

PRESS RELEASE



NEW "FAST-TRACK" EU-FUNDED COVID-19 RESILIENCE FACILITY TO BENEFIT CARIBBEAN OCTS

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The European Union and Expertise France on Monday, 6th April approved a special, fast-tracked €10 million COVID-19 mechanism to support the Caribbean Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) in their efforts at managing and responding to the impact of the Novel Coronavirus.

The RESEMBID COVID-19 Resilience Response Facility has thus been established against the backdrop of overwhelmed public health systems across the OCTs, and jarringly deepening social and economic crises in most Territories.

The Facility is funded by the European Union under the 11th European Development Fund, and is a component of its regional RESEMBID Programme (Resilience, Sustainable Energy and Marine Biodiversity). RESEMBID is being implemented by Expertise France, the development cooperation agency of France.

According to Fabian McKinnon, RESEMBID's Programme Director, the

Story Highlights

RESEMBID launches new €10 million COVID-19 mechanism to support the Caribbean Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) in their efforts to respond to the impact of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19).

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genesis of the new facility was his team's recognition of the *"crushing pressure"* that the increasing number of cases and mortality are placing on the public health systems of the OCTs, on vulnerable groups and on the capacity of Governments to manage and respond.

"In these exceptional circumstances, and as the outbreak began to gather pace and rapidly internationalise, our team at RESEMBID quickly set out to explore ways and means of leveraging our Programme in order to come to the support of the OCTs at this terribly trying time," said McKinnon.

He further pointed out that while the Facility is an integral part of the ongoing RESEMBID Programme, it does not displace any strategic or functional aspect of the existing Programme, that the allocated funds are geared specifically towards financing COVID-19 Resilience response actions across the twelve OCTs.

Highlighting the simplified approval procedures, McKinnon further noted, *"We crafted it [the Facility] as a purpose-designed, fast-track, flexible response tool for the OCTs to confront the multiple challenges of responding to the pandemic."*

"Its aim is to be very quick and flexible, whilst affording each Territory maximum control and latitude in determining their needs and requests. We will do our utmost to support the OCTs."

Speaking on the European Union's decision to support the new *"fast-track"* Facility, Karel Lizerot, Head of Cooperation at the Delegation of the European Union in Guyana – with additional responsibility for Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, Sint Eustatius, Sint Maarten, and Suriname – cited the convenience and good fortune of having a pre-existing resilience-based programme already operational within the OCTs.

Referring to the recently concluded RESEMBID formulation missions to all twelve OCTs, Lizerot said, *"To have Expertise France and RESEMBID already up and running, and comprehensively covering all the Caribbean OCTs in a way that is very much based on listening, and taking care of their needs, has been very encouraging."*

"So all that trust that we have towards Expertise France, enabled us to give our green lights to this Facility."

The decision came just days before Eurozone Finance Ministers successfully negotiated a €540 billion stimulus package in response to the devastating impact of the Novel Coronavirus on European economies. While the OCTs are linked to their respective European mother countries, politically, they are not a part of the European Union, and therefore are not eligible for EU external funding.

While most Governments have already implemented stern measures to prevent the community spread of the Novel Coronavirus – thus avoiding a complete collapse of local public health systems – the socio-economic fabrics of the OCTs, are today being tested in ways previously unimaginable.

Lizerot in acknowledging the challenge of predicting the ultimate impact of the coronavirus on the OCTs, and determining immediate responses, said, *"I can only praise the fact that we have a running programme that has always been – even before COVID-19 – resilience-based."*

"It was more based on climate change resilience, but it was also contractually and procedurally relatively easy for the European Union to reorient it towards the health resilience."

Highlighting the unsung value of solidarity in crisis situations, Lizerot said, *“Prior COVID-19, I had my questions about how we were going to set up a truly regional approach among twelve OCTs, that are very diverse – different languages, different systems, different geography.*

“However, I think now is really a good time to actually come together, and be one front against COVID-19 – all of the OCTs. Because COVID does not discriminate.”

The RESEMBID COVID-19 Resilience Response Facility is now deployed across the twelve OCTs, under a fast-track expedited procedure, with priority actions to be determined by each country or territory, consistent with local needs.

The twelve participating OCTs are Anguilla, Aruba, Bonaire, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Curaçao, Montserrat, Saba, Saint Barthélemy, Sint Eustatius, Sint Maarten, and Turks and Caicos Islands.

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About RESEMBID

The Resilience, Sustainable Energy and Marine Biodiversity Programme (RESEMBID) for Caribbean Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) is financed under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) Caribbean OCT Regional Programme, and is being implemented by Expertise France.

The primary stakeholders are the 12 Caribbean OCTs: Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat, Turks and Caicos Islands, Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, Sint Eustatius, Sint Maarten, and Saint-Barthélemy.

The Prime Minister of Sint Maarten has been designated Regional Authorising Officer (RAO) for the 11th EDF Caribbean Regional Programme, and as such represents the 12 Caribbean OCTs vis-à-vis the EU. The RAO liaises with national authorities and other stakeholders of the Caribbean OCTs, and plays a key role in information-sharing and knowledge management.

The overall objective of the Programme is to support the sustainable human development efforts of the

Caribbean OCTs, and the operational objectives are based on three component pillars: Sustainable Energy, Marine Biodiversity, and Resilience.

About Expertise France



Expertise France is the international technical cooperation agency of France. The agency operates around four priority areas: democratic, economic and financial governance; security and stability of countries in crisis/ post-crisis situations; sustainable human development; strengthening of health systems, social protection and employment.

In these areas, Expertise France supports the sustainable human development efforts of partner countries with the provision of technical expertise and capacity-building, and as a project manager. The €127 million programme of Expertise France includes a portfolio of more than 400 projects in 80 countries, and 63,000 days of expertise provided. The work of Expertise France is part of the policy of solidarity and diplomacy of France.

Website www.expertisefrance.fr

About the European Union



The European Union is a unique economic and political union between 27 EU countries that together cover much of the continent. The work of the organization spans policy areas, from climate, environment and health, to external relations and security, justice and migration.

The EU plays an important role in diplomacy and works to foster stability, security and prosperity, democracy, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law at international level.

The European Union Delegation to Guyana, for Suriname, and with responsibility for Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, Saint Barthelemy, Sint Eustatius and Sint Maarten, is part of the European External Action Service (EEAS), and represents the European Union in all matters of its competence. The Delegation actively promotes the values and policies of the European Union, in an open and equal partnership with the Governments and people of the countries to which it is accredited.

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