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# Hot topic: The EU's response to the COVID-19 outbreak

## Council gives go-ahead to support from EU budget

On 18 March 2020, EU ambassadors agreed the Council's position on two legislative proposals which will free up funds to tackle the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak. Given the urgency of the situation, both proposals were approved without amendments.

The so-called Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative will make available €37 billion of Cohesion Funds to Member States to address the consequences of the crisis. About €8 billion of investment liquidity will be released from unspent pre-financing in 2019 for programmes under the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. The measure will also provide access to €29 billion of structural funding across the EU for 2020. Expenditure on crisis response will be available as of 1 February 2020.

The new measures will help SMEs to alleviate serious liquidity shortages as a result of the pandemic, as well as strengthen investment in products and services necessary to bolster the crisis response of health services. Member States will also have greater flexibility to transfer funds between programmes to help those most adversely affected.

EU ambassadors also endorsed without amendment a legislative proposal to extend the scope of the EU Solidarity Fund to cover public health emergencies. The fund was initially set up to help Member States and accession countries deal with the effects of natural disasters. Including public health emergencies will enable the Union to help meet people's immediate needs during the coronavirus pandemic. The aim is to complement efforts of the countries concerned.

### Next steps

The European Parliament will now need to agree its position on the new measures. Once there is an agreement, the Council is expected to adopt the measures by written procedure.

## Horizon 2020 calls to be extended

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 IMI2-2020-21-01 call, no extension of deadline/cut-off date will apply. The cut-off date for the EIC Accelerator part of call EIC-SMEInst-2018-2020 was extended by 48 hours, to Friday 20 March 2020 at 17:00:00 (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.

## Business continuity measures at the European Research Council

The ERC is taking steps to try to minimise the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on its operations, while ensuring the safety and wellbeing of its staff and collaborators.

Like other Commission Services and Agencies, the majority of ERC's staff are now working remotely and doing their best to ensure that they remain fully operational during this exceptional period.

Panel evaluations of proposals are currently being organised remotely. The ERC is confident that this will allow it to finalise the ongoing Step 1 evaluations of Starting Grants shortly, and is grateful to its panel members and applicants for their flexibility and understanding, and to its staff for working under very challenging circumstances prior and during such remote panel meetings. For the moment, the ERC does not anticipate any delays with upcoming evaluations or application deadlines.

The ERC's grant management activities are continuing as usual, although certain technical and/or IT access constraints might affect response timelines. The central services are doing their best to minimise the impact.

Many ERC-funded research projects are facing disruption and delays. So the ERC invites grantees and their host institutions to flag any problems to their usual counterparts in the ERC's scientific and granting departments. They will try to find solutions on a case-by-case basis, using the flexibility provided by the grant agreement. Please note responses from the ERC to such requests may take a bit longer than usual due to current circumstances, but they will get back to you as soon as they can.

The ERC is continuing to monitor the situation closely and will provide further information as necessary to grantees and applicants. Consult the ERC website and social media regularly for updates.

Sources:

- <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press-releases/2020/03/18/covid-19-council-gives-go-ahead-to-support-from-eu-budget/>
- <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/faq/12944?type=1;categories=;programme=null;actions=;keyword=covid>
- <https://erc.europa.eu/news/coronavirus-business-continuity-measures-erc>
- [https://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/news/coronavirus-impact\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/news/coronavirus-impact_en)

## Consequences for Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) projects and related activities

The European Commission understands that the current coronavirus containment measures taken at national level may have consequences on MSCA projects.

This may concern the regular mobility activities of MSCA fellows and other project staff as well as the participation of individuals in meetings and events organised by beneficiaries in the framework of MSCA projects.

To respond to these uncertainties, the Commission is applying maximum flexibility in the implementation of the programme, within the limits of the applicable legal framework.

The Research Executive Agency (REA) has informed all project coordinators about the possibility to invoke the *force majeure* clauses: REA will assess the circumstances on a case-by-case basis.

Project coordinators should liaise with their project officer as soon as possible to notify them of the situation and receive support.

The Commission is monitoring this situation very closely and will adopt any additional measure that may become necessary.



Minister Counsellor, Head of the Trade section in the Delegation of the European Union in the Republic of Korea since August 2019

## Interview with Mr Christophe Besse, Minister Counsellor, Head of the Trade section in the Delegation of the European Union in Korea

**EURAXESS Korea: The whole world is facing challenges caused by the rapid spread of coronavirus. As much as it is difficult to predict, do you think that this pandemic will have a significant impact on EU-Korea science, technology, research, and innovation cooperation?**

Christophe Besse (CB): Infectious diseases such as COVID-19 infection do not have borders, and international collaboration is essential to fight them. Since the outbreak, the Korean government has set up a public health response task-force comprising clinical and research scientists and experts in infectious disease, epidemiology and virology, including Institute Pasteur Korea's (IPK) scientists Dr Seungtaek Kim and Dr Wangshick Ryu.

The IPK is a member of the Institut Pasteur International Network (IPIN), a 130-year-old global network renowned for infectious disease research. The Network consists of 32 institutes in 25 countries, including nine institutes in the Asia-Pacific region. The IPK's over ten years' experience of drug screening in the BSL-3 laboratory is a unique asset for IPIN, to reinforce its expertise in basic research and the clinical field. Leveraging the platform and the IPIN, IPK helps domestic and international efforts to find

treatments. Specifically, IPK is at the heart of the search for antiviral chemotherapeutics and/or chemoprophylaxis against infectious diseases including, but not limited to SARS, MERS and COVID-19.

In the context of the Korean COVID-19 task-force, IPK is instrumental to the Ministry of Science and ICT's (MSIT) research and development strategy aiming to discover therapeutics to fight the disease. It is fully mobilised in the fight against COVID-19. At this moment, IPK and the Korea Research Institute of Chemical Technology (KRICT) are working together for accelerated drug screening, with first results expected end of April, which would be a very crucial step towards developing a cure or a vaccine.

Overall, this joint vaccine development experience during such a critical pandemic crisis will further promote EU-Korean science, technology, research, and innovation cooperation.

**EURAXESS Korea: What is the current status of the science, technology, research and innovation cooperation between EU and Korea. What are the main fields of cooperation? What are the most prosperous trends?**

CB: The Agreement on the Scientific and Technological Cooperation between the EU and South Korea has been in force since 2007. In addition, the Agreement for Cooperation between Euratom and South Korea in the field of fusion energy research has been in force since 2006. South Korea is also party to the ITER International Fusion Energy Organisation (in force since 2007) and is a signatory to the Generation IV International Forum (GIF) Charter.

The 6<sup>th</sup> EU-South Korea Joint Science & Technology Cooperation Committee (JSTCC) meeting took place in Brussels in 2017, which was further testimony of the breadth and dynamism of the partnership that continues to develop very rapidly and favourably. The successful cooperation on political, economic, security as well as science and technology affairs reflects the EU and South Korea's increasing international engagement, and shows that they face similar challenges and share many of the same values and concerns. To provide solutions to these challenges, the EU and South Korea are designing comparable policies, instruments and actions. In particular, they are joining forces in a range of strategic focus areas of mutual benefit, and they are improving the framework conditions for their scientists and innovators to work together.

Both the EU and South Korea emphasise the need to deepen, scale up and open opportunities for cooperation in selected thematic areas:

- In the ICT area, the first joint call launched under the 2016-17 Work Programme of Horizon 2020 addressed 5G communication networks, Internet of Things (IoT) and the brokerage of mobile cloud services. The second ICT joint call launched under the Horizon 2020 WP 2018-20 addressed 5G technological validation in application contexts, and the interoperability and integration of

5G vertical testbeds in heterogeneous environments, combining Cloud, IoT and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. Projects were launched in July 2018 and will continue until 2021.

- In the non-nuclear energy area, EU and Korean researchers are engaged in twinning activities in the area of technologies and processes for post- and/or pre-combustion CO<sub>2</sub> capture, following calls in 2016-17. EU-Korea cooperation also takes place on the acceleration of clean energy innovation through the Mission Innovation initiative.
- In the areas of nanotechnology, since 2015, both sides have cooperated through Nanoreg, the initiative for regulatory testing of nanomaterials, and strong cooperation also takes place in advanced nanoelectronic technologies developments.
- In the area of health and bio-medical challenges, cooperation continues in the context of the GloPID-R initiative, the Global Research Collaboration for Infectious Disease Preparedness. The EU and South Korea is also participating in the International Rare Diseases Research Consortium, IRDiRC, the International Human Epigenome Consortium, IHEC, and the Joint Programming Initiative on Antimicrobial Resistance, JPIAMR.
- In the area of satellite navigation, the EC-Korea Satellite Navigation Cooperation Agreement, which entered into force on 1 July 2016 promotes joint research activities and, so far, two projects have been launched under Horizon 2020.



EURAXESS –  
Researchers in Motion  
is an initiative of the European  
Research Area (ERA) that  
addresses barriers to the  
mobility of researchers and  
seeks to enhance their career  
development.

This pan-European effort is  
currently supported by over 40  
countries, of which we will  
profile one in each of our  
quarterly EURAXESS Korea  
newsletters. In this edition, we  
will zoom in on Norway



## EURAXESS members in focus: Norway

Following a remarkable transformation in the past century in research and innovation, in particular through the development of new technologies and processes in sectors such as oil and gas, shipbuilding and also fisheries and aquaculture, Norway today occupies a strong position internationally in terms of new technology, skills and knowledge.

Norway is among the OECD countries with the highest share of government-financed gross domestic expenditure on research and development. The country can offer unique competence and research opportunities, largely related to its geography, economic specialisation patterns and institutional characteristics. It has internationally leading competence in a number of areas, both in universities, in the research institutes and in industry. There is a strong focus on international cooperation.

### Policies and strategies in science, technology and innovation

Norway's government has high ambitions for the Norwegian knowledge society and has committed itself to investing heavily in the quality of research and higher education. In its long-term plan for research and higher education, the Ministry of Education and Research has underlined the importance of strengthening competitiveness and innovation capacity, solving major challenges to society, and developing high-quality research groups in the years to come.

There is a special focus on areas where Norway enjoys strategic advantages, such as natural resources, strong industry clusters and top-notch expert communities. The long-term plan for research and higher education therefore identifies six specific R&D priority areas:

- The oceans
- Climate change, the environment and environment-friendly energy
- Public sector renewal and higher quality, more efficient welfare, health and care services
- Enabling technologies
- An innovative, adaptable private sector
- World-class research groups

As a major energy producing nation, Norway has key competences in developing knowledge and technology for efficient and sustainable energy systems. With strong traditions within marine and maritime and energy research, Norway is among the world's leading nations in petroleum and hydropower competence. There is key expertise in oil-related fields of science and technology, such as seismography, fluid flow dynamics, and fixed and floating offshore structures.



GDP: €368,389 million  
(Eurostat 2018)

GDP per Capita: 69,300  
euros (Eurostat 2018)

Areas of marked S&T  
specialisations: Arctic  
research, climate change,  
public health, marine and  
maritime activities, petroleum  
technology, and renewable  
energy

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All based on:  
[https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/japan/68361/new-publication-2019-science-technology-and-innovation-europe\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/japan/68361/new-publication-2019-science-technology-and-innovation-europe_en)

Although petroleum is important to the Norwegian economy, the Government has a very strong focus on research on renewable energy and environment-related technologies. Since 2008, expenditure on the research, development and demonstration of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency have increased significantly. Norway has vigorous internationally recognised research communities working on the climate system, climate trends and the impacts of climate change on ecosystems.

In addition, Norway has a leading position in technological climate-related research, especially on carbon capture and storage. Norway also has high-quality research groups working in fields such as environmentally hazardous substances and biodiversity. The Norwegian government has a strong commitment to industry-oriented research and strives for Norway to be one of the most innovative countries in Europe. Norway has established strategic, large-scale research programmes in emerging technology areas such as ICT, biotechnology and genomics, material science and nanotechnology. Today, the IT sector is one of the most knowledge- and education-intensive branches in Norway, managing to innovate in a highly competitive environment.

In terms of important actors, the Ministry of Education and Research is the main policymaking body responsible for research and innovation in Norway. At the operational level, the Research Council of Norway (RCN) serves as the key advisory body on research policy issues to the Government. The Research Council identifies strategic research areas, allocates research funds and evaluates research within all fields and disciplines. It acts as a meeting place and network builder for Norwegian research and works actively to encourage international research cooperation.

#### List of national programmes open to the world

Programme title	Contents
Research Council of Norway Programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most RCN programmes are open to, and indeed encourage, international partners in funded projects.</li> <li>• There are programmes in a great variety of thematic areas, including Advanced production processes, Biotechnology, Bioeconomy, Energy, Global development, Seas and oceans, Health, ICT, Public sector renewal and innovation, Climate, Culture, Food, The environment, Environmental technology, New materials/nanotechnology, Industry-oriented research, Transport and mobility, Education, Welfare and working life. More information can be found on the <a href="#">Research Council's website</a></li> </ul>



### Joint activities with Korea

Programme title	Contents
MoU RCN - NRF	The Research Council of Norway and the National Research Foundation of Korea have signed an MoU and are exploring opportunities for cooperation.
Joint activities and agreements between universities and institutes	Numerous Norwegian universities and research institutes have signed collaboration agreements and are carrying out many joint activities with Korean institutions.

See the whole country profile:

[https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/japan/68361/new-publication-2019-science-technology-and-innovation-europe\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/japan/68361/new-publication-2019-science-technology-and-innovation-europe_en)



# Last opportunity to carry out your two-year research project in Europe or in Korea with a Horizon 2020 MSCA Individual Fellowship (IF)

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA) provide grants for **all stages of researchers' careers** – be they doctoral candidates or highly experienced researchers – and encourage **transnational, intersectoral and interdisciplinary mobility**. The MSCA enable research-focused organisations (universities, research centres, and companies) to host talented foreign researchers and to create strategic partnerships with leading institutions worldwide.

The MSCA aim to equip researchers with the necessary skills and international experience for a successful career, either in the public or the private sector. The programme offers attractive working conditions and the opportunity to move between academic and other settings.

The MSCA are open to **all domains of research and innovation**, from fundamental research to market take-up and innovation services. Research and innovation fields are chosen freely by the applicants.

There are four types of MSCA. The one targeting individual researchers with a PhD or four years of research experience (called experienced researchers within the MSCA programme) is named **Individual Fellowships (IF)**. The call is expected to open on **8 April 2020**, with a deadline on **9 September 2020**.

## Individual Fellowships (IF)

*Support for experienced researchers undertaking mobility between countries, optionally to the non-academic sector.*

Individual Fellowships support the mobility of researchers **within and beyond Europe** – as well as helping to attract the best foreign researchers to work in the EU. The grant usually covers two years' salary, a mobility allowance, research costs and overheads for the host institution. Individual researchers submit proposals for funding in liaison with their planned host organisation.

Proposals are judged on their research quality, the researcher's future career prospects, and the support offered by the host organisation. Fellows can also spend part of the fellowship elsewhere in Europe if this would boost impact, and those restarting their career in Europe benefit from special eligibility conditions.

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) contribute to excellent research, boosting jobs, growth and investment by equipping researchers with the new knowledge, skills and international and intersectoral exposure to fill the top positions of tomorrow and solve current and future societal challenges.

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowships (IF) call 2020 will be the last such call under Horizon 2020, as the new EU framework programme for research and innovation, entitled Horizon Europe, will start in 2021.

### IF in a nutshell:

- All research areas
- All nationalities
- Open to PhD holders or four years of research experience

Two types of fellowships: from Korea to Europe or from Europe to Korea



European Fellowship
Korea -> Europe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For post-doctoral research stays (one to two years) in an <a href="#">EU Member State or an Associated Country</a></li> <li>• Can help to restart research careers after a break such as parental leave</li> <li>• Can also help reintegrate researchers coming back to Europe</li> <li>• Mainly provides an opportunity for <b>international researchers</b> to undertake a research and training project in <b>Europe</b></li> </ul>

Global Fellowship
Europe -> Korea
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For post-doctoral research stays (one to two years) outside Europe for researchers based in an <a href="#">EU Member State or an Associated Country</a></li> <li>• There is a mandatory one year return period to Europe</li> <li>• Provides an opportunity to <b>international (Korean) institutions</b> (universities, institutes and companies) to host <b>Europe-based researchers</b> in their laboratories</li> <li>• No costs for the international (Korean) host institution</li> </ul>

### European Fellowship (EF)

\* [You can read the guide for applicants 2019](#) until the [guide 2020](#) is released at the call opening

\*\* Looking for a host institution for your MSCA-IF? [Find a host organisation in Europe here](#)

If you are a Korean or international researcher interested in a research stay in Europe with an MSCA-IF European Fellowship, we suggest you:

- Get familiarised with the call
- Read the guide for applicants\*
- Look for a host institution\*\*

Ready? Find how to submit your application in the step-by-step guide that will be published in the next issue of the EURAXESS Korea Quarterly Newsletter!

If you are already **based in Europe**, you can also apply to a European Fellowship for mobility within the [EU or Associated Countries](#).



If you are based in Europe and are interested in a research stay in Korea, or if you are a Korean institution interested in hosting a Europe-based researcher, you'll find more details about the Global Fellowships below.

### Global Fellowship (GF): Bringing Europe-based researchers to Korea

Explore this excellent opportunity to bring researchers based in Europe to carry out a postdoc of up to two years in Korean laboratories, fully funded by the European Commission.

In the case of Global Fellowships, European researchers submit an application in partnership with a European institution. Thus, the institution in Korea will be considered as a 'partner organisation'.

**I want to host a researcher with an MSCA-IF Global Fellowship at my institution in Korea. How do I find a fellow?**

- Post your hosting offers on the EURAXESS portal ([follow this step-by-step guide](#)).
- Do inform your research network and colleagues based in Europe of your institution's hosting offer.

## We invite all researchers currently working outside Europe to take the [MORE4 Global Survey](#)



The European Commission has launched the fourth

international study to improve the knowledge of mobility patterns, working conditions and career paths of researchers. The European Commission has commissioned PPMI (Lithuania), in consortium with IDEA Consult (Belgium) and WIFO (Austria), to carry out this study which is known as MORE4 (<http://www.more-4.eu>).

This study involves two large surveys. The first one focuses on researchers currently working in one of the higher education institutes in the EU. The second survey will take a global perspective and focuses on **EU and non-EU researchers currently working outside the EU**.

If you are a researcher working in a non-European country, we invite you to complete the survey, which can be accessed through the following link:

[CLICK HERE TO TAKE THE SURVEY](#)

Together, these two surveys will provide a comprehensive picture of researcher mobility and satisfaction worldwide.

*Your input is very valuable to us. Please note that only aggregate data collected through this survey will be used for purposes of this study. Any personal data and individual answers will be treated as strictly confidential and processed anonymously. For more details please see the [Specific Privacy Statement](#).*

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