

2 Seas Programme decided exceptional measures relating to April financial claim submission

(communication to projects and FLCs)

Dear Lead Partners, dear Project Partners, dear First Level Controllers,

In the perspective of the April deadline for the submission of the consolidated financial claims, we would like to inform you of important decisions agreed with each of the Programme National Authorities in this difficult COVID-19 context.

Please find hereafter the exceptional measures that will be implemented in this unprecedented context to answer the issues identified both at (Lead) Partners' and First Level Controllers' levels in order to ensure as much expenditure as possible is declared, validated and submitted to the Programme.

A. At Partner level

We all know that both the staff working on the project and their organisations are confronted with:

1. Technical issues: Most of the staff working on the projects is currently working from home. People who usually are actively involved in the preparation of a partner financial claim may not have the necessary office equipment, leading to difficulties in accessing the EEP, accessing data only available within their organisation, and/or accessing the necessary supporting documentation to be provided to the FLC.
2. Financial issues: Some organisations may, because of these technical difficulties, either not claim as much as they could or even miss the April deadline altogether.

Therefore, in order to support the Interreg 2 Seas Partner organisations and their staff, in this already critical financial context, the April financial claim submission window will remain opened until the end of May 2020. **Claims can be submitted starting 23/04/2020 until 31/05/2020**.

If necessary, a similar measure may also be implemented for the July deadline, depending on how long this critical period lasts for. Obviously in this case, considering the exceptional character of the currently proposed measures, an official communication will be delivered the time being.

B. At First Level Controller level

Some of you, working from home, have already contacted the JS to raise an issue linked to the impossibility to sign the FLC Certificate as you do not have the necessary office equipment to print, sign, scan and upload FLC Certificates in the EEP system.

In order not to block the finalization of the control process and the submission of claims to the Programme, from 01/03/2020 and until further notice, **FLCs who do not have the office equipment at their disposal are exceptionally allowed to download the FLC Certificate and immediately re-upload it into the system i.e. without their signature**. This is a temporary measure and a signed certificate will be requested by the JS in the framework of the Admissibility check or at least as soon as the situation gets back to normal.

Obviously, FLCs who work from home but have the necessary office equipment shall proceed as usual.

This lenient measure, together with the extra time granted in relation to the extension of the April claim submission deadline, will hopefully smoothen the control implementation. Still, as usual, FLCs can only validate declared expenditure if there is adequate and sufficient supporting documentation available. The same level of assurance shall remain. Nevertheless, it may happen that some organisations, due to the context, are not in a capacity to provide exactly the same type of supporting documents than they usually provide FLCs with. The JS invites each First Level Controller to be pragmatic on the one hand, but obviously to ensure that validated expenditure is sound and complies with eligibility rules on the other hand. To this end, do not hesitate to contact your Central Approval Body and ask for advice shall you have any doubt on the acceptability or not of such or such probative document.

Finally, regarding the implementation of the On-the-Spot (OTS) Administrative and/or Physical checks, we understand that there are currently cancellations, postponements and delays. Each situation will be considered on a case-by-case basis with the JS lead and reviewer officer of the given project and tailor-made solutions will be proposed.

We remain available for any further information,

Best regards,

The 2 Seas JS