

COVID-19 crisis: 2 Seas Programme's second package of decisions

Communication to all partners of approved projects

Dear Project Partners

With the COVID crisis impacting the Programme and the projects, the Programme has developed a series of measures in order to, on the one hand, facilitate the projects' implementation and, on the other hand, reassess the feasibility of the projects as they were originally approved.

In order to facilitate the projects' implementation, the Programme took a first urgent decision to grant a top-down 6 months extension to all projects ending between April 2020 and March 2022.

Furthermore, certain requirements in the claiming process were relaxed (e.g. regarding signed FLC certificate) and the deadline of the April 2020 claim was extended by one month.

A second, more comprehensive package of decisions was then developed in April and approved by the Programme Monitoring Committee on 14 May 2020.

The measures contained in this 2nd package comprise new elements facilitating the projects' implementation and reassessing the feasibility of the projects.

The Programme has taken the following decisions:

1. The latest possible end day of projects has been postponed by 6 months. 2 Seas projects can now close at the latest by the 31 March 2023.
2. Projects ending between April 2022 and September 2022 can therefore ask for a 6 months extension, if they need so. This will be done on a case-by-case basis following the normal major modification procedure. There is no automatic top-down extension.
3. The MC has acknowledged that in some cases the projects will need to go through a certain reprofiling of their initial workplan. This should be in line with the following principles:
 - a. The Programme can accept that the projects may carry out unforeseen activities that are aimed at allowing the initial project's aim to be preserved. Once accepted in the project's revised workplan, the costs attached to these unforeseen activities will be considered as eligible, as long as they are in line with applicable EU, national and internal rules.
 - b. The extra costs linked to extra activities and longer duration of the project will in most cases be absorbed by the natural underspending.
 - c. In the exceptional case where underspending cannot be used to absorb all extra costs linked to essential delivery, an increase of ERDF could be requested. It is to be noted that this increase of ERDF can only be granted on condition that ERDF is released by other projects that are underspending.

- d. Where underspending would not be sufficient to absorb the extra costs and as extra ERDF might not be an option (see point c), then projects shall ensure that the ERDF is concentrated on financing essential activities necessary to the delivery of the initial outputs and expected results.
 - e. A reprofiling of the projects' workplan should be submitted via a technical or major modification.
4. The projects' performance review of 2020 to be carried out in 2021 will be for information only. The Programme acknowledges that virtually all projects are impacted by the COVID-19 crisis and anticipates that most projects will not be able to reach their 2020 targets. Therefore, the performance review that will be carried out in 2021 will have no financial consequence.
5. The feasibility of each approved project will need to be reassessed, through a dialogue with the LP. It will be done for all projects, starting from the most recently approved projects under call 7 and 8. The JS will kick-off a dialogue starting with call 7 and 8 projects in order to assess the feasibility of the project in its entirety. Call 7 and 8 Lead Partners will be contacted in the coming days by the JS lead officer to discuss the matter.
6. For all other more advanced projects approved in call 1 to call 6, the JS will contact the projects after summer, in order to discuss the impact of the crisis on the projects' workplans. These cases are considered less urgent since these projects have all received a top-down 6 months extension. Their situation will be reviewed after summer, unless explicitly requested and justified to do it before.

We all know the situation is exceptional and as you can see, the Programme is taking a series of comprehensive and exceptional measures. More measures are under development and will be deployed if considered pertinent and useful.

Rest assured that the JS is working full steam to overcome together these challenging times!

Best wishes

The JS team