

# Online Refresher Training for project partners

## Q&A



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## Session 1 | APR: evidencing the project delivery

### Keeping track of target group involvement and other evidence

- How do we access the different tools that were presented in the seminar to keep track of target group involvement?
  - Please find them via the follow [link](#).
- How can we provide proof of online meeting attendance? For offline meetings we keep signed attendance sheets which is straightforward. Which evidence should we gather for online meetings/conferences?
  - You are advised to keep the agenda of the meeting, your registration confirmation and a screen shot that demonstrates your participation. Most software for online meetings allows you to download a digital participant list.
- How do we evidence members of the public attending? How to deal with vulnerable groups? Do we have to count participants for trainings?
  - You should keep lists of participants for all project events, so also for trainings. If people do not want to share their contact details, you can count the number of participants by counting the signatures only on the attendance sheet.
- Is the name/position of person spoken mandatory for the target group? Or is the name of the organisation sufficient?
  - It is advised to also include the name of the person spoken.
- Do we need to resubmit evidence sent for a previous report or do we just include new additional evidence?
  - Projects only need to include evidence that is related to the activities that are reported upon in the current APR so previous annexes do not have to be attached again. However, if evidence has already been provided in a milestone, we recommend you to mention it, to help JS officers in their check.

### Drafting the APR

- Is it possible to have a word template of the APR to circulate within the partnership and collect input from the different partner organisations?
  - There is no word template available as most of the sections are directly imported from the Application Form. Some projects have created their own templates that are project specific and that can be useful to collect information from the partners. It is possible to export a pdf document from the EEP. All partners working on the project also have reading rights on the APR.
- The host of the session mentioned as best practice monthly reports with updates from partners; would this be considered as evidence?
  - No, monthly progress reports are used to provide input to the consolidated APR and do not have to be attached as evidence.
- We are preparing the 2nd APR for our project. I noticed that APR/summary section does not show the specific result categories & methodologies that were approved last time. Do we have to copy them in manually, or is this a bug in the system?
  - There is no automatic insertion of previously submitted data from the APRs so you will have to copy-paste some of the sections.

- Can JS automatically copy/paste all content from previous APR into subsequent APRs and Closure Report?
  - It is unfortunately not possible to automatically copy-paste content from previous APRs. Only the Lead Partner has editing rights in this section.
- My project has submitted a modification for approval on 19/11 by the Monitoring Committee, when will we be able to open the version of the APR template based on the new approved Application Form?
  - Once your Major Modification is approved by the Monitoring Committee, the updated template of the APR can be downloaded from the EEP. If the APR was opened before the modified AF was approved, it is not a problem. The EEP will showcase a very clear warning message after AF approval (if APR has not been submitted yet, of course). This will clarify that a more recent AF version to base the APR template on is available. The AF version on which the APR is based can be changed in the dropdown list, in the section A.1 Project progress report identification. This will not wipe previously written stuff. Obviously, if the new AF version has extra or removed deliverables / activities, these will show (or not) in the new APR.
- My project deliverables and outputs are delayed due to covid. How should I report upon this in the APR?
  - For each of the work packages, you will have to detail the delays per activity, deliverable and output. Please make sure to justify the reasons for this delay and to specify the new delivery date. If your project is undertaking a major modification, the delivery dates of deliverables/outputs can be modified. It is important that enough details are provided to limit the questions raised by the JS officers.

### **Last check and submission of APR**

- Can I send a draft version of the APR to my partners before I submit to the JS?
  - The LP is able to download the draft APR version in pdf to send it to the project partners. All partners working on the project also have reading rights on the APR.
- As there will be no performance review in January 2021, will the last claim have to be made before the submission of the APR?
  - Yes, you should submit the January financial claim before submitting the APR. Even though there will be no corrective measures following the performance review, the Programme will evaluate the performance of each of the projects. Projects that are underspending and/or not delivering according to plan should detail in the APR the reasons for this underperformance. Please be also aware that the project performance is cumulative so during the performance review of January 2022, the cumulative performance of the project will be considered.

### **Evaluation and closure of APR**

- If the JS rejects an APR and the project has to submit a second version, will all information that was previously added, be lost if you open the changed APR?
  - Yes, the first version of the APR will be re-opened for modification. This new version (X.2) will contain all previously included information from the initial submission (version X.1).

## Session 2 | Communication and impact

- Does the Programme provide templates that projects can use for social media to create a shared image?
  - The Programme does not provide any templates that can be used for social media.
- How can projects make use of the 2 Seas website for dissemination?
  - There are multiple ways of making use of the 2 Seas communication channels:
    - [Project pages](#) (links to website, social media, documents, videos, outputs)
    - [Event page](#)
    - [Video page](#)
- Any tips for projects on how to best reach out to tv networks or local newspapers?
  - You can contact them directly via their website or you can try to attract their attention by publishing lively content on social media. We also advise to ask around within your organisation if someone has a direct contact in any of your local media.
- Can you share the link of the hub-world café flyer of the Cascade project that was presented as best practice?
  - Please find the flyer via the [following link](#).
- Any tips on how to approach target groups that do not have the necessary equipment or internet access?
  - Each project shall define the most suitable communication channel to reach the target audience. If the target audience does not have internet access, your project can print flyers, publish in local newspapers, etc.
- Any tips on what projects should think about before producing a video? What are the obstacles of producing a video yourself?
  - A series of tips have been highlighted during the training session. You can follow [this link](#) to listen these tips again.

## Session 3 | Cost eligibility and claim submission

### Financial claim submission

- Will the deadline of the January 2021 financial claim be extended with 1 month as was done for the claims in 2020?
  - No, the deadline for submission of the January 2021 claim will remain the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2021.
- What should we do as partner if the January 2021 claim is our only claim for 2020 (mandatory) but our FLC is not able to finalise the control before the deadline for it to be included in the consolidated claim? (Flemish specific question)
  - Please alert your LP as soon as possible so that he can notify the JS of the issue. Partners are also advised to contact the Flemish Territorial Facilitators and to highlight when it is their only financial claim of the year. The JS is aware of the delays in treatment for financial claims submitted to the Flemish FLC unit.
- Can I complete and submit a claim to my FLC as a partner before a project modification has been approved?
  - Yes, you are able to complete and submit a claim to the FLC before a modification is approved. The FLC will perform the control on the basis of the last approved application form at the date of the control. If the modification is still not approved at that date, the control on the eligibility of expenditure will be based on the old Application Form. However, please inform your Lead Partner if you plan on submitting important amounts. This might have an impact on the project budget if your LP is working in parallel on a project modification.
- Is there eventually any plan to "optimise" the FLC system for future calls/programmes: sometimes delays are rather long, sometimes FLCs are not really experienced.
  - The JS welcomes any feedback regarding procedures and systems to be considered for the future. Please also make sure to complete the questions thoroughly in the closure report and highlight any areas for improvement.
- Section reconciliation activities-expenditure: Do we need to broadly describe what has been done on the project in the current reporting period or do we need to be more specific and justify each expenditure with a link to the relevant deliverable/output?
  - The section reconciliation activities-expenditure shall provide detailed information on the type of work that has been undertaken in the current reporting period. It is advised to refer to certain activities/deliverables/outputs but it should especially focus on the type of costs that were necessary to achieve them. Partners do not need to justify each expenditure in particular.

### Financial management

- Does the 20% flexibility rule apply at partner level or at project level?
  - The 20% flexibility rule applies at project level. For more information please refer to the Programme Manual – Fact sheet 6
- I manage multiple European projects for my organisation, do you have any best practice tools that I can use to manage the multiple budgets in parallel?
  - Yes, you can use the financial monitoring tool that has been developed by the JS. The [template](#) and its associated [guidance](#) are available on the website.



- Our travel costs are much less - due to Covid. Therefore, our costs are less than budget. Who do we need to inform?
  - The reduction of travel budget (BL3) due to COVID can be included in a technical or major modification that your project will prepare in the future. In case of budget change, please inform your Lead Partner who gathers the information from all project partners and draft the modification.
- One of my project partners does not have any budget forecasted for this year, do they need to submit the mandatory annual financial claim?
  - If no activities or budget were foreseen for this partner, please contact your lead and review officer to ask for an official authorisation to be exempted from the mandatory annual claim.
- Will there be any changes to the 20% flexibility-rule due to Covid-19 and the impact it may have or have had on budgets?
  - No, the flexibility rule will not be affected by any of the Covid-19 Programme measures.
- Brexit: Are there at this stage any risks regarding the involvement of my UK partners in the project in case of a no deal scenario.
  - An official communication from MHCLG and the JS will be published soon.
- What is the responsibility/task of the Lead Partner in the monitoring of partner budgets? When should the LP reject costs of a partner.
  - The LP should keep an overview at all time on the progress made for each of the partners' budgets. There are tools available (see link) to assist the LP with this task. If a partner submits a cost under the wrong budget line or work package, the LP is entitled to exclude the related budget line and/or work package (it is to be noted that the Lead Partner can only exclude aggregated amounts, not single expenditure items). The partner will then be able to resubmit the cost under the correct budget line/work package in the following financial claim.
- Where can be find the monitoring tool that was presented as best practice?
  - Please find here the financial monitoring tool that has been developed by the JS. The [template](#) and its associated [guidance](#) are available on the website. **Eligibility of costs**
- Can I change from real costs to 20% flat rate for staff costs declaration?
  - No, a partner cannot change the staff costs method after the project is approved.
- Can I still declare staff costs from 2019 in a claim submitted in 2020 or do they have to be declared in the same calendar year?
  - Yes, the eligibility period for costs starts at the approval date of the project and end at the end date as listed in the latest version of the Application Form. A claim is not linked to a specific semester or calendar year, any cost that was incurred and paid within the eligibility period can be inserted in a financial claim.
- Do we need to complete time-sheets in English even though our organisation is Dutch/Flemish/French?
  - No, time sheets can be filled in in the language of your Member State.
- Travel outside the eligible area. If a train ticket to Brussels/Paris is declared, shall this be listed in the table as expenditure outside the eligible area?
  - Yes, any travel related expenditure that takes place outside the eligible area shall be listed in the table as 'outside the eligible area'. For Brussels or Paris, no specific authorisation of the JS is necessary prior to the travel in case it concerns a project management meeting. Although an authorisation is not necessary, the costs shall still

be declared as outside the eligible area. This rule also applies to London and Amsterdam.

- Do I always need prior approval from the JS before travel outside the eligible area?
  - If the meeting is not project management related, you should always request authorisation to travel outside the eligible area prior to the travel. For management meetings in Brussels, London, Paris or Amsterdam, no prior authorisation is needed.
- If staff from my organisation performs work outside the eligible area, do I need to declare the proportional part of these staff costs in the outside programme area tab?
  - Expenditure outside the eligible area only related to BL3 Travel and Accommodation. The costs related to staff costs shall not be declared as being encountered outside the eligible area.
- Expenditures outside the area - is it only related to travels or does it also relate to procurement (for example, BL4 that is outside the eligible area)?
  - Expenditure outside the eligible area only related to BL3 Travel and Accommodation.
- My university employs staff to work on the project that travels from Leuven to Ghent. Do I need to declare the travel cost as outside the eligible area even though the activity takes place in Ghent which is in the eligible area?
  - Only activities taking place outside the eligible area need to be reported as such. In this case, activities take place in Ghent, which is within the eligible area and therefore the related costs are to be declared as being within the 2 Seas Programme area.
- Are there any restrictions regarding alcohol consumption during project dinners?
  - The 2 Seas Programme does not have any specific rules regarding alcohol consumption. Partners are invited to consult national or organisational policy regarding these types of costs.
- What information do you need to provide as evidence for travel expenses where you drive to attend an event and claim mileage?
  - The organisation will need to present the number of kilometres, fiscal horse power and justification of mileage methodology according to organisational policy.
- What type of evidence do I need to provide for attending webinars and online training where there is no cost except for staff time to attend?
  - You are invited to present the agenda of the meeting, your registration form and a screen shot that demonstrates your participation to the event. In addition, if you are a staff member and you have chosen the 'real cost' option including the timesheet, the participation to the event should appear in the timesheet.
- How to act regarding the declarations/budget when employees are replaced by external hired staff in the project? What evidence must be reported for external hired staff?
  - The partner will need to shift budget from BL1 to BL4, respect the applicable procurement rules and support by written contracts and invoices the costs of the time spent on the project (for further information on supporting documents required under BL4, please refer to the Programme Manual, factsheet 8). A budget shift is part of the 20% flexibility rule but can also be undertaken in a technical or major modification if the amounts to be shifted are high.
- In the framework of BL5 equipment, can you please further clarify the concept of key component? If I need to buy small equipment in my project that is not an essential part of one of the outputs, is this equipment then no longer eligible?
  - As stated in the Programme Manual fact sheet 8, *'Equipment in the form of key*

*component of one or more project outputs means equipment that is an integral part of the output itself and is thus fully necessary and justified for the existence and durability of the output'. If the FLC validates an equipment as key component, he or she is obligated to refer to the output number to which it relates. In your example, if the equipment is not an essential part of the output, it is therefore not a key component but it is eligible (provided that all eligibility criteria are met). The difference lies in the fact that for equipment considered as key components, depreciation shall not be deducted.*

- Equipment bought outside the programme area (e.g. computing equipment essential to project outputs) has to be claimed as expenditure outside the programme area?
  - No, only travel costs (BL3) shall be declared in the section outside the eligible area. Please note that this only applies to partner organisation located in the eligible area. Partner organisations based outside the eligible area should declare their total partner budget as outside the eligible area.
- Because of the COVID19 crisis we had to supply IT equipment to our staff working on the project that was originally not budgeted for in the project. Can we claim this cost?
  - Yes, partners can claim these types of costs that were originally not foreseen in the Application Form but were necessary in order to deliver the activities given the current epidemic.
- In claiming in-kind support from technical specialists, how is it best to capture the value of this without their payroll information?
  - In order to claim in-kind external expertise, the organisation that will donate the professional and research work shall be able to demonstrate the employment contract and the hours spent (donated) to the project. The payroll information is therefore necessary to define the value of the work donated to the project. The beneficiary responsible for receiving the contribution shall establish a written agreement with the organisation providing the contribution. In the agreement, detailed arrangements for ensuring, in case of control and audit, the availability of all original documents supporting the reality and eligibility of the expenditure or the certification of its value must be established. Please refer to the Programme manual fact sheet 9 on in-kind contribution for further information.
- Will it be possible to review the EEP access settings so that partner organisations can choose which users will have access to full information or only to a limited set of data? E.g. sometimes there are several persons at one organization responsible for financial reporting and they fill in data for different BLs (as staff costs can be a confidential info), thus some organisations would want to be able to choose which person can have access (view and fill in) to expenditure in different BLs ?
  - This is not possible to provide limited access to users. It can only be a full access to the financial claim in the EEP.



## Session 4 | A smooth project closure

### On the spot check and last financial claim

- What if the FLC cannot physically perform the OTS because of COVID-19 regulations?
  - If your project is closing soon, the FLC may obtain the authorisation to perform the On-the-spot check virtually. Check with your JS officers.
- Is the OTS check implemented on the initiative of the partner organisation or the FLC?
  - The partner organisation shall contact its FLC in order to plan the OTS.
- What is the role of the LP in the closure procedure?
  - The LP shall coordinate the closure phase and make sure that all partners contribute to the content of the Closure Report. The partners are responsible to communicate to the LP the progress regarding their final claim, the submission date of the final claim and the OTS completed.
- Do I still need to undergo an OTS check from the FLC even though my organisation already received a second level audit?
  - Yes, all partners that have claimed expenditure to the Programme are obliged to undergo an OTS check. Second level audit is independent from the OTS.
- What if one of the partners got bankrupt? Do we also need an on the spot check?
  - Yes, if this partner has declared expenditure to the Programme, an OTS is mandatory.
- Can you claim the costs which occurred before the end date but were not yet paid before the end date?
  - No, costs can be claimed if incurred and paid before the project end date. Proof of payment will need to be provided to the FLC in order to validate the cost.
- How to include the invoice of my FLC regarding the last financial claim if my project end date has already passed?
  - If you wish to include the last invoice of the FLC in the last partner claim, you shall ask to anticipate the invoice in order for it to be paid before the last FLC control takes place.

### Closure report and durability

- How long does it take to validate the Closure Report?
  - This is highly dependent on the quality of the Closure Report. A good quality Closure Report can be validated in 2-3 months, while a bad quality report can take up to 6-7 months.
- Will information on the 'legacy' of projects be collected? It is hoped they will continue to have a wider impact after they have finished?
  - Yes, the Programme gathers information regarding durability and transferability of project outputs and results in order to communicate and disseminate at large scale. All achieved project outputs are gathered in the [Output library](#) on the Programme website. There will be other initiatives to capture the outputs and results.
- What do you mean by revenue generation?
  - For more information about revenue generation, we refer to the Programme manual [fact sheet 10](#).
- What are the documents required related to the "net-revenue action plan" procedure?
  - Projects that will generate net revenue after project completion will have to complete a net-revenue action plan. The JS officers following your project will send you all documents and explain the procedure to be followed.

- Is the one person for necessary follow-up per project (i.e. from LP) or per project partner?
  - All partner organisations need to ensure that at least one person in the organisation is aware of all documents/accountancy related to the project. This shall be the case during the closure phase but also in case of a second level audit.
- Do we need to keep hard copies of documents for 4 years or are electronic copies acceptable?
  - If your organisation has a policy that allows for electronic copies, this is acceptable.