

## LERU requests on H2020 projects and the impact of the Covid-19 crisis

We very much welcome the flexibility, responsiveness and guidance the European Commission (EC) has offered to date for ongoing Horizon 2020 projects, in context of the current crisis caused by the Covid-19 outbreak in Europe.

There are however some points of major concern which LERU hopes the EC will consider and thus increase its support of beneficiaries in these difficult times.

### 1. Cost extensions

We strongly advocate the EC allow cost extensions in specific circumstances and especially where no other alternatives exist despite all efforts:

- When staff fully employed on the project are not able to carry out any project tasks during a certain period because e.g. the research facility/institution where they work are closed for an extended period of time due to the Covid-19 containment measures or other circumstances outside their control which does not allow them to complete their usual number of working hours.
- When 'force majeure' has been invoked to ask for an extension of the project reporting and / or deliverables deadlines.

Particular attention should be paid to Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions, especially Individual Fellowships. If a fellow is unable to work due to the Covid-19 measures and they have also received an extension equal to the amount of time they are unable to work, the additional salary cost for the period of the extension should be covered.

We are fully aware finding additional funding from within the Horizon 2020 budget to cover these cost extensions is not straightforward. However, we strongly call on the EU to make such additional funding available within the wider framework of its Covid-19 support.

Many large research funders in Europe such as Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, Wellcome Trust and UK Research and Innovation have already announced either cost extensions or confirmation that the costs of staff unable to work as a result of the current situation are deemed eligible. We hope the EC will follow their example and provide the necessary confirmation and budget backup.

## 2. Eligibility of staff costs impacted by Covid-19

LERU welcomes the introduction of the special absence category, however the calculation option by which it needs to be claimed will not enable all beneficiaries to use this option. We urge the Commission to allow the newly introduced 'special absence' to be applied under all three staff cost calculation options.

## 3 Other requests

- Project Officers should allow beneficiaries sufficient time to a) gather information on the impact that Covid-19 restrictions are having (or likely to have) on ongoing projects and b) to devise the relevant contingency measures. Considering that staff are now working remotely, it can be challenging to meet tight deadlines. We would appreciate if the EC could publish, on the Funding & Tenders Portal, detailed guidance on the type of information required for invoking Article 51 (e.g. templates to be filled out, list of documents/information to be provided, etc.) to ensure that research managers and administrators are able to provide the correct information as quickly as possible.
- In general, we would like to underline that the FAQ on the Funding & Tenders Portal is very helpful. We have one suggestion to improve its accessibility: it would be particularly useful to add the wording 'NEW' and the relevant date every time a new answer to an existing question is published or, an older one is amended. This will help the reader to understand what is the most up to date information.