

Press release

COVID-19: Research Luxembourg is mobilising

Provision of equipment and specialised personnel, support for hospital staff, scientific studies

Research Luxembourg, a joint initiative of the main players in Luxembourg's public research sector, is mobilising its knowledge and its human and material resources to help address the challenge of COVID-19. A task force has been set up in order to offer the health system the combined expertise available within the Luxembourg public research sector (LIH, LISER, LIST, LNS, University, FNR, under the coordination of the Ministry of Higher Education and Research).

The missions of this working group are to:

- Coordinate the provision of support from the national research community to healthcare providers and the government in order to contain the current COVID-19 pandemic.
- Help identify and centralise a variety of priority activities, leveraging on the cross-sectoral expertise in molecular biology, epidemiology, clinical trials and fundamental research
- Be the point of contact between the national research ecosystem, the clinical community and the authorities

The task force will focus on three pillars:

- a prevalence study to assess the extent of the spread of the virus and the number of asymptomatic individuals;
- a stratification study in which researchers attempt to identify risk factors that contribute negatively to disease progression;
- statistical simulations on the evolution, impact and spread of the COVID-19 pandemic to provide short- and medium-term projections and thus facilitate decision-making on when restrictions could be lifted.

Concrete actions have already been put in place. Research institutions have provided the health sector with equipment and specialised personnel. In this context, it is worthwhile mentioning the important mobilisation of doctors in training in the framework of the “formation spécifique en médecine générale”. Indeed, many of these future general practitioners have volunteered to support hospital staff in the four hospital establishments in Luxembourg. To enable this initiative, the government, with the support of the University of Luxembourg and the doctors involved in this training, has adjusted the relevant regulatory framework and adopted the necessary measures to enable the deployment of these volunteers in the coming days. Likewise, nurses working in research as well as students in medicine are also being trained to support hospital staff.

Due to the international pressure exerted by governments and research funding agencies, almost all scientific data and publications on COVID-19 are freely accessible in digital form

(*machine readable*). This data is a very valuable resource, easily amenable to text and data mining using artificial intelligence techniques. This is an area in which Luxembourg has strong expertise.

To accelerate these efforts and to stimulate new ideas and new collaborations between researchers, additional funding will be provided by the Luxembourg National Research Fund (FNR). Given the urgency of the situation, quick funding decisions will be ensured.

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Info for journalists

Research Luxembourg is a joint initiative of the main players in Luxembourg public research Luxembourg Institute of Health (LIH); Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER); Luxembourg Institute of Science and Technology (LIST); Laboratoire National de santé (LNS); University of Luxembourg; Fonds National de la Recherche (FNR), under the coordination of the Ministry of Higher Education and Research. The main aim of the initiative is to promote scientific cooperation in Luxembourg and to communicate the activities of the sector as a whole.