

Commissioner's monthly update

August 2020

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Mariya Gabriel, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth

Good morning

These past months have been testing for all of us, both professionally and personally. But summer is now upon us and many of us are looking forward to taking well deserved holidays. The past month was rich in activities, some highlights of which I would like to share with you in this August edition of my monthly update.

I am happy that July saw the launch of [the DigComp at work report and its implementation guidelines](#). Social distancing has transformed the way we connect, research and innovate at work, and we need to support people with the right digital skills to continue doing this. Our own experts at the Joint Research Centre defined practical steps, key actions, tips and online resources to help educators, employers and recruiters ensure Europeans are equipped with the digital skills to thrive in the post-coronavirus world of work.

The digital space has been central in our lives these past months, with work, education and connecting with family and friends all happening online. This can also make us vulnerable to cyber threats. [The JRC report 'Cybersecurity: our digital anchor'](#) presents a new, systemic approach to protect us from these threats – one in which education and digital skills are central and we should all be involved.

These activities are designed to support managing the digital transition, which is at the heart of [the European Skills Agenda](#) the Commission presented on 1st July. In this context, the Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ programmes, [research, innovation and education](#) go hand in hand in developing Europe's skill base, enabling students, researchers and employees to make the most of their potential, new technologies and work practices. They support the lifelong learning approach and generate the advanced knowledge and skills Europeans need to adapt to the fast-changing labour market and address our big societal challenges. I'm proud to say our teams played an important part in bringing about this important initiative.

In July, I also took part in targeted consultations with stakeholders to gather their views on the vision and priorities for the upcoming Communication on how to make the European Education Area a reality by 2025, which should be released in September.

The new Digital Education Action Plan should also be published in September. It will promote high quality and inclusive education and training in the digital age. To increase awareness about this consultation, but especially to engage directly with citizens and experts, I participated in two important events: [a live chat](#) on the DEAP, and a videoconference with the Committee of the Regions.

I am also proud to announce the [24 new European University alliances](#) that have been selected last month. Each alliance receives up to €5 million for three years

from the Erasmus+ programme and will also have the opportunity to apply for up to €2 million from the Horizon 2020 programme. On 22 July, the first seventeen alliances were already awarded with this [Horizon 2020 top-up](#).

On 29 June, I welcomed the European Commission's independent Group of Chief Scientific Advisors ([SAM](#)) [opinion](#) 'Adaptation to climate change-related health effects', containing advice and recommendations on how the EU can help improve the preparedness and resilience of our societies, in particular our health sector, with regard to the health impacts of climate change.

Replacing fossil fuels, in particular in hard-to-decarbonise sectors, is central for green recovery. On 8 July, I welcomed the [EU Hydrogen Strategy](#). It will help reducing greenhouse gas emissions ahead of 2030 and I am confident about [the role R&I will play](#) in this challenge.

On 21-22 July, I was happy to participate in the informal meeting of research ministers organised by the German Presidency of the Council of EU to address R&I contribution to social, economic and ecological transformation and define together a roadmap on research and education policy.

In this area like in many others, the importance of cooperating closely across the EU and beyond, supporting open science and the principles of open access has never been more evident. Promoting international cooperation in research is also vital.

The [Intellectual Property Manifesto](#) prepares the ground for products and solutions resulting from EU research grants, to be scaled up, available and affordable for all.

On 1 July, the High-Level Group of Personalities gathered to discuss urgently reinforcing partnerships to emerge stronger from today's pandemic and climate emergency crises. At this occasion, I recalled our ongoing High-Level Policy Dialogue on Science, Technology and Innovation with Africa. Reinforcing our cooperation with African countries is critical if we are to address today's and tomorrow's challenges. We need to find innovative solutions and strengthen the education system, while connecting and nurturing the talents of the African continent. In this respect, I suggested the organisation of a joint Hackathon on the EU-Africa Climate Alliance involving the over 200 African Innovation Hubs, and took part in the first ever EU-AU research and innovation ministers' meeting. The latter took place on 16 July, to discuss our common activities addressing the human health impacts and far reaching socio-economic effects of COVID-19 for Europe and Africa. By strengthening our R&I cooperation we provide concrete benefits for our people and societies.

The Health Innovation Exchange (HIEx) platform was established by UNAIDS in 2019 to bridge the gap between innovators, implementers and investors to support countries' progress towards the SDGs. It was a pleasure for me to open the high-level session on 'Transforming healthcare through innovations' of the UNAIDS Health Innovation Exchange annual event on 2 July. Health features prominently in the priorities of the European Commission and innovation will be key to address the needs for public health, improve health care services and increase the sustainability and resilience of health systems, healthcare professionals and regulators. I believe transforming healthcare through innovation is a process that requires commitment from all of us. It requires engagement involving small and big actors, embracing societal changes and the political will to do it.

On 10 July, I participated in the Science, Technology and Innovation session of the UN High Level Political Forum. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is more urgent than ever to strengthen international STI cooperation to help address the crisis, mitigate its longer-term impacts, and boost resilience for future challenges. I would like to highlight the JRC's engagement with the UN Multi-stakeholder Forum on STI for the SDGs, in particular through the contribution to the development of UN Guidebook on STI Roadmaps for SDGs, building upon the EU's Smart Specialisation methodology.

I also welcomed the European Innovation Council advisory board's [practical roadmap](#) to maximise the organisation's impact in its endeavour to catapult Europe's game-changing start-ups, SMEs and researchers onto a global stage. The EIC is a key partner in our efforts towards economic recovery is the

European Innovation Council. This is why the Commission's recovery package proposed to increase its budget beyond €10 billion as part of Horizon Europe.

I'm also pleased that [Professor Jean-Pierre Bourguignon has accepted the position as ERC President ad interim](#). He has the experience and the trust of the scientific community and I have full confidence that he will provide the leadership necessary to ensure a proper functioning of the European Research Council during the final stages of Horizon 2020 and at a crucial moment of preparations for Horizon Europe.

On a very practical level of promoting evidence-based policymaking, I am quite enthusiastic about [the Science for Policy Handbook](#) that the JRC just published to help researchers and research organisations add greater value and achieve better impact in policymaking. Scientists and policymakers alike embrace new types of knowledge and practices, yet science and policy remain very different worlds. The Science for Policy Handbook is a precious bridge-building resource, and an entertaining read as well!

With best wishes for the month ahead,

Mariya Gabriel

My portfolio updates

European Innovation Council advisory board – a vision and roadmap for impact

On 30 June, the European Innovation Council (EIC) Advisory Board launched the report '[A vision and roadmap for impact](#)' to pave the way for the fully-fledged EIC in [Horizon Europe](#). The EIC will play a leading role in establishing Europe as the place where the industries of the future will be established and flourish, creating wealth through socially responsible enterprise, and generating opportunities for our talented and enthusiastic youth to stay and build their futures in Europe.



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EU and African Union research and innovation ministers meet for the first time

On 16 July, Commissioner Gabriel and Sarah Agbor, the African Union (AU) Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology, hosted the first ever EU-AU research and innovation ministers' meeting. The discussion, taking place by videoconference, focused on [common research and innovation activities](#) addressing the human health impacts and the more far-reaching socio-economic effects of COVID-19 for Europe and Africa. Four areas of cooperation were covered: public health; green transition; innovation and technology; capacities for science.



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€75 million to CureVac for vaccine development and expansion of manufacturing

On 6 July, the European Investment Bank and CureVac, a company developing innovative medicines, entered into a €75 million loan agreement to support the company's ongoing development of vaccines against infectious diseases, including its vaccine candidate aimed at preventing coronavirus infections. The loan will also support CureVac's efforts to expand its manufacturing capabilities. It is financed under the [Infectious Diseases Finance Facility](#) (IDFF) of Horizon 2020, the EU research and innovation programme.



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How to put cybersecurity at the centre of society: JRC report connects the dots

A landmark report, 'Cybersecurity: our digital anchor', connects the dots to analyse cybersecurity as a societal challenge for Europe. It brings together knowledge from across technological, economic and social disciplines and argues for a coherent, cross-sectoral and cross-societal cybersecurity strategy.



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Mobility data explains COVID-19 spread

New studies published by the JRC show that mobility data can explain the spread of COVID-19 across the EU and inform early warning systems for potential new outbreaks.



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EU Prize for Women Innovators 2020: 21 entrepreneurs through to the final

On 10 July, twenty-one of the most talented and inspiring women entrepreneurs working in Europe have been shortlisted for the [EU Prize for Women Innovators 2020](#). The EU's Horizon 2020 funded prize celebrates the outstanding achievements of female entrepreneurs running innovative companies. This year's finalists are pioneering game-changing innovations across a wide range of industries and help combat global challenges. Their innovations going from the optimisation of cancer treatments to generating clean electricity from ocean and sea waves.



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The sex and gender impact of the coronavirus pandemic

Several actions are underway to address the sex and gender aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic, including [a case study](#) developed by [the European Commission's 'Gendered Innovations' Expert Group](#), on "The sex and gender impact of the COVID-19 pandemic" and on Horizon 2020 projects tackling key issues. [A factsheet based on this case study](#), and presenting recent actions undertaken by the Commission and other EU-level actors, has also been

produced.



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New ERC interim President

The European Commission has appointed Professor Jean-Pierre Bourguignon as interim President of the European Research Council (ERC), the EU's funding body for investigator-driven frontier research. The mandate as ERC President ad interim will start on 27 July 2020. The new ERC President is expected to take office in 2021. The Commission has also renewed the mandates of two members of the ERC Scientific Council until the end of 2020: Professors Kurt Mehlhorn and Nektarios Tavernarakis.



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Publication of Report on the implementation and relevance of the EU Work Plan for Sport 2017-2020

[This report](#) has two main aims: first, to provide an assessment on the implementation and the broader policy impact of the EU Work Plan for Sport during the first half of 2020, and second, to put forward recommendations for future actions in the field of sport. In particular, it will serve as a basis for the preparation of a possible fourth EU Work Plan for Sport during the second half of 2020.



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Reaching out to Members of the European Parliament and stakeholders from the higher education and youth sector

My objective is to build a European Education Area that gives everyone a chance to succeed, that promotes creativity and entrepreneurship, steps up investment in education and training, and ensures balanced brain circulation in the EU.



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'Europe's Culture close to you' competition launched

In mid-June we launched a social media campaign 'Europe's culture – close to you' #EuropeForCulture, to motivate Europeans to discover the beauty and richness of places close to their homes. To complement the campaign, we also launched [an online social media competition](#) inviting Europeans to submit a photo and short text about their cultural experience this summer. The overall aim of this competition is to raise awareness of and create engagement around culture and heritage in the EU, with a special focus on local offers.



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10 Tips for Researchers: How to achieve impact on policy

The JRC's Science for Policy Handbook provides advice on how to bring science to the attention of policy makers. The handbook is dedicated to researchers and research organisations aiming to achieve policy impact.



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Participation in webinar “What is the EU looking to do in the future regarding sports and disabilities?”

On 14 July, I took part in [a webinar dedicated to Sport and Disabilities](#) organised by the European Paralympic Committee (EPC). Now that Europe is emerging from the lockdown, our joint challenge is to ensure that the new momentum for sport that grew over the past months is maintained.



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Commission launches a Manifesto to maximise research results accessibility in the fight against coronavirus

The Commission has launched a Manifesto to maximise the accessibility of research results in the fight against Covid-19. The Manifesto provides guiding principles for beneficiaries of EU research grants for coronavirus prevention, testing, treatment and vaccination to ensure that their research results will be accessible for all and guarantee a return on public investment.



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Coronavirus: easier access to finance for business in the Cultural and Creative sectors

On 29 July, the Commission and the European Investment Fund (EIF) launched new support measures for cultural and creative businesses to access finance more easily. The goal is to alleviate the economic constraints caused by the coronavirus crisis. The new measures will be available from August 2020 and apply retroactively to loans due from 1 April 2020. This will be done under the existing €251 million [Cultural and Creative Sectors Guarantee Facility](#) via [a new call](#). The revision of this financial tool will enhance further access to finance for SMEs and Small Public Enterprises in the sector by incentivising financial intermediaries to provide more flexible terms and conditions on loans.



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Calls and collaborations

First 'Green Deal' European Innovation Council Call – The results are out!

On 20 July, the European Innovation Council awarded over €307 million to 64 game-changing 'green deal' start-ups and SMEs contributing to the objectives of the European Green Deal Strategy and the Recovery Plan for Europe. Winning proposals range from innovative solutions for the automotive, aerospace and maritime sectors to advanced materials or Internet of Things technologies.



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2020 call for Erasmus accreditations in the field of youth

The [2020 call for Erasmus accreditations in the field of youth](#) was published on July 10. The call is a key step for implementation of the future 2021-2027 Erasmus programme in the field of youth. Erasmus accreditations are a tool for organisations that want to open up to cross-border exchange and cooperation, and plan to implement youth learning mobility activities on a regular basis. Accredited Erasmus organisations will gain simplified access to funding opportunities under Key Action 1 of the future Programme.



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DiscoverEU travel period extended to summer 2021 - travel to resume 1 August

The 20,000 DiscoverEU travellers from the November 2019 round now have [the possibility to book their travel](#). Their travel period has been extended until 31 August 2021. I invite them to join [the #DiscoverEU Facebook group](#) and take part in a photo and video competition on European culture launched on [the European Youth Portal](#) on 1 July.



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EU Youth Strategy platform to host live webinars to share experiences on Covid-19 impact

The pandemic has badly affected young people's social and professional prospects and the capacity of youth work to support them. In order to share experiences on how to tackle these issues, we are holding [a series of live on-line sessions](#) with the EU Youth Strategy Stakeholders Platform community, which gathers close to 300 people in permanent exchanges: representatives from NGOs, public authorities, national agencies in charge of implementing the EU youth programmes, youth researchers, etc. Two meetings have already taken place with evidence presented by organisations such as Eurofound, OECD, European Youth Forum or the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership. More will follow in the autumn, to keep gathering feedback and testimonies and feed into the policy-making processes.



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European Solidarity call

[A call is now open](#) for European Solidarity Corps Volunteering Teams in high priority areas. These projects involve young people from different countries to implement short-term high-impact actions addressing climate challenges, social divide and mental health and well-being. Organisations can apply for this Call until 17 September 2020 12:00 CEST.



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European Universities – results of the second call

In July we unveiled [24 additional alliances of higher education institutions](#) from all over Europe that will join the first 17 European Universities selected already in 2019. With financial support from the Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 programmes, they will enhance the quality, inclusion, digitalisation and attractiveness of European higher education. I am very pleased to see the diverse range of higher education institutions from all Member States and beyond [involved in the 41 European Universities](#). These European Universities are a key building block for the European Education Area.



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Music Moves Europe: launch of call to support music industry post-Covid-19 crisis

With a budget of €2.5 million EUR, the Commission has launched the call for proposals: [Music Moves Europe – “Innovative support scheme for a sustainable music ecosystem”](#) to support the recovery and post-Covid-19-crisis development of the European music ecosystem, so it becomes more sustainable. The goal of this call also contributes to the EU’s plans for a green, digital, just and resilient recovery. We need to help the music sector adjust to the post-crisis reality, to recover in a more sustainable way and ultimately become more resilient. I want Europe’s music sector to flourish in all its diversity and to remain competitive in the global context.



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Pilot Project - Measuring the Cultural and Creative Sectors in the EU

Europe's cultural and creative sectors are strong and vibrant, but data is lacking to properly estimate their economic impact. Therefore, I launched [a call for a pilot project](#) to fill that gap and allow us to help the industry reach its full potential.



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Results of the SWAFS-32 call for European Universities

On 22 July, the Commission announced the results of the SWAFS-32 call for European Universities. Seventeen alliances of universities selected under the Erasmus+ programme will each receive a complementary EUR 2 million support from Horizon 2020, complementing the up to EUR 5 million from the Erasmus+ programme. European Universities are transnational alliances of higher education institutions from across the EU that come together for the benefit of students, teachers, researchers, and society. The purpose of the Horizon 2020 complementary support is to further contribute to the research and innovation dimension of the 'European Universities', in line with their shared, integrated, long-term joint strategy and in synergy with their education dimension.



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Upcoming calls and events

Horizon 2020 – The European Green Deal Call

The Green Deal call will mobilise research and innovation to foster a just and sustainable societal transition aiming at 'leaving nobody behind'.

Projects are expected to deliver tangible and visible results relatively quickly and show how research and innovation can provide concrete solutions for the Green Deal main priorities. The call will be published in mid-September and there will be also an opportunity to find potential project partners at [the EU Research & Innovation Days](#).



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Research & Innovation Days 2020

Save the date for a fully online version of [the European Research and Innovation Days](#) on **22, 23 and 24 September 2020**.

All sessions and actions showcasing Europe's best and brightest research, science and innovation will be reimaged as an online happening featuring a high-level **Policy Conference** and interactive **Science is Wonderful!** public exhibition. The **European Research and Innovation Days** brings together policymakers, researchers, entrepreneurs and citizens to debate and shape the future of research and innovation in Europe and beyond.

For now, all you need to do is **save the date**, check the [draft programme](#) and follow all the developments around the event on Twitter [@EUScienceInnov](#). Feel free to share your thoughts about how you want to shape future research and innovation policy by using the hashtag #RiDaysEU.



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Science is Wonderful!

Part of the [European Research and Innovation Days](#) the [Science is Wonderful!](#) Exhibition takes place online from 22-24 September. Through an array of digital activities, researchers will interact with children, students and citizens, explaining what a researcher's role is in a post-crisis context and highlighting how research impacts citizens' daily lives.

Follow all the developments around the event on Facebook and Twitter [@MSCActions](#) and [@EUScienceInnov](#). Feel free to share your thoughts with the hashtags [#SciencelsWonderful](#) [#RiDaysEU](#).



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European Day of Languages

European Day of Languages is on 26 September. [Follow the Commissioner's official twitter account](#) for updates on the day's activities, including an online conference planned for 28 September.

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