



Ad-hoc COVID-19 Survey

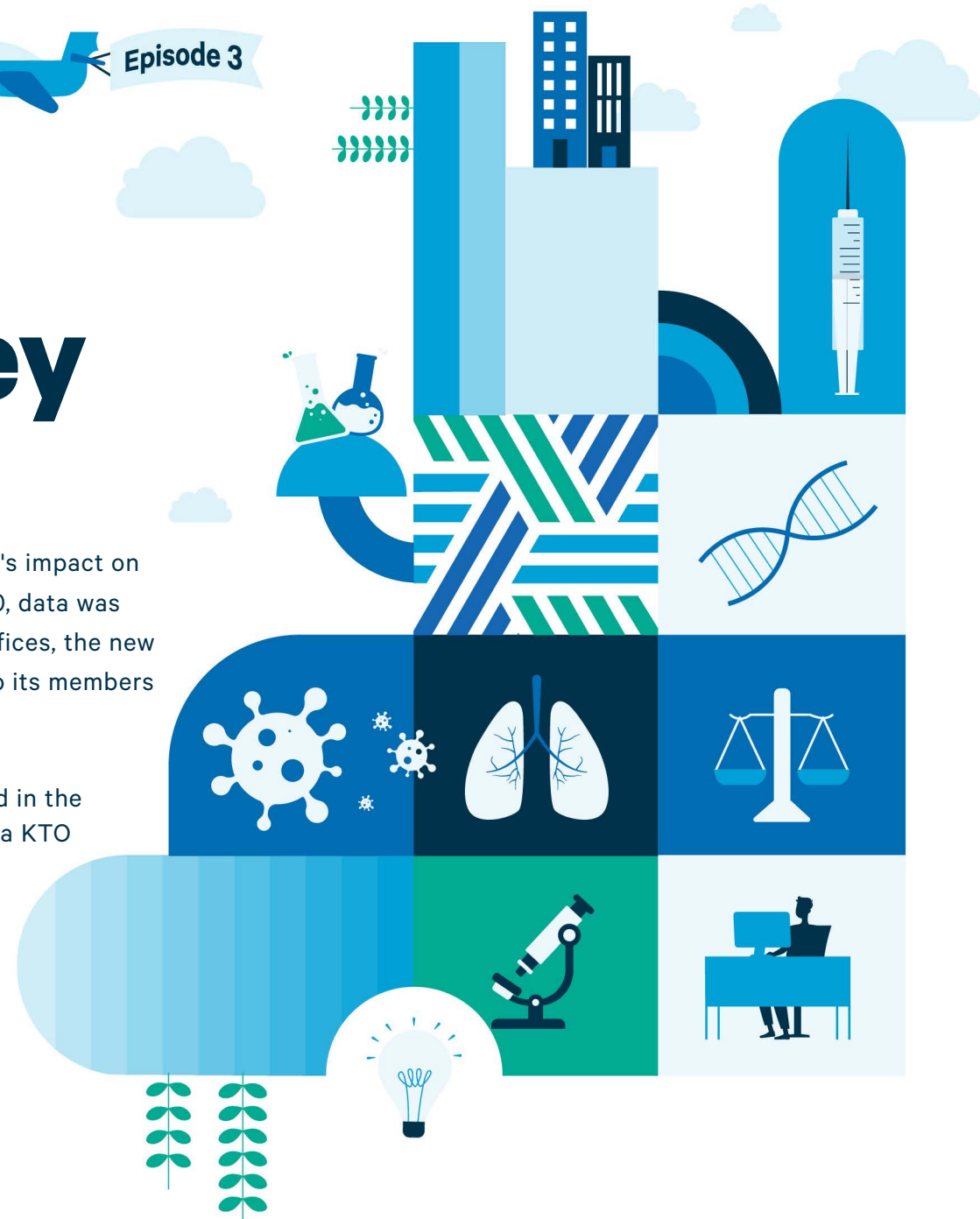
Episode 3

ASTP's COVID-19 ad-hoc survey set out to better understand the pandemic's impact on the knowledge transfer (KT) community. Between July and September 2020, data was gathered from 252 respondents on the challenges faced by European KT offices, the new practices of KT professionals, and how ASTP can provide further support to its members and the KT community.

Respondents from 31 countries, 26 within and 5 beyond Europe, participated in the survey. 65% were ASTP members at the time and 42% had been working as a KTO professional for 10 years or more.

The insights from this rich dataset will be shared with the KT community and the larger public over the course of consecutive 'episodes' in the summer of 2021.

Feedback is very welcome. Contact us at survey@astp4kt.eu



Key Insights

Help or assistance needed

- exchange of best practices among KTOs and training
- support digitalisation of activities and more resources, in particular FTEs

Priorities until the year-end 2020

- 33% of KT of professionals focused on reaching annual targets and getting projects done
- 19% fostered networking with academic and industry partners
- 11% worked on building skills, particularly regarding working with new processes, platforms and programmes in a digital environment

KTOs expectations towards PROs and governments

- more funding, with long-term vision, flexible mechanisms and more focused on research results' valorisation
- support in digital transformation, reducing bureaucracy and providing a flexible and sustainable digital work environment
- more engagement and awareness on what KTOs are facing in the pandemic context

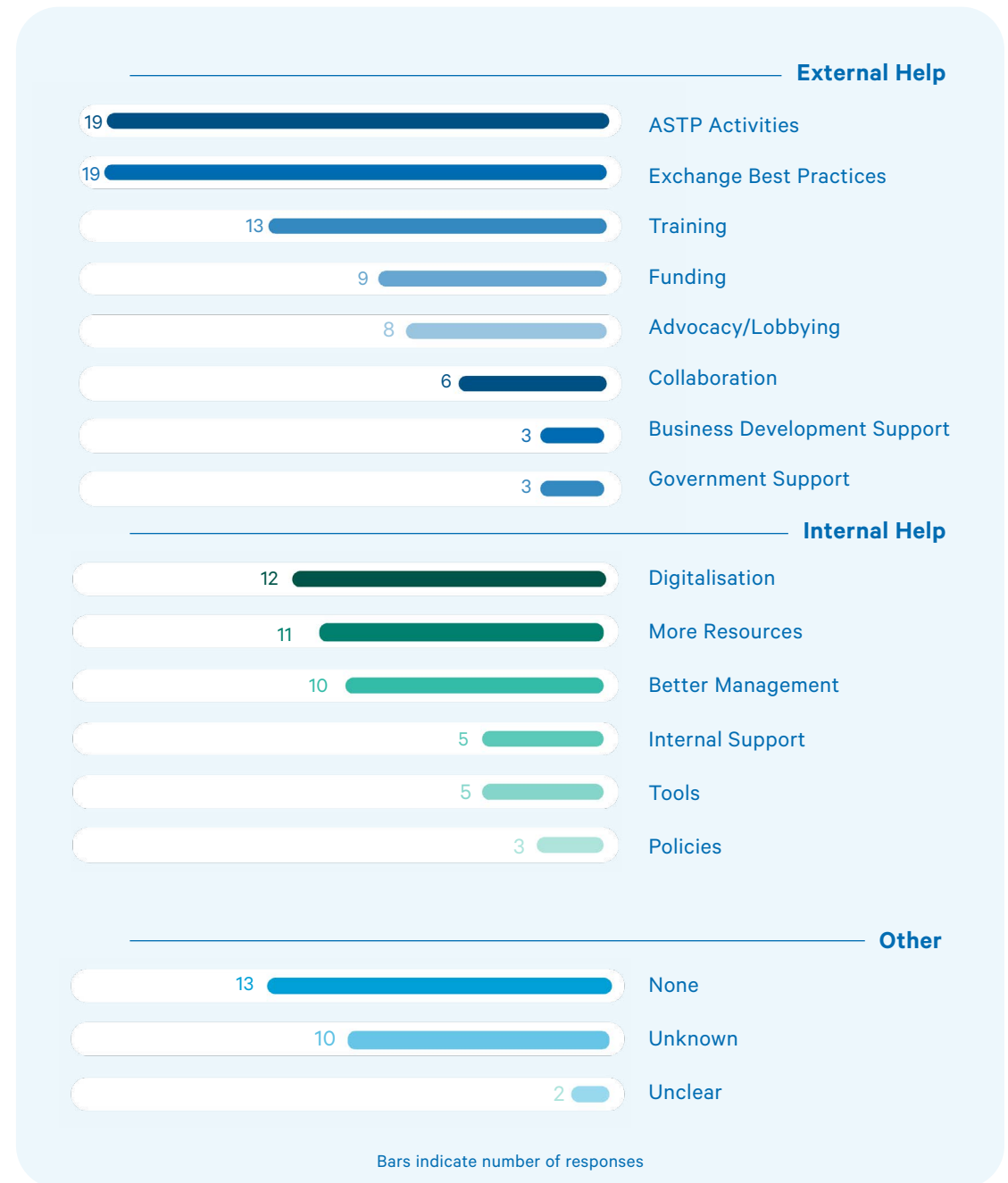
Outlook for the next 12 months

- more than 40% of respondents estimate their future, and the future of their KTO to be more difficult in the next 12 months
- most respondents estimate that the outlook for the next 12 months is the same for the work in their KTO and their work in particular

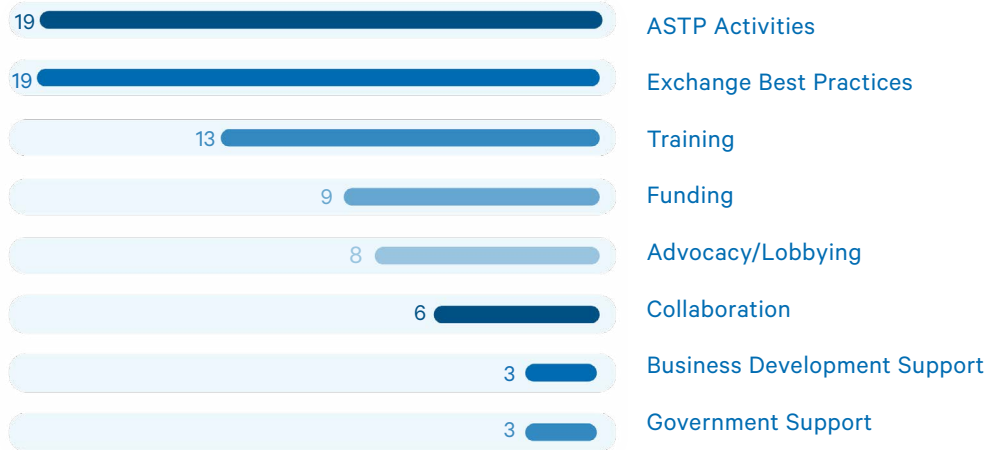
Help or assistance needed

Please tell us about help or assistance that would support you in your work at your KTO?

When answering this question, the survey respondents gave insights about what was needed in order to overcome the challenges the profession has been facing. 137 survey respondents reported help or assistance that would support them in the work at their KTO. While some indicated one, others pointed to multiple areas for support. In total, 80 responses related to help from **external parties**, 46 responses on **internal help** and 25 responses provided none (13) or unknown (10) help needs and two were unclear.



External Help



The majority of respondents indicated the need for different kinds of external help. 19 respondents mentioned the need for more **activities run or organised by ASTP**.

“From ASTP: sharing threats and opportunities and best practices in dealing with the COVID-19 crisis for KTOs” | “Digital (online) trainings that are more tailored to specific operations or TTO’s. It is nice to meet during ASTP trainings and have a bundle of topics in 2,5 day, but waiting half a year for this is not effective. I believe lots of training content could be split into smaller webinars, with CE points”

19 respondents sought an **exchange of best practices**.

“A forum where we can post questions and get answers, or ask for introductions to certain companies, or ask advice on the commercialisation of certain projects” | “Best practices in KTO during COVID-19” | “Sharing experiences with other KTOs”

13 people indicated the need for **training**.

“I would appreciate on-line trainings in the fields: - technology positioning, competitiveness - technology potential evaluation - market research for our technologies, market evaluation” | “some of our group leaders are looking for a seminar about how to manage a group of people in times of telework”

9 of the respondents had a need for **funding**.

“increased funding availability for Proof of Concept and Entrepreneurship” | “increased funding to activities that have been affected by COVID-19”

8 respondents expressed the need for **advocacy or lobbying** in favour of KT.

“strong affirmative messaging from our political and industrial leaders in Europe that KT is an essential part of the coping and recovery strategies for each country”

6 respondents were in favour of more **collaboration**.

“collaboration with other KTO’s and incubation centers during this period would be very helpful”

3 respondents mentioned a need for support either for **business development** or from the **government**.

“facilitate online meetings industry and KTOs, collaboration and licensing” | “governmental support programs”

In terms of ASTP activities and/or resources KT professionals would be interested in, 107 respondents showed interest in webinars on a large variety of themes. 79 were in favour of virtual fora that enable exchanges among ASTP members related to topics like KT and COVID-19. 55 respondents signalled need for assistance from an experienced KT professional to help their KTO address current challenges. 26 respondents provided other ideas which the ASTP team will analyse for consideration, in addition to the above proposals.

Internal Help



In addition to the help and assistance from external parties, KTOs indicated several ways in which they can help themselves. 12 respondents mentioned making use of **digitalisation**.

“a confident system for electronic signature in agreements, such as NDAs, research and development agreements, etc” | “Simplify the overall administration and interconnect our databases to have a full digital world”

11 respondents estimated the need for more **resources**.

“more admin resources” | “extra FTE” | “more qualified personnel”

10 respondents proposed improving **management practices**.

“better organization of meeting times (restricted to specific day periods)” | “improve projects prioritization” | “remote people management (for the Manager), and how to increase efficient communication without increasing emailing”

5 respondents estimated they need **internal support** from other departments or governance structures in their institution.

“due to the virtual environment, administrative, legal and research departments support is critical for us not to double work and to have access to info”

5 respondents mentioned the need for appropriate **tools**.

“S2B innovation platform” | “recommendation for smart online CRM’s”

3 respondents brought up the need for **new policies**.

“clear policy between university and KTO”

KTO's expectations towards PROs and governments

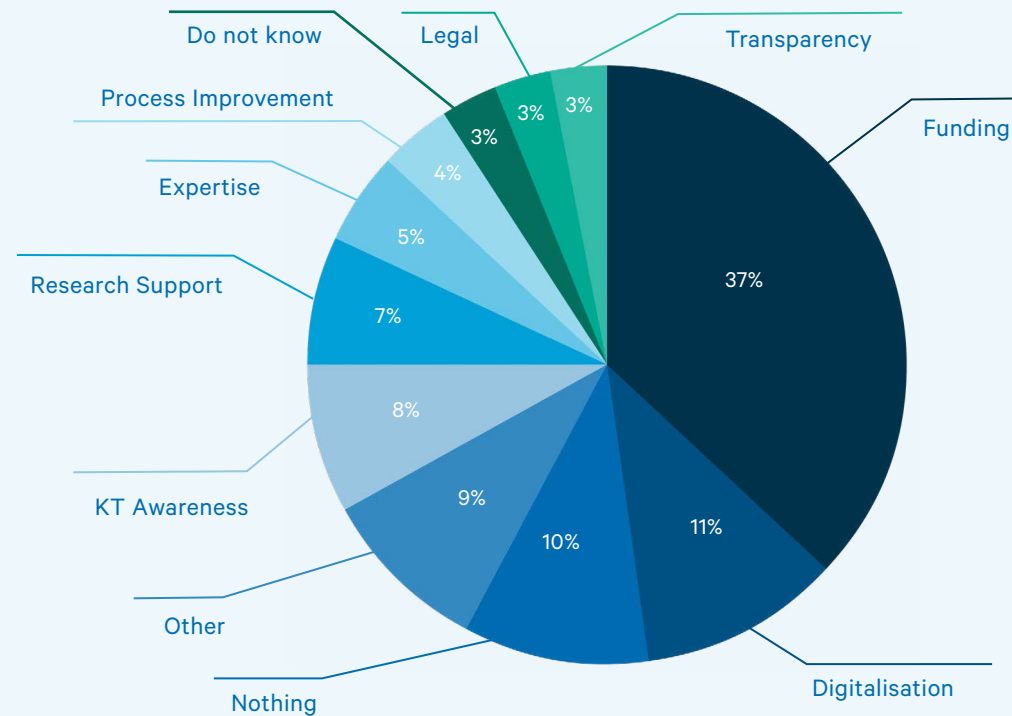
What do you think should PROs and governments do to support KTOs in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?

This question intended to go a step further in understanding the KTOs' needs in the pandemic context.

Out of 156 respondents, 58 (37%) highlighted the importance of **funding** to support KTO activities.

Through the analysis of the data, it has been possible to infer some characteristics of the expected funding strategy that, according to the respondents, both PROs and the governments should put in place. The stability of funding was mentioned by several respondents.

*“...provide sustainable and long-term financing...”
| “...maintain funding supports...” | “...continued funding/support of spin-out and SME...” | “...stabilise funding ...”*



Others highlighted the need for flexibility of the funding terms, while some respondents focused on the importance of targeting COVID-19 with specific and ad-hoc funding.

“...set up new financing mechanisms with flexible terms to allow KTO get access to funding...” | “...more flexibility in terms of opening the ability to engagement between PROs and industry through funding mechanisms ...” | “...support COVID-19 projects in a targeted way...” | “... organize short calls for applicable COVID-19-response projects...” | “...more financial support towards COVID-19 related pandemic research...” | “... increased fund amounts and new calls for COVID-19...” | “... provide extra means for COVID-19 related research...”

Creating and/or supporting Proof of Concept funds or implementing funding targeted to the valorisation of research results were important aspects raised by the respondents.

“...PROs should promote impact-driven research and governments should increase funding programs for POC and valorisation activities...” | “...Emphasis on valorisation in existing funding programs...” | “...introduce more widely Proof of Concept funds and acceleration funds...” | “...provide easily accessible early stage commercialisation funding to seed projects...”

Digital transition of KTOs was the second most cited aspect (11%). The answers addressed the simplification of the procedures, in particular through the digitalisation of the bureaucratic aspects of the job and stressed the importance of providing a flexible and sustainable digital work environment.

“...to facilitate on line bureaucracy...” | “... avoid original documents giving validity to pdf or other online format docs...” | “... PROs and governments should decrease the bureaucracy-paper work...”

10% of the respondents stated that PROs and governments could do **nothing** (or nothing more) to support KTOs in the pandemic context.

“...I am quite satisfied with the support we had...” | “...not convinced KTOs need special support...” | “...nothing towards KTOs in particular but make sure the innovation sector at large has the possibilities to continue working...” | “...not much. I don't think KTO work has suffered much from the corona crisis...” | “...they should always support the KTOs in doing what we do. Regardless of COVID-19...”

The importance of **KT awareness** among PROs and governments was raised by 8% of the respondents. They underlined the need for acknowledging their work and efforts to better understand the situation in which KTOs are operating.

*“...to understand better conditions which KTOs are working under and support us...”
“...increase their engagement. Find out what we struggle with and work to help find solutions...” | “...recognise that the third mission remains important and should not be neglected during COVID-19...” | “...more recognition of the work...” | “...make visible KTOs work and achievements...”*

Finally, 7% of the respondents, affirmed that PROs and governments should put in place strategies to support the research activities carried out by PROs (see **Research support** in the graph). For many respondents, research is the very base of KT activities and they encourage the institutions to take care of research activities in order to indirectly support KTOs' work.

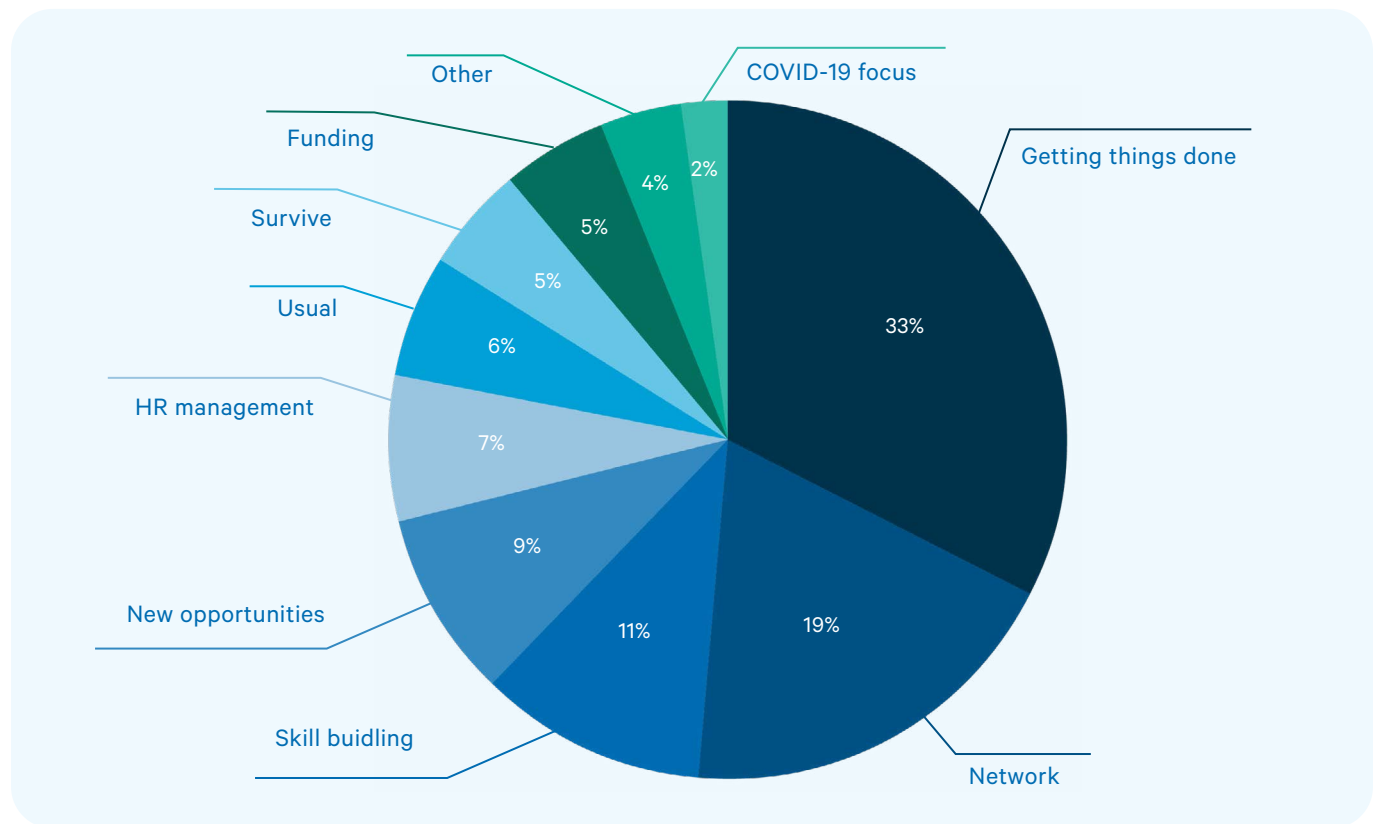
“...no research, no work for KTO. So I think that the support should go to R&D activities, to retrieve their full rhythm, and KTO work will surely follow...” | “...Support the research and teaching activities to allow the institutions to be economically stable...” | “... Ensure support of institutions that KTOs support, to ensure continuation of knowledge supply i.e. research and discovery...” | “... Keeping support as universities have shown their capacities in the crisis...Universities and high tech companies were the new “army” to fight the crisis...” | “...Change the researchers evaluation and put applied research on the same level as publications...”

Priorities until year-end 2020

What are your priorities for the coming weeks and months until the year-end 2020?

A diverse picture emerged from the total of 286 answers that the 252 survey respondents indicated in response to the question on their priorities in the short-term. It was not uncommon that the answers reflected a range of issues in the face of the pandemic.

They can be roughly divided into two groups: either KT professionals aimed to preserve the status quo (reflected in answers in categories 'get things done', 'networking', 'survive', 'funding', 'HR management'); or they set out to develop the KTO given the new circumstances ('skill building', 'new opportunities', 'COVID-19 focus').



Preserving the Status Quo

The majority of answers (195/285) indicated that KT professionals focused on preserving the status quo and dealing with the challenges that the pandemic presented to them. Most prominently, 33% of all answered concerned the focus to **get things done**. Concretely, this included service provision and meeting KPIs set for the year.

“Maintaining a high level of service to our clients” | “Deliver the milestones on the already existing projects” | “make sure 2020 finishes as foreseen in terms of KPI”

Apart from the priorities that focus on meeting the deliverables and finalising the projects set for the year, the **KTO’s network** was the second most prominent priority in a total of 19% of all answers. This concerned dedicating time and efforts to maintain the inter-personal relationships with researchers, other academic staff and industry partners.

“Try to re-activate industry connections that have fallen silent due to COVID-19” | “Nurturing existing relationships” | “Keeping in contact with the researchers and the companies in virtual mannerstrengthen the cooperation with our (regional) partners” | “re-establishing connections with the research community” | “maintain contact with companies and external partners to encourage collaborations with researchers”

Less common but also related to maintaining the status quo were priorities that related to HR management, survival and funding. A reoccurring issue of concern related to **HR management** (7% answers) was the health and well-being of staff as well as team spirit.

“Maintaining health & safety of employees and job security simultaneously” | “strengthening the social bond of the teams” | “manage and improve the relationship within the TTO team ”

Funding was an issue mentioned by 13 answers (5%) who raised different kinds of financial concerns. While some focused on getting new funding, others had concrete finance targets like new companies.

“Securing funding from the PRO to overcome current financial/cash-flow struggles” | “Seek additional funding” | “Raising finance for investment in social ventures” | “raising funds to support spin-outs”

Equally prevalent in 13 answers was the fight to **survive the crisis**.

“Keep up workflow” | “Keep projects running” | “help teams in trouble” | “keep the KTO afloat”



Develop the KTO given the circumstances

22% of all answers were rather optimistic and pragmatic and focused on developing the KTO given the new circumstances. The most prominent category was **building new skills**. 11% of answers from KT professionals indicated either concrete educational activities planned or improving capacity to work digitally.

“organise additional bootcamps” | “educate researchers in KT in the open access mode” | “hold online workshops to engage more academics” | “further develop effectiveness of remote work” | “working with digital networking tools” | “getting trained to be more proactive on new web tools” | “establish online transactions and process to get rid of all the paperwork we have been using”

Seeking new opportunities and looking ahead positively was the notion of 9% of all answers.

“building project pipeline” | “scouting license deals” | “Preparing new offerings for spin-offs” | “Expansion of activities in the diagnostics and pharmaceuticals sector” | “launch new initiatives.”

Just five answers concerned a concrete **COVID-19 focus**.

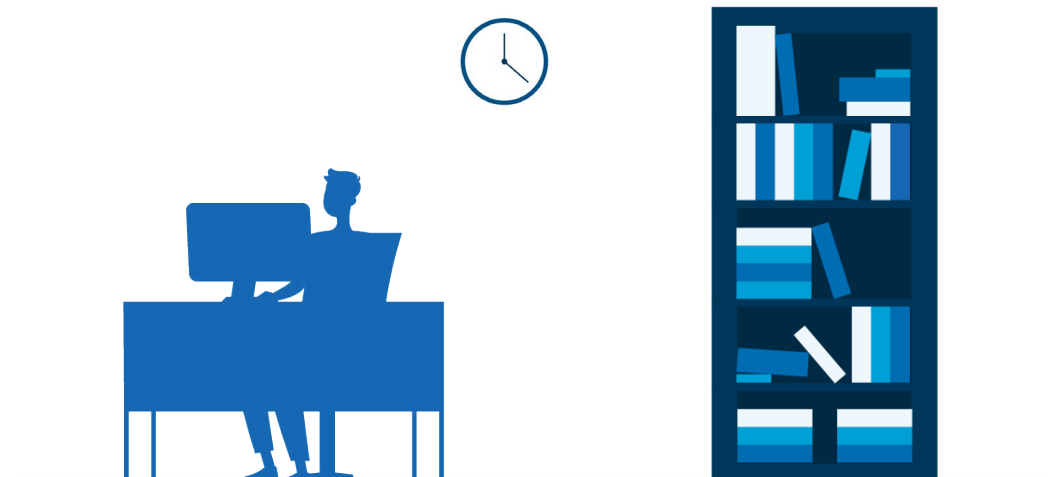
“inventory of the impact of the crisis” | “focus more on COVID-19 related projects” | “activities depend on the evolution of the pandemic”

Interestingly, 6% of the answers suggested no major changes or different priorities since the outbreak of the pandemic, so that they continued **business as usual**.

“no special priorities due to COVID-19” | “except that we work from home, nothing has really changed and our management has not indicated any priorities or unveiled/opened projects to change something” | “trying to work less overtime and improve the life-work-balance whilst working from home other than that business as usual”

Most **other** answers (4%) related to learning from and getting ready for future crisis.

“Embed learning from the current crisis into normal daily practice” | “prepare for similar situations in future”

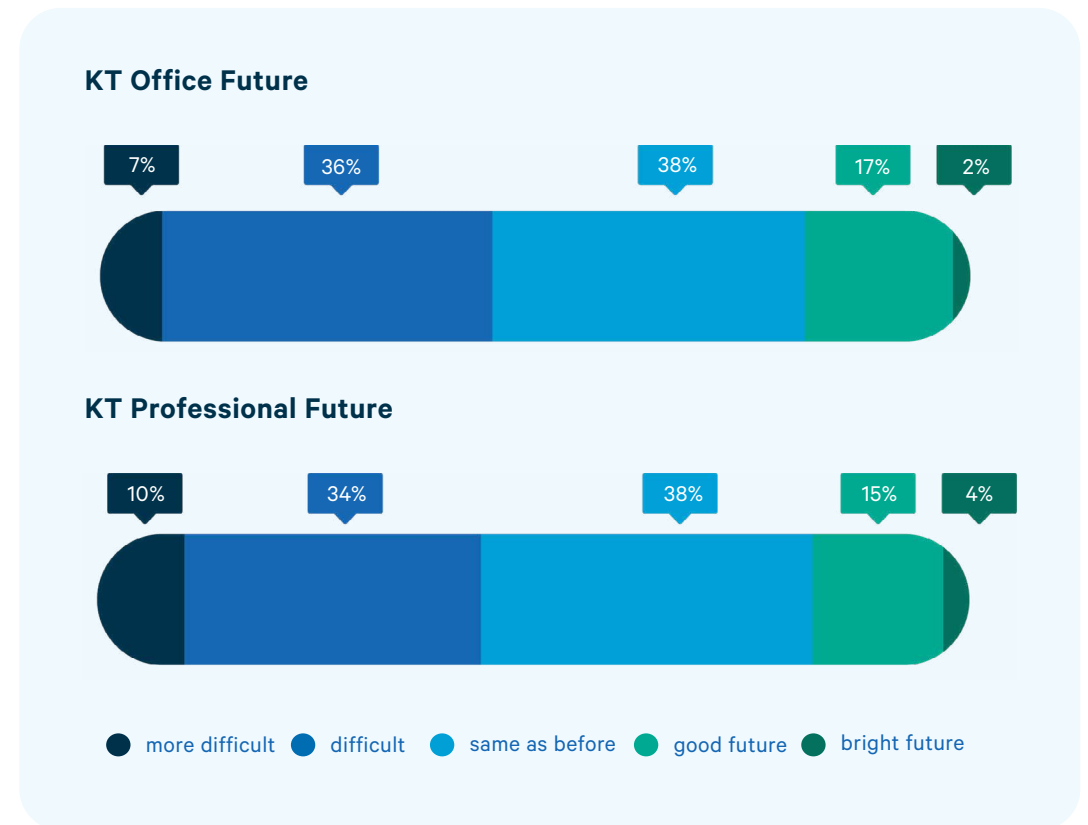


Outlook for the next 12 months

The survey also intended to get feedback from the KT community concerning their outlook for the next 12 months. This question provided a scale from 1 - 5 (1 = more difficult, 3 = same as before, 5 = bright future) to measure the respondents' outlook concerning both the work in their KTO and their own work.

Interestingly, the trend is the same for both aspects, with more than 40% of the respondents estimating both their work and the work in the KTO to be harder in the near future (combination of the categories “more difficult” and “difficult”), and only 19% remaining optimistic (combination of the categories “good future” and “bright future”).

Comparing the note given by individual respondents on each category, it is striking that the same value was chosen for both categories by 71% of the respondents. These KT professionals estimated that the outlook for the next 12 months was the same for the work in their KTO and their work in particular. 14% estimated that the future looked brighter for their work in particular than for the work in their KTO in general, while 15% respondents gave the opposite estimate.





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Ad-Hoc COVID-19 Survey



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