

Presidency Summary of the Informal Videoconference of Research Ministers

Brussels, 29 May 2020

Introduction

As the immediate response to the COVID-19 crisis remains focused around areas of vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics, the European Union and its Member States are now challenged by the subsequent impact this crisis has on its societies and economies.

On May 29, the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the EU organised an informal meeting of research ministers to discuss the role that R&I should play in strengthening the resilience of our societies and economies following the COVID-19 pandemic, with a special focus on the role of R&I in the development of future jobs.

Main messages

Ministers re-acknowledged the importance of the work done by the research community so far, along with the swift reaction from the Member States and the European Commission in the last months. In this regard, the important work done based on the ERAvsCorona Action Plan was noted. Ministers called for timely, coordinated and effective actions, while respecting existing procedures. Many Ministers spoke about the need to empower technological sovereignty of the Union, thus ensuring strategic autonomy in critical supply chains. Other lessons learned from this period include, *inter alia*, the necessity to enhance mechanisms for coordinating national actions and to adapt procedures for an efficient Union response to possible future crises. The importance of uniting our forces, learning from each other and using the full potential of all Member States was especially stressed around the table.

Ministers stressed R&I should lie at the very heart of the recovery of Europe, supporting a system-wide resilience of the Union and all its Member States. R&I are crucial in the development of future jobs, they are key drivers of the economic recovery and enablers of green transition and digital transformation, which should contribute to the overall well-being and resilience of humanity. In this regard, Ministers emphasised the need to increase R&I investments at all levels during the recovery period, as well as strengthen partnership with industry. They called for flexibility in the Framework Programme and inclusive approach in its implementation. Removing barriers for effective synergies between EU programmes and funds remains crucial.



Croatian Presidency of the
Council of the European Union

Finally, Ministers called for a revision of the European Research Area (ERA) on the basis of the experience and lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis. We need an ERA which is more agile, flexible, addresses the R&I needs, encourages data and knowledge sharing, provides for better career prospects for researchers throughout Europe and reinforces the links with the European Education Area. They also stressed the need to strengthen the institutional setting of the ERA, including its governance structure, enhance political ownership and continuous commitment at EU, national and regional levels. The future of the ERA will be discussed more in-depth in the coming months.