

Research and Innovation in the Black Sea: Empowering the next generation for a healthy, resilient and productive Black Sea



CONNECT  BLACK SEA

The impact of Covid-19
pandemic on the national
R&I priorities towards a
healthy and resilient Black
Sea

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-  A clear message from the government of Bulgaria towards more innovations in the digitalisation and the green transformation.
-  Circular economy in the focus bridging to the blue growth challenges.
-  At the latest Conference of the EU ministers of research, Bulgaria clearly defined its anti-Covid related reaction and demonstrated readiness to design measures under the new recovery instrument – the Next Generation EU.
-  Pan-European hackathon with a Bulgarian-led team in one of the categories
 -  The followed matchaton with a Bulgarian representative in the core group putting the blue growth and the circular economy in the front end of commercializing the research ideas generated



-  A policy response in coordination with European Commission's proposal for a recovery plan and revised proposal for the 2021-2027 EU long-term budget
-  A new Agency for Promotion of Research and Innovation at the Council of Ministers was established.
-  A new Operational Programme focused only towards the research and bridging towards the innovation is framed and to be submitted for the new programming period 2021-2027.
-  A special focus on the activities of the Bulgarian innovative SMEs towards the EIC accelerator and especially the calls related to the Covid-19 pandemic relations. Some of them were bridging the blue economy issues.



-  Grants for microenterprises and small enterprises and the self-employed.
-  Financial instruments to SMEs to alleviate the negative effects from late payment.
-  Support for adoption of digital technologies, facilitating work from distance – with voucher schemes for digital services and grants for digitalisation in online distribution and e-commerce of the products and services.
-  Enhancement of cyber security tools and solutions.
-  Trainings to enhance digital skills.
-  Health promotion, health protection and disease prevention to sectors like tourism and transportation to perform in a safe way.
-  Directed grants anti-Covid measures under the Fisheries OP.



-  Special session on the impact of Covid-19 activities initiated by the National “Scientific Research” Fund.
-  Enhanced budgeting to the research units working to marine resilience.
-  Bulgarian research institutions and universities teaming in applications under Horizon 2020 on the Black Sea research.
-  National “Scientific Research” Fund supporting Bulgarian teams to join international research networks on the anti-Covid related topics.



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The impact of COVID on the national R&I priorities towards a healthy and resilient Black Sea

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The Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, Mikheil Chkhenkeli took part in the online ministerial "COVID-19 and Open Science" organized by UNESCO in March. The main goal of the conference was to discuss effective ways to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus, which has been declared a pandemic in the world, and to share the experience of different countries in this field.

In October, the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia Mikheil Chkhenkeli participated in the online 17th Annual Round Table of the Ministers of Science and Technology within the framework of the STS Forum (Science and Technology in Society Forum), where representatives from 35 countries discussed the importance of science and technology in the post-pandemic period.

Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia plans to announce a grant competition on Covid-19 research, which will allow Georgian scientists to become more actively involved in scientific research on pandemic issues.

Due to the situation in the country, several research institutes reorganized and actively participate in the production of goods required for COVID-19 preventive measures.

A group of Georgian scientists participated in the international interdisciplinary project supported by the World Pandemic Prevention Organization "Georgian Reality: Sustainability of Scientific Research during the COVID-19 Pandemic", which aims to facilitate the consolidated interdisciplinary research of the world scientific community.

Georgian Technical University has signed an agreement with the Partnership Fund to set up the necessary infrastructure and install the appropriate technological line, for the production of face masks on the basis of the former institute "Analizkhelsatsqo".

The Institute of Cybernetics of the Georgian Technical University has started working on the project which aims to determine minimum effective range of ultraviolet radiation, intensity and irradiation time, required for destruction of viruses and further develop recommendations to create a compact, inexpensive device that works on UV diodes, and make possible to destroy viruses in the air and on the surface in conditions of minimum ozonation of air and in the range harmless to humans.

The TSU R. Agladze institute of non-organic chemistry and electrochemistry participates in the project lead by TSU and GITA. Project deals with the assessment of polypropylene production capacity in the country. It considers existence of conditions for providing medical and hygienic protection accessories. Also, within project "Enterprise Georgia", the Institute conducted a laboratory study of material imported for the production of Georgian face masks. In addition, as the institute has accumulated knowledge on the use of ozone technology in chemical research, due to the new situation, has applied it for disinfection purposes. An ozonator adapted for the relevant conditions has been developed and offered for disinfection with appropriate processing methodology.

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Turkey's R&I Efforts in the context of COVID-19 pandemic

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 TUBITAK's efforts in the context of COVID-19 Pandemic

- ✓ COVID-19 Turkey Research Platform
- ✓ Special Coronavirus Call under the Support Programme for SMEs:
- ✓ Intern Researcher Scholarship Program (STAR) for COVID-19 Research Projects
- ✓ Social Science Research Call on the Impact of COVID-19
- ✓ EUREKA Network Call on COVID-19 Pandemic
- ✓ Entrepreneurial Support and Coronathon Turkey Competition
- ✓ Active Participation in ERAvsCorona Action Plan

- TÜBİTAK created a co-creation based platform under the coordination of TÜBİTAK Marmara Research Center (MAM) Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology Institute
- Researchers from 32 universities, 9 public R&D units and 8 private sector organizations to work on vaccine candidate development, drug re-purposing, drug candidate development and innovative treatment approaches
- After the pre-clinical research stage that is funded by TÜBİTAK for up to 9-12 months, the clinical research stage of the platform developments is being funded by the Health Institutes of Turkey (TÜSEB) under the Ministry of Health

- TÜBİTAK established a rapid funding mechanism for SMEs that have research activities on COVID-19 diagnostics, protective and medical equipment as well as ICT solutions for the effective prevention, diagnosis and treatment of the disease
- Fast track call that was launched in March received 444 project applications in 2 weeks and 35 projects were supported
- Projects are receiving support for up to 9 months, enabling a fast track to market
- The first product funded under the call is commercialized in 3 months and successful progress in all projects are ongoing, including innovative diagnostic kits and AI-based technologies



Intern Researcher Scholarship Program (STAR) for COVID-19 Research Projects Connect2BlackSea.org

- A rapid call was launched in April to support young scholars' participation in COVID-19 related research projects
- New Intern Researcher Scholarship Program (STAR) provided undergraduate, graduate, doctorate and post-doctoral researchers an opportunity to conduct research in publicly supported R&D projects
- 340 applications from students and researchers received
- 88% of applicants were supported
- 118 are undergraduates, 85 are graduates, 70 are doctoral students and 27 are post-doctoral researchers
- 167 of these young scholars are involved in projects that are related to the vaccine and drug development projects of the COVID-19 Turkey Platform
- 209 out of 300 fellows are female researchers

- TÜBİTAK launched a call in April to reveal the impact of the pandemic on socio-economic, social and industrial developments.
- “COVID-19 and Society: Social, Human and Economic Effects of the Pandemic, Problems and Solutions” call focused on determining the current status as well as short, medium, and long-term projections, foresight studies, forecasting and analysis studies
- 682 project proposals from 160 different institutions were received to provide an evidence-based analysis of trends with projections, forecasting, analysis and planning studies for the future.
- 102 projects were selected for funding with initial duration of 6 months
- Multi-disciplinary approaches have been promoted within the call with 55% of the projects relating to more than one research activity area, including those across sociology, psychology, education and economics.

- A joint EUREKA call was launched for research and innovation projects aiming to find short and medium term responses to the needs specific to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Mutual consent between the participating funding bodies from Turkey, Canada, Austria, Denmark, Netherlands, Spain and France
- Research and innovation projects for COVID-19 (particularly in infection prevention and protection, sanitation)
- Turkish participants are involved in 14 different proposals



Entrepreneurial Support and Coronathon Turkey Competition

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- TÜBİTAK continues to support entrepreneurs that provide solutions with impact against the COVID-19 pandemic
- Related institutions that are implementing their accelerator programs under the Individual Young Entrepreneur Program (BiGG) of TÜBİTAK have been given an extra budget to support 30 business plans
- In addition, 540 Turkish entrepreneurs participated in the EUvsVirus Hackathon and took place among top three challenge winners in various categories (cheap rapid tests, research, demonstrate purpose, university specific challenges, e-learning methods and tools - more info here)

- TÜBİTAK actively shared its experiences, including co-creation based models for vaccine and drug development and rapid calls across the ecosystem for a comprehensive mobilization
- Experiences are also shared during the “Cooperation Between the EU and Associated Countries on R&I actions on COVID-19” with counterpart institutions
- Turkey gives great importance for sharing of experiences as a means of accelerating an effective response.