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Ronald de Bruin
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CONCERNS: Reduce impact of Covid-19 on Horizon 2020 projects and COST actions

DATE: 10 June 2020

Dear Mr Paquet

Dear Mr De Bruin

CESAER - the strong and united voice of universities of science and technology in Europe - commend the efforts from the European Commission towards tackling the novel coronavirus, reaffirming the [crucial role of European research and innovation](#) with prominent examples including the '[ERAvsCorona Action Plan](#)' and the #EUvsVirus initiative (where we are a [partner association](#)).

We further welcome your efforts to support ongoing Horizon 2020 projects in this unprecedented situation, including the guidance provided to ensure that '[maximum flexibility will be given in relation to the action implementation](#)'. While this is a good start, some concerns remain.

We fully support the [requests on Horizon 2020 projects and the impact of the Covid-19 crisis](#) which outlines the urgent need to:

1. Allow [cost extensions](#) in specific circumstances, and especially where no other alternatives exist; with particular support needed for the Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions;
2. Ensure broad [eligibility of staff cost claims](#) as impacted by Covid-19.

Complementing these points, we call on the European Commission to:

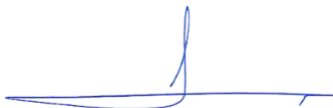
3. [Issue an unambiguous clarification on invoking *force majeure* \(Article 51\) of the \[model grant agreement\]\(#\)](#) in relation to the impact of the spread of Covid-19: "The party prevented by force majeure from fulfilling its obligations under the Agreement cannot be considered in breach of them". All running Horizon 2020 projects have to be able to invoke *force majeure* at the time of the final reporting. Projects must be able to be completed even if, due to Covid-19, not all deliverables have been achieved.

4. [Engage with the COST association](#) which have been somehow inflexible and unclear in regards to (i) reimbursing costs due to Covid-19 (e.g. related to the cancellation of tickets, flights, hotels etc.); (ii) changes in financial reporting during the current grant period due to Covid-19; and (iii) taking into account suspension of current activities in the current grant period (due to Covid-19), while drafting the next grant period.
5. [Continue to update the FAQ sections](#) on Covid-19 implications for Horizon 2020 projects, as these FAQs are much appreciated and useful.

We offer our continued and constructive partnership to ensure the consequences of the spread of Covid-19 in the calls and implementation of projects under Horizon 2020 can be dealt with and addressed adequately and in a timely fashion.

For more information and enquiries, please do not hesitate to contact our Advisor for Research and Innovation [Mattias Björnmalm](#).

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a long horizontal line with a small vertical stroke at the end, and a small loop above the line.

Rik Van de Walle
Rector of Ghent University
President of CESAER