



BRINGING CIVIL SOCIETY TOGETHER  
TO END THE TUBERCULOSIS EPIDEMIC

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## The Impact of COVID-19 on Research and Development on TB Diagnostic Tools and the Lessons Learnt about R&D Policy Reform

TBEC Webinar series

*Friday, 2nd October 2020, 15:00-16:30 CET*

### Background

Achieving the target of eliminating TB by 2030 will require increased use of existing diagnostics and treatments, as well as the development of new technologies for prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. Innovative approaches and improved access to TB services is needed in order to tackle TB.

Continued engagement of TB activists, health care providers, and other stakeholders from affected communities is needed to ensure continued investments into TB research and development. Diverse stakeholders continue to advocate for increased funding for TB R&D, recognizing that eliminating TB will be impossible without increased investments and robust community engagement in the research agenda. While there is increased funding for TB R&D, this funding is not at the level that we need to end the TB epidemic and the COVID-19 pandemic is diverting efforts away from TB. Even before the global pandemic, with R&D investments totalling over US\$79 million, diagnostics is the only area of TB research that saw reduced funding in 2018 (a loss of US\$1 million).

Diagnosis of TB and drug-resistant TB remains a challenge globally with a third of the people with TB and two-third of the people with drug-resistant TB remaining undiagnosed. Not only does this increase the risk of TB transmission, but patients are also more likely to experience poorer health outcomes. Despite the achievements made in the field of diagnostics, with the development of GeneXpert in the last decade, there is still a high unmet need for improved accessibility and accuracy of early-detection diagnostic tools and systems.

Critically, improving diagnosis remains one of activists' key priorities in TB R&D. There is a need for both new diagnostic technologies and increased access to already existing diagnostic tests. Improving diagnostic capacity and adequate policy reform will also increase the uptake of TB diagnostic technologies and enable their effective use in TB screening. This discrepancy between activists' priorities and funders' financial commitments is emblematic of a larger disconnect between funding institutions and the communities who are intended to benefit from the results of TB R&D. Without increasing funding for TB diagnostic research, we will not be able to develop new diagnostic tools or resolve the low uptake of existing diagnostic technologies.

As the world continues to tackle the global pandemic, it is important to ensure there continues to be adequate access to TB diagnostic tests, and that TB research and development is able to continue. This is especially important considering the similarities in symptoms and transmission of TB and COVID-19, as well as synergies in the response (e.g. prevention, infection control, adherence support, etc). The pandemic presents many questions for the TB



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field and opportunities for learning through research and innovation, and the adoption of best practices.

Join TB Europe Coalition for the 2nd in our series of webinars on the impact of COVID-19 on TB R&D. In this session we will be joined by MSF and FIND to discuss developments in the field of TB diagnostics and R&D policy reform.

The line-up for speakers and registration is below. Please register to receive zoom link.

Registration: [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_Hao6LQEdQ2mRTp4P5ToxFQ](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Hao6LQEdQ2mRTp4P5ToxFQ)

The registration form may be in English. If you are having any problems, please contact [coordinator@tbcoalition.eu](mailto:coordinator@tbcoalition.eu).

## Agenda

- ❖ Introduction (Yuliia Kalancha, Executive Director, TBEC)
- ❖ Impact of COVID-19 on TB Diagnosis: How the Tools for TB Have Been Used and the Development of New Tools (Stijn Deborggraeve, MSF)
- ❖ TB Diagnostic Pipeline & Opportunities Arising from COVID (Morten Ruhwald, FIND)
- ❖ Research & Development Policy Reform: from TB to COVID-19, Mistakes Made and Lessons Learnt (Sharonann Lynch, MSF)
- ❖ Questions and Answers