

Annex I – Provisions related to the eligibility of expenditures derived from the impact of Covid 19 (New)

Following the spread of the Coronavirus COVID-19 epidemic in Europe, all sectors of the economy and activities have been severely affected by this circumstance: the way we communicate, the way we work or travel was severely affected. In several European countries Governments had to declare State of Emergency and for once in the history of the European Union, Schengen agreement was put on hold.

All of these radical changes had a very negative impact on projects' implementation. On 4th March 2020, a message was sent to all beneficiaries advising them to rethink the participation in transnational events and meetings by holding them remotely, whenever possible, until the spread is contained. Additionally, it was advised to consider, if possible, the postponement of these events. Whenever travelling is considered mandatory, beneficiaries have been advised to make sure that a cancellation option exists for all reservations and logistical arrangements.

Another area where this impact is also highly visible is in the certification of beneficiaries' expenses.

Taking into account all the circumstances derived from the pandemic COVID-19, this document presents a summary of specific management rules taken by the Interreg Atlantic Area Programme.

Formal Procedures adopted by the Programme - Written Consultations launched

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and in an effort to mitigate its negative effects, the programme Monitoring Committee approved a set of provisions related to the eligibility of expenditures linked to cancelled missions/events/activities (Written Consultation procedure closed on 18th March 2020) and the 6-month automatic extension of projects (written consultation procedure closed on 30th March 2020).

A) Written Consultation about the eligibility of expenditures related to cancelled missions/events/travels and terms approved by the Monitoring Committee

Timeframe of the process:

The Written Consultation procedure concerning the eligibility of expenditures related to cancelled missions/events/travels was launched on 5th March 2020 and closed on 18th March 2020.

Decisions and respective approved terms:

As a result of this Written Consultation, the following decision has been made by the Programme Monitoring Committee:

“Costs of cancelled travel remain eligible if:

The national level or the partner institution ban any travel activities,

A person has a health issue making travelling too risky,

A conference was cancelled by the organizer (taking into consideration that the costs are borne by the institution and will not be reimbursed otherwise).

Personal preference not to travel, if not backed by a recommendation either from your organisation, or any other official level (local, regional or national) is not considered a reason for eligibility from the Atlantic Area Programme side.

Meeting costs (room, catering, etc.) remain eligible. We leave it up to the organizer to either go ahead with a reduced amount of participants or to cancel the meeting due to force majeure.

Finally, we remind you to always have a clear audit trail for those expenditures (with official announcements, cancellation notes, internal notes, etc.). It is also important to check with your FLCs as there may be national rules that apply as well. Therefore, beneficiaries must provide documentary evidence of non-reimbursement of these trips (e.g. reimbursement claim and decision rejecting the reimbursement of expenditure).

These provisions are related to all projects, including the technical assistance of the programme.”

Results:

As a result of the closure of this Written Consultation, the programme Monitoring Committee has agreed on the exact type of expenditures which shall be considered eligible in the case of cancelled missions, due to the pandemic COVID-19. According to the Programme Manual of the Interreg Atlantic Area Programme, expenditures related with travel and accommodation are eligible if and only the journey actually takes place. However, since the spread of the infection by the COVID-19 severely affected beneficiaries due to the transnational nature of their activities, the Monitoring Committee has approved the establishment of a set of specific provisions to proceed with the categorization of these situations as unforeseen and extraordinary, beyond the control of the beneficiary, and so as force majeure.

B) Written Consultation on the 6-month automatic extension to projects and terms approved by the Monitoring Committee

Timeframe of the process:

The Written Consultation concerning the 6-month automatic extension to projects was launched on 24th March 2020 and closed on 30th March 2020.

Decisions and respective approved terms:

As a result of this Written Consultation, the following decision has been made by the Programme Monitoring Committee:

“I) Inform the projects’ Lead Partners that an automatic 6 months extension is given to all the projects without any request. For projects which do not need such extension they must inform the JS, by mail, about their “opt out option”;

II) Inform the projects’ Lead Partners needing an extension beyond 6 months directly caused by the COVID-19 situation about the possibility to request it by email with reference to the last projects’ approved ending date. They will have to give due justification and show the direct links between the extension requested and the delays incurred by the COVID-19. This is an exceptional measure that has been put in place in response to the COVID-19 pandemic;

III) Approve the requests mentioned in II) submitted to the JS on the basis of a simple Modified Request Form without the need of a Written Consultation procedure, and just informing the Monitoring Committee about all the cases. Routine extension requests, not related to the COVID-19, must continue to be approved by national authorities;

IV) Lead Partners will have 2 weeks counting from the date they receive this orientation to request the exceptional extension.”

Results:

On 1st April 2020 all Programme beneficiaries were informed by email about the terms above outlined.

The measures approved are outlined above and are also available on our website:

<https://www.atlanticarea.eu/page/58>

Reminder

The measures contained in this document result from the Programmes Authorities’ interpretation within the framework of the response to the COVID-19 crisis and the arrangements they consider necessary to be taken. These provisions are related to all projects.

The Programme bears your attention to check with your FLCs as there may be national rules that apply as well.

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