



Interreg Europe COVID-19 crisis – additional measures for projects

In response to the global COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences, the Interreg Europe programme has put several actions into place. In particular, in order to mitigate the consequences of the crisis on projects implementation, the following measures to increase flexibility and allow additional activities were approved by the Interreg Europe Monitoring Committee meeting during its online meeting on 10th June 2020. For any further information, projects are invited to contact their JS officers.

Measures for additional flexibility						
N°	Project phase concerned	Description of the measure	JS prior validation	Change in AF	MC approval	Comments
1	Phase 1	<p>Possible extension of phase 1 by six months for third call projects lasting 54 months</p> <p>18 projects from 3rd call have to finalise their phase 1 by end of November 2020. Several projects have already contacted the JS to share their concerns that they will not be able to finalise the learning process by that time due to the current crisis. For those who will need more than 3 months, it is possible to grant an exceptional extension of their phase 1 by six months. This will reduce accordingly the duration of phase 2. The reporting rhythm would need to be adapted accordingly.</p> <p>Depending on the evolution of the situation, this measure may also be possible to the 26 projects of the 3rd call lasting 60 months and finalising their phase 1 by May 2021.</p>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Compared to the second proposed measure, this does not imply an extension of the whole project duration. It is just Phase 2 duration which is reduced to allow more time on Phase 1. However, this is still considered as a major change to the project, and the MA/JS has no mandate to approve such changes.



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2	Phase 1	<p>Possible extension of duration for 4th call projects lasting less than 48 months</p> <p>18 projects from 4th calls have to finalise their phase 1 by July 2021 (total duration of 36 months including a Phase 1 of 2 years only) while 23 others have to finalise their phase 1 by January 2022 (total duration of 42 months including a Phase 1 of 2.5 years). Some of these projects have already informed the JS that they will not manage to properly organise their policy learning process without a project extension. This extension is possible for these projects since it would remain within the programme's timeframe (it is however not possible for the remaining fourth call projects lasting 48 months). This extension would mean that more time would be allocated to Phase 1 (in principle 6 months) without modifying Phase 2 which only lasts 1 year and can anyway not be modified due to the lump sum.</p>	Yes	Yes	Yes (although not required)	The JS has in principle a mandate to approve extension of projects' duration. However, as explained in the manual, such changes were supposed to remain very exceptional. Therefore, the MA/JS prefers to have the green light from the MC before allowing it on a larger scale.
3	Phases 1 and 2	<p>Adapting the format of the activities</p> <p>Activities and in particular policy learning events can be organised fully online (e.g. stakeholder meetings) or <u>partly online</u> (e.g. study visits). The <u>physical</u> part of the meeting may be organised in reduced formats (bilateral study visits for the regions with special interest in a specific good practice that they want to import).</p>	No	No	No	Several projects have already successfully organised online policy learning events and even designed methodology for virtual study visits. See for instance: https://www.interregeurope.eu/oss/news/news-article/8571/stakeholders-online-workshop-session/
		<p>More flexibility to purchase equipment items needed to adapt the format of the activities</p> <p>If an increased number of policy learning events are organised online, projects may need to purchase equipment items, which were not planned in the application form, in order to organise such events (e.g. video conferencing tools, software licences).</p>	Yes	No	Yes	The revision of the flexibility rule requires an amendment of the programme manual. The following sentence has therefore been added to section 6.3.5 of the manual: "The 20 % flexibility rule also allows for the budget line equipment to be



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		<p>Normally this type of minor changes in the budget can be managed through the 20% flexibility rule, described in section 6.3.5 of the programme manual. However, if a project did not plan any budget for equipment in the application form, the flexibility rule cannot be applied.</p> <p>The 20 % flexibility rule is revised to allow projects with no equipment budget to report costs for unplanned equipment, provided that the unplanned equipment is duly justified and 'pre-validated' by the JS.</p>				exceeded by a maximum amount of EUR 7,000, provided that the unplanned equipment is duly justified and pre-validated by the JS."
4	Phases 1 and 2	<p>Adapting the focus of the activities</p> <p>Projects cannot ignore the unprecedented crisis the world is going through. It may therefore be inevitable to put the issue addressed by the projects in the crisis context. This means for instance that the focus of the learning process may have to evolve so that the issue addressed by the project (regardless of the thematic priorities concerned) is also tackled from the prism of the crisis (i.e. what impact the crisis has and will continue to have on the issue addressed by the project).</p> <p>In the same spirit, the objective of influencing the next programming programme is also facilitated for all projects when relevant.</p>	No	No	No	This slight shift of focus may be obvious for projects approved under TOs 1 and 3. For instance, a project focusing on business start-up in rural areas would need to see how this topic is affected by the crisis and what evolution it means for the regional development policies supporting this issue. But this adaptation is also possible for projects approved under TO4 and TO6 since any field of regional development policies (energy efficiency, sustainable transport, circular economy, natural and cultural heritage) will be impacted by the current crisis.
5	Phase 2	<p>Adapting the pilot actions</p> <p>The way pilot actions are implemented may need to be adapted to the current situation. Therefore, projects may propose measures to adapt the activities to ensure that the pilot action can still be properly implemented. This will be possible as long as the overall objective of the pilot action is not changed.</p>	Yes	No	No	



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6	Phase 1	<p>Advancing pilot actions</p> <p>Since projects are currently not able to implement the learning process as initially planned, the opportunities for 'learning by doing / testing' are reinforced. In this perspective, the pilot actions can be requested at any moment during phase 1 under the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It clearly contributes to the learning process not only in the region but also within the partnership. The implementation and lessons learnt from the pilot action should therefore be shared among the partnership to enrich the interregional exchange of experience, - All criteria for pilot actions would apply (apart from the interregionality that could be lightened). In particular, this means that the subject of the pilot should be clearly relevant to the issue addressed by the project. It should also be linked to a policy framework. Such pilot actions would also be included in the Action Plan of the region as an action already implemented. <p>For these cases, the interregional character can be less dominant as long as the link to the project activities is still clearly demonstrated (e.g. ideas generated through the stakeholder groups). These pilot actions can be submitted as soon as they are ready in phase 1. Since regions may need urgent solutions to face their policy challenges, the pilot action can also be related to the COVID-19 crisis (e.g. new methodology to provide business support services / development of a new online tourism concept; development of a tool for monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on a certain field, etc.).</p>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Due to the project stage of implementation, this measure is relevant mainly for 4 th call projects (and a few third call projects in case the duration of the pilot action is short). One added-value of this measure is to allow 4 th call projects to request pilot actions which otherwise would not be feasible due to the characteristics of their phase 2 (one year based on lump sum). However, due to these characteristics, pilot actions for 4 th call projects would need to be finalised at the latest by the end of phase 1.



Measures for additional activities (within the limit of the initial approved budget of the project)

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7	Phase 1	Revision / update the state of play analysis (if relevant) Some projects dedicate time to further analyse the different regional contexts of their partners in relation to the issue addressed by the project. It may be relevant to update the analysis to take into consideration the new context and assess how the issue addressed is impacted by the crisis in each region.	Yes	No	No	The analysis of the regional situation usually takes place at the beginning of projects. This measure may therefore be more relevant for 4 th call projects. However, if the updated analysis can still influence the learning and the action plans, it may also be carried out later in Phase 1
8	Phases 1 and 2	Organisation of additional activities to address the new context Projects can propose additional policy learning activities at local or interregional level in order to exchange more precisely among stakeholders and / or partners about the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. These activities could also be proposed as follow-up actions of the updated state of play mentioned above. These activities may also be related to joint meetings with other projects dealing with similar topic (cross-fertilisation)	Yes	No	No	For projects already in phase 2, these additional activities may be related mainly to stakeholder group meetings. The objective would be to analyse the relevance of the activities initially foreseen in the action plans and the need of changing / adapting them to the current context (the additional activities in phase 2 would not be applicable for 4 th call projects where this phase is based on a lump sum).
9	Phases 1 and 2	Participation in additional external events Partners can participate in additional events (for example online discussions among projects and thematic webinars organised by the Policy Learning Platform) dedicated to sharing solutions <u>on the issue addressed by the project</u> in the crisis context. The participating partner <u>no longer needs to have an active communication and dissemination role</u> but to make sure that the lessons learned from this participation are shared with the stakeholder and the other project partners.	No	No	No	



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10	Phases 1 and 2	Production of additional communication activities Projects can propose additional activities dedicated to promoting the project activities and results in particular in the current context. This could take the form of videos showing specific good practices relevant to face the COVID-19 crisis or 'solutions' from the regions involved in the projects (example from the World Economic Forum videos , CoR COVID-19 Exchange Platform). This could also take the form of online publication, brochures or infographics.	Yes	No	No	
11	Phases 1 and 2	Production of additional 'policy related' publications Projects can propose dedicated publications that would highlight the policy impact on the COVID-19 crisis on the issue addressed by the project. Examples from different regions could be provided. Specific policy recommendations could also be elaborated.	Yes	No	No	