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The ENI CBC Latvia-Lithuania-Belarus Programme 2014-2020
Guidance Note for Projects Implementation During COVID-19 Pandemic



The Programme's Managing Authority (MA), the National Authorities, the Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) and Control Contact Points of the ENI CBC Latvia-Lithuania-Belarus Programme 2014-2020 have received number of questions regarding difficulties in implementation of project activities, traveling and eligibility of costs due to COVID-19 pandemic. The short explanations are therefore provided below for project implementers and control bodies.

General instructions

- Please follow the recommendations and regulations officially issued by your national authority on first priority. Please also assess the situation based on the advice from other competent national public authorities, World Health Organisation (WHO), state embassies, national health organisations and partner organisations.
- Please avoid travelling during the pandemic and follow the national restrictions, if issued.
- Please use remote work methods and online communication wherever possible.
- The information regarding pandemic in **Latvia** is published on the website <https://covid19.gov.lv/> or <https://arkartassituacija.gov.lv> , the telephone line for questions is +371 673 87 661.
- The information regarding pandemic in **Lithuania** is published on the website www.koronastop.lt, free coronavirus hotline is 1808.
- The information regarding pandemic in **Belarus** is constantly updated in the official Telegram channel of the Ministry of Health "Официальный Минздрав", the telephone line for questions is +375-17-334-34-68.

Eligibility of expenditure already occurred

In the event of payment for hotels, tickets, catering, conference rooms, etc., reimbursement must be requested as soon as possible in accordance with the terms of the contract. In the case of non-refundable funds, please contact your auditors immediately in order to assess the case. The auditor may, in cases of force majeure and based on the partner's documented recovery efforts, consider the expenditure incurred as eligible for the project. However, all documentation and justification on the efforts taken shall be available.

Expenditure related to cancelled travel, events, etc. (e.g. tickets, pre-paid accommodation, event services, other procurements) that has occurred before the cancellation shall be eligible and the responsible national controller/auditor shall accept them if:

- They cannot be recovered by any means;
- They are subject to inevitable external circumstances (force majeure), e.g. official warnings by WHO or national authorities, or to the COVID-19 related medical condition or its suspicion of some participant;
- This expenditure and the relevant instructions of the authorities for such decision or the medical condition are properly documented.



In case the expenditure is refundable (from the provider, insurance covers the losses, etc.), it cannot be claimed in the framework of the programme.

Provisions regarding the implementation of the projects

In assessing the situation and further actions, please note that beneficiaries affected by the force majeure conditions are not exempted from obligations to pay, deliver, render services, but rather are exempted from responsibility for timely fulfilment of such obligations. Please keep in mind that all changes and modifications within the project implementation cycle shall be preliminary agreed with the respective Project and Financial Managers at the JTS.

Due to the changing situation and conditions, the MA/JTS recommend:

- To continue with implementation of activities (modified, if necessary) in order to reach the goals and indicators of the projects to the best of the present possibilities.
- However, the health and safety of people during the pandemic should be seriously taken into account. Thus the persons involved shall keep to the requirements of quarantine and national restrictions in their country (i.e. home office, travel limitations, online meetings, etc.). The possibilities of electronic documents and e-signature should be used as much as possible in order to reduce physical traveling and contacts to a minimum during pandemic.
- For future travels and events use flexible booking options and contractual arrangements allowing refundable cancellations, if possible.
- In order to avoid negative impact to the project implementation, whenever possible it is recommended to replace cancelled meetings and events by online measures, i.e. meetings by Skype, Zoom or other available online platforms, video-conferences, targeted online promotional campaigns, videos, online presentations of results, and use of social media and websites, if the quality of project results and the cross-border nature of events will not be reduced. Please note, that the online activities shall be properly documented as well. Responsible Project Manager at the JTS shall be consulted regarding proofs of expenditure and outputs of the online activities.
- In case project activities other than travel and events are affected by COVID-19 situation, projects are requested to properly document those cases and to identify alternative solutions to implement the activities in question.
- The beneficiaries are advised to carefully review agreements with suppliers in order to identify any risks in timely delivery and possibility of temporary suspension of agreements, if parties agree. If there are delays regarding supplies and/or works' implementation, it is recommended to foresee changes in the contracts, if applicable, regarding terms of delivery of supplies and/or works' implementation within project implementation period.
- Please follow explanations of national procurement monitoring authorities regarding amendments to the procurement contract, if the contract cannot be performed due to an emergency situation.



- Explanation in website of Procurement Monitoring Bureau of Latvia (Iepirkumu uzraudzības birojs): <https://www.iub.gov.lv/lv/node/1066>
- Explanation in website of Lithuanian Public Procurement Office is available here: <http://vpt.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos>
- It is advised to transfer payments to the suppliers after delivery as fast as possible.
- If because of COVID-19 situation beneficiaries do not organise some of the planned project's events, do not perform other administrative work related to the administration of the project, please consider real involvement in the project and declare it accordingly in the Progress / Final reports, as human resources will be necessary when you will organise the planned but postponed events or other issues related with the implementation of the project.
- The auditors of the projects should use the online methods for check of projects costs (checking evidence documents, photos, video and audio recording, etc.) and postpone checks-on-spot until the end of the pandemic and before approval of the final reports of the projects, if possible.
- The full package of Progress/Final reports and other project correspondence shall be submitted by the Lead Beneficiary to the JTS in e-version (scans of the originals/copies of the documents and excel file or signed by e-signature delivered via e-mail or electronic submission system "e-pristatymas") to the relevant Project and Financial Managers at the JTS. Paper version (by post) of the reports shall be submitted later as soon as traveling restrictions are removed. JTS will start the verification procedure of the report after receiving full e-version of the documents. The deadlines for each report remain unchanged.
- Correspondence related to the reports and letters between the JTS and the Lead Beneficiary will be carried out in e-version by e-mails (scans of signed letters) or via electronic submission system "e-pristatymas".

The procedure of changes and modifications:

The modifications within the projects shall be made on case by case basis with prior agreement of MA/JTS.

The procedure is as follows:

1. Contact your Project Manager at the JTS. In case the project identifies the need to postpone or modify project activities, the Lead Beneficiary shall contact JTS responsible Project Manager and inform on the situation as well as provide a proposal on how the activities shall be implemented or modified.
2. In case the changes proposed (regarding online solutions instead of meetings, etc.) do not increase the budget allocated for the proposed activity and no reallocations are needed in the Project Budget, the Lead beneficiary prior to implementation of the activity requests the changes via "Notification" procedure as described in Section 3.6.1 "Types of amendments to the project" of the Guidelines for Applicants and Beneficiaries.



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3. In case the changes proposed exceed the allocated budget for the activity, the request for minor amendment shall be submitted prior to implementation of the activity via “Minor amendments” procedure as described in Section 3.6.1 “Types of amendments to the project” of the Guidelines for Applicants and Beneficiaries.

4. As a general rule the prolongation of the project implementation period is to be requested in the last reporting period of the project implementation. Please use the proposed alternative measures to reduce the delay in project implementation to the possible minimum – project prolongation is possible only in individually and duly justified cases within the framework of the general timewise eligibility rules of the Programme.

For further information or clarification regarding your project, please contact your designated Project Manager and Financial Manager at the JTS by e-mail or phone.