

# COVID-19 EFFECTS ON PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION - MA/JS SUPPORT AND MITIGATION MEASURES

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Overview document

May 2020

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## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview on the COVID-19 related support measures set in place by the Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat (MA/JS) in order to mitigate negative effects on project implementation.

## 2. Communications to lead partners

As already mentioned in the email to the Monitoring Committee (MC) dated 1 April 2020, the following information has been sent by the MA/JS to beneficiaries:

- 2 letters to all concerned project lead partners with:
  - Information on eligibility of incurred costs and cancellation fees related to the cancellation or non-attendance of meetings/events due to the Corona crisis (consistent with answers given by the EC in the CRII WIKI)
  - Request to discuss necessary project mitigation measures within the partnership
- 1 direct mailing to all 1200+ project partners with updates on:
  - Continuation of project implementation and discussion of project mitigation measures with LPs if needed
  - Going digital with events and meetings (training by Interreg Europe was shared on social media for inspiration)
  - Eligibility of incurred costs and cancellation fees related to the cancellation or non-attendance of meetings/events due to the Corona crisis (in line with answers provided in the CRII WIKI)
  - Availability of MA/JS staff and their full services through teleworking
- 1 letter to national controllers with guidance and solutions on how to handle:
  - On-the spot verifications during lockdowns
  - Verifications of hard copies and the annulling of documents

### 3. Effects on content-wise implementation of projects - support and mitigation measures

Overall, the COVID-19 outbreak has seriously affected many physical activities of projects such as pilot actions, meetings, trainings etc.

It is to be noted that direct effects on project implementation very much depend on the timing of projects (i.e. the call under which projects are approved).

- First call projects (35) finalised their implementation before the COVID-19 outbreak and are either already closed or in their final reporting phase. Therefore, the COVID-19 situation has not affected their implementation.
- Second call projects (50) are currently in their final implementation phase. The majority of projects have end dates in spring/summer 2020 and are thus facing particular challenges, e.g. for finalising their pilot actions, preparing the adoption of strategies, organising stakeholder meetings and final events, and disseminating their results. In many cases planned (physical) activities cannot be carried out as foreseen, therefore partnerships are adapting activities to the new circumstances (e.g. by using digital means for meetings/events and trainings or are postponing to a later stage. As a consequence, many lead partners (in consultation with their partnerships) have come up with proposals for project modifications (project extensions and/or activity changes) which are jointly discussed with the JS in order to find the most suitable solutions for successfully finalising the projects. However, the MA/JS refrain from approving unjustified requests for additional activities, which merely aim at using up unspent funds without clearly contributing to the achievement of the planned results. It is to be noted that, in some cases, partnerships decided not to go for project prolongation since alternative and viable solutions could be found.

There are 7 second call projects ending in autumn/winter 2020 or beginning of 2021. According to the available information, they consider to have sufficient time buffer to implement their activities as planned. Accordingly, such projects will most likely manage to successfully implement with no or minor adjustments.

- Third call projects (44) are currently in their first half of implementation with end dates in the second half of 2021/first half of 2022. At the moment it is still not clear to which extent the projects will be affected. Possible needs for modifications will be addressed during the mid-term reviews to take place as from the end of 2020.
- Fourth call projects (9) have just recently started their implementation. Partnerships adapted to the current situation by, in some cases, shifting kick off meetings to digital.

Below please find an overview on project extensions and activity modifications of second call projects<sup>1</sup> (including related budget changes) which have already been granted by the MA since the COVID-19 outbreak. It is to be noted that some of the requested prolongations are not only linked to the COVID related issues but are also due to delays encountered before the outbreak.

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<sup>1</sup> In case modifications of third or fourth call projects would be needed, according to the provisions of the programme implementation manual those can be only requested after the mid-term review.

Index	Acronym	Modification
CE1100	LOW-CARB	prolongation by 3 months
CE1131	FIRECE	prolongation by 3 months
CE1237	BIOCOMPACT-CE	prolongation by 6 months
CE1226	AWAIR	activity and budget changes, prolongation by 6 months
CE1101	AIR TRITIA	prolongation by 6 months
CE902	RUINS	prolongation by 4 months

In addition, second call lead partners have put forward the following requests for modification to date:

Index	Acronym	Modification (preliminary information)
CE1047	INTENT	prolongation by 6 months
CE1001	3Lynx	prolongation by 3 months
CE1125	CIRCE2020	prolongation by 3 months
CE1136	ENTeR	prolongation by 5 months plus modification of pilot action
CE1146	CULTURECOVERY	prolongation up to 6 months
CE929	HICAPS	prolongation by 3 months
CE897	MaGICLandscapes	prolongation by 4 months
CE946	REEF 2W	prolongation by 3 months
CE933	RURES	prolongation by 1-2 months

Overall, the JS project, finance and communication managers are committed in providing an extensive support to all lead partners, at the same time ensuring the maximum possible flexibility in accepting modifications. Lead partners highly appreciated the cooperation with the JS, which allowed finding tailor made solutions for a successful project implementation.

It is to be underlined that some projects have implemented or are adapting some of their project activities in order to directly address the COVID-19 challenges. For example:

- The project CE1136 ENTeR plans to implement a new pilot action on the recycling of textile face masks)
- The project CE1171 SYNERGY has launched a new pilot voucher scheme on their Synergic Crowd Innovation Platform to connect actors that are involved in the COVID-19 emergency to join forces in solution development

In parallel to the measures described above, the MA/JS are also putting a focus on “helpful and positive project news” on the social media channels, by sharing such stories from the funded projects. For further information, please consult our social media at [www.facebook.com/InterregCE](http://www.facebook.com/InterregCE), [linkedin.com/in/interregce](https://www.linkedin.com/in/interregce), [twitter.com/interregce](https://twitter.com/interregce).

## 4. Financial considerations

During the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Monitoring Committee (MC) meetings held in 2019, within the project selection of the third and fourth calls for proposals the MC decided to fund projects going beyond the availability of funds. The MC decided that such projects are to be funded through savings made from running projects. The granting of project extensions due to COVID-19, might have an impact on the savings that were predicted to be made available. The impact cannot be quantified yet. This is mainly with regard to the second call projects. It is to be noted that, savings made from the first call projects are in line with the calculation that had been carried out by the MA/JS prior to the approval of the fourth call projects. The MA/JS is constantly monitoring the situation and will keep the MC informed.