. Cohesion remains the EU's most powerful investment tool, enabling EU, national, regional and local actors to work together and react in times of crisis.

The road ahead is uncertain, and communities urgently need help today to not only protect lives, but also to rebuild in the aftermath. Across Europe we must be able to work in partnership and fairly share the responsibility. The European Union must offer support and solidarity to those most in need: never has this been more true than during the unfolding pandemic crisis. Regions and cities will remain on the front line in the fight against the virus. Our first duty as political leaders during these difficult times is to our citizens. We must join forces at local, regional, national and European level to protect them. I am confident that democracy is stronger than a virus and that, thanks to our joint efforts, over time we will emerge stronger from the COVID-19 crisis.

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## **[#EURegionsWeek deadline extended: apply by 17 April 2020!](#)**



In light of the latest developments of the Corona-virus pandemic and its impact on public and private entities across Europe, the organizers of the European Week of Regions and Cities have decided to **extend the deadline for submitting applications to become partners of the 2020 edition until 17 April.**

We wish to offer equal opportunities to all potential partners across Europe and we stand with all the local and regional authorities and partners who are affected by the pandemic.

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## Press release – European Parliament to hold extraordinary plenary on 26 March



Parliament's President and Group leaders (Conference of Presidents) held an informal exchange of views on Thursday morning. They approved in written procedure the proposal of EP President Sassoli to convene an extraordinary plenary session next Thursday, 26 March in Brussels to debate and vote on the first three legislative proposals of the European Commission to tackle the effects of the COVID19 pandemic in EU Member States.

EP President David Sassoli said: "The European Parliament is doing its duty and will continue to do so. Parliament must remain open, because a virus cannot bring down democracy. We are the only European institution voted in by its citizens and we want to continue representing and defending them".

On the agenda:

- The Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative, which will make available €37 billion of the Cohesion funds to member states to address the consequences of the crisis,
- a legislative proposal to extend the scope of the EU Solidarity Fund to cover public health emergencies

- a Commission proposal to stop the so-called ghost flights caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.

It is key that the European Parliament adopts these three proposals swiftly, to provide concrete support to EU citizens and to the Member States in this unprecedented situation.

The Bureau of the European Parliament will adopt specific measures for this session to ensure the votes can be organised remotely.

This plenary will formally replace the session foreseen for 1-2 April.