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ASIA EDITION

EU grants USD127M for COVID-19 treatment, diagnosis innovations

May 14, 2020 | News

8 large-scale research projects, aimed at developing treatments and diagnostics for the coronavirus shortlisted by Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI) will benefit the fund



European Union Commission announced on 12 May 2020 that 8 large-scale research projects, aimed at developing treatments and diagnostics for the coronavirus, were selected in a fast-track call for proposals, launched in March by the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI), a public-private partnership.

The Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI) is a public-private partnership between the European Commission and the pharmaceutical industry represented by the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA). Its aim is to improve health by speeding up the development of, and patient access to, innovative medicines, particularly in areas where there is an unmet medical or social need.

In order to fund a larger number of high-quality proposals, the Commission increased its commitment to USD78 million (up from the originally planned USD49 million) from Horizon 2020, the EU's research and innovation programme. USD49 million will be provided by the pharmaceutical industry, IMI associated partners and other organisations involved with the projects, bringing the total investment to USD127 million.

Mariya Gabriel, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, said: “We need to bring together the expertise and resources of the public and the private sector in order to defeat this pandemic and prepare for any future outbreaks. With this funding from Horizon 2020 and our industry and other partners, we are speeding up the development of coronavirus diagnostics and treatments, essential tools that we need to tackle the global emergency.”

The projects selected today are part of the common European response to the coronavirus outbreak that the Commission is coordinating since the beginning of the crisis. On 4 May, the Commissionpledged USD2.1 billion in total during the Coronavirus Global Response pledging event, of which USD1.1 billion comes through Horizon 2020 and is aimed at developing vaccines, new treatments and diagnostic tools to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Moreover, since January 2020 the Commission has mobilised a total of USD541 million under Horizon 2020. This includes, among others, USD52 million awarded to 18 research projects that have started working on preparedness and response to outbreaks, rapid

point-of-care diagnostic tests, new treatments and new vaccines.

Out of the 8 projects funded under the IMI call, 5 are focusing on diagnostics and 3 on treatments. The ones that will be working on diagnostic tools intend to develop devices that can be used anywhere, such as in the doctor's surgery or in a patient's own home and can deliver fast results in 14-40 minutes. The other projects, which will focus on the development of treatments, will primarily work on the current coronavirus outbreak, while they will make substantial efforts to prepare for future outbreaks.

In total, these projects comprise 94 organisations, such as universities, research organisations, companies, and public organisations. There is also strong involvement of small and medium businesses (SMEs), which makeup over 20% of the participants and will receive 17% of the budget.

The list of projects that have been selected for funding, pending successful finalisation of the Grant Agreements with IMI, is available on EU commission website.