



FULL SPEED AHEAD TO COUNTER THE PANDEMIC AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

3 May 2020

MEASURES OF THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH TO FIGHT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

We are strengthening research

- We are making every effort to support the development of a new vaccine: Germany is among the founding members of the international Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI). The BMBF has supported CEPI with a total of 90 million euros since 2017. In response to the pandemic, we have provided an additional **140 million euros for vaccine development within CEPI**. The German biotech company CureVac is also involved in the vaccine development projects initiated by CEPI.
- In early March, the **BMBF** launched a **funding call** under which an initial sum of **15 million euros** will be available **for developing medicines** to treat COVID-19 and improving our understanding of the virus.
- **To counter the current pandemic**, we are providing an additional **150 million euros** for the establishment of a research network which will **pool and strengthen the research activities of German medical schools**. The aim is to set up a national COVID-19 task force and establish central infrastructure including a patient data base. The rapid exchange of knowledge and new insights will help to identify best practices and to achieve the highest possible quality of treatment throughout the country.
- Global challenges call for global solutions. The BMBF is therefore supporting the **World Health Organization's Solidarity Trial** with an initial contribution of 1.5 million euros. This global clinical trial will involve participation by 70 countries and well over 10,000 patients and will focus on whether and how existing drugs may be used to treat COVID-19. The following options will be studied: Remdesivir, which was developed as an Ebola treatment; chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine, which are used to treat malaria; a combination of Lopinavir and Ritonavir used as an HIV treatment; the combination of this HIV treatment with Interferon beta. German research institutions will participate in the trial. The German infection and lung research centers DZIF and DZL will be responsible for coordinating the German participants.
- For years, we have been providing **institutional funding** for the German Center for Infection Research (DZIF) and the German Center for Lung Research (DZL). The four major research organizations – Helmholtz Association, Leibniz Association, Fraunhofer, and Max Planck Society – are making special efforts in the current situation.
- We have adapted the conditions for **project funding** on a short-term basis and will continue to re-evaluate them. In this way, we can ensure liquidity and appropriate processes for those who are already working in BMBF-funded projects.

We are strengthening digital education

- Digital teaching and learning is a good means to compensate for lost teaching time in schools these days. The aim is to quickly develop digital formats. As a short-term measure, **100 million euros** have been provided from the **DigitalPakt Schule** which enable the Länder to swiftly establish infrastructures and increase digital teaching provision at a time when schools are closed throughout Germany.



- We are expanding capacities under the BMBF's ongoing **HPI School Cloud** project for schools which currently cannot use their own school cloud. This enables teaching and learning by digital means in spite of school closures. The School Cloud enables teachers to provide digital classes while school students can work on their tasks at any time, even in teams. This creates a virtual "classroom feeling". Open educational content can also be included. This is why the "Bündnis für Bildung" and the edusharing network, which are already offering educational content in several Länder, will become involved in the project.
- We have launched the "Wir bleiben schlau!" alliance together with the Länder, the scientific community and industry to promote **STEM education at home**. The new, extensive and interlinked web programmes are designed to encourage young people to become involved with mathematics, informatics, science and technology even in home learning settings. We want to demonstrate that it does not take much to engage in experiments, programming, discovery and fascinating STEM work at home and outside school curricula.
- As a short-term measure, we will make **500,000 euros available for the vhs-Lernportal** of the German Adult Education Association (DVV). The online portal offers free digital learning programmes with a focus on literacy, basic education and German as a second language. The funds are to be used to train (additional) online tutors and to offer teaching support for more learners in the vhs-Lernportal.

We are supporting university students

- Nobody should have to be worried about their training assistance due to the coronavirus pandemic. We have adjusted some of the BAföG rules for the provision of training assistance. **BAföG will continue to be paid to students** already receiving assistance even if regular teaching has been suspended at schools and universities due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- If BAföG recipients do paid work that is urgently needed in the current crisis, their social commitment will be honoured. **Income earned** as helpers in the fight against the pandemic and its consequences **will not be counted** against them in the calculation of their BAföG assistance.
- The implementation of BAföG training assistance will also be facilitated. The aim is to **provide rapid financial support** for persons entitled to BAföG, particularly those who now need to apply for assistance due to a change in their own or their parents' income.
- BAföG will continue to be paid **beyond the maximum assistance period** where studies are interrupted due to the pandemic.
- Numerous arrangements facilitate matters for trainees and students who have spent or are spending **periods abroad while receiving BAföG** and who are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- From the beginning of May, students who have lost their jobs as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and need financial support can apply for a loan of up to 650 euros per month from KfW as **interim financial help** which is interest-free during the payment period up to 31 March 2021. The student loan (Studienkredit) will be opened up to those international students who are particularly affected by the current crisis from July 2020 until March 2021.
- In addition to this, the German National Association for Student Affairs (DSW) will be provided with **100 million euros for local student services emergency funds**. This money will be used to help those students who can prove that they are suffering from particularly acute hardship and who need immediate help and do not have access to other forms of support.