

## **Guidance of the Managing Authority with regard to the impact of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic on Interreg V-A Hungary-Croatia Co-operation Programme 2014-2020 funded projects**

The Joint Secretariat of the Interreg V-A Hungary-Croatia Co-operation Programme 2014-2020 has received a number of queries related to project activities, travels, organizing events, eligibility of prevention costs etc. in relation to the current pandemic. The Managing Authority hereby provides the following guidance to partnerships and to the programme bodies.

### **General instructions**

In general, projects are advised to continue implementing their activities as originally planned. However, due to the constantly and rapidly changing situation, the MA/JS advises to continuously assess the situation and act **in accordance to the instructions of the relevant authorities responsible for public health, such as WHO and the national health organisations**. Furthermore, despite the potential difficulties, please always pursue keeping your project's **cross-border character** to the maximal possible degree.

Please **identify alternative solutions** and/or use the proposed alternative measures **to avoid any delay in project implementation**. Project prolongation should be requested only in individually and duly justified cases within the framework of the general eligibility rules of the Programme.

### **1. Online project events, activities**

**It is solely the partnership's responsibility** to decide whether to hold real, physical or online events, taking into consideration the aspects of the present COVID-19 situation or the potential further waves of the pandemic. The Interreg V-A Hungary-Croatia Co-operation Programme bodies are well aware of the risks of organizing physical events. This is why, in general, organizing online events, conferences, lectures, project meetings etc. instead of offline ones is **acceptable**. However, **the joint character of projects activities/events originally planned as joint should always be kept**. Furthermore, the **direct link** between the need for replacing an offline event with an online project event/activity and the COVID-19 situation **always has to be proven**.

**In case of organizing online events and other online project activities** (such as targeted online promotional campaigns, videos, online presentation of results, use of social media etc.), the partnership has to consider all possible aspects of such alignments.

For instance:

- the technicalities, hardware and software,
- the possible number of reach outs (number of participants from both sides of the border),
- the method of online knowledge sharing or, if needed, the online method of voting,
- interpretation, if needed,
- the type of online educational tool,
- the unnecessary or unexpected, unplanned costs,
- how the originally planned project goals can be reached under such online circumstances,
- how the originally planned project activities can be accomplished under such online circumstances,
- how the originally planned project indicators can be achieved under such online circumstances,
- activity plan, time schedule of project events,
- keeping real cross-border effect,
- adjusting project budget,
- submitting a project modification request,
- the direct link between the pandemic and the need for the modification has to be always proven etc.

*Here is an example: Originally the partnership had planned a physical event as opening conference but later decided to have it online. In this case most probably there will be no need for catering and/or premises to rent, travel and accommodation costs etc. Thus these costs could be reallocated to other budget lines to which it is reasonable (with properly underpinned reasons) only, or you could even introduce new, properly underpinned budget items, needs (for example IT support to handle such online meetings/conferences etc.).*

**Proper administration** of the online project activities is essential. If the costs of such online project activities are to be reported, the emerging costs have to be properly administered, recorded from not only the financial parts, but also concerning the professional content point of view. **The minimum requirements** to approve such project activities are e.g. the following: invitation mails, homepages where the event is promoted, proper registration of participants, recordings of the online events,

screenshots, copies of presentations, minutes, a video of the conference, any form of e-publications etc. **As regards the financial aspects of the reimbursement please contact the relevant First Level Control Body: <http://www.huhr-cbc.com/en/control-bodies--flc-contacts>**

## 2. Organizing events with higher number of participants

If replacing project events with online ones would be unreasonable (for example organizing events with large number of participants expectedly from both sides of the border, such as: folkdance camps, gastronomic festivals, sport contests etc.), the following aspect should be taken into consideration:

- Organizing project events **with the originally planned amount of people, in line with the original schedule** is acceptable if the partnership takes the instructions of the relevant authorities responsible for public health, such as WHO and the national health organisations always into consideration. The partnership has to take into consideration all possible **safety recommendation of preventing contagion**.
- **Reducing the number of participants to a reasonable number** is acceptable, taking always into account the national-level rules and regulations on sanitizing, gathering, traveling, social distancing, wearing mask etc. in the light of the COVID-19 situation. Please note that there are no general rules on the volume of such modifications. It is a subject to a case-by-case decision process with the JS. When rationalizing the number of participants, please do not forget to adjust other aspects of your project as well (such as the project budget).
- If the **originally planned project duration allows**, and **when the national restrictions (on traveling, gathering etc.) permit it, rescheduling/postponing** these events **to a later stage could also be a solution**. Being in line with the original goals of the project, in special cases, even **seasonal changes** of organizing project events is acceptable (for example: organizing a summer festival instead of an autumn festival).
- For future travels and events please make use of **flexible booking options** and contractual arrangements allowing refundable cancellations.

## 3. Eligibility of costs related to the COVID-19 situation

In case project activities other than travel and events are concerned with the COVID-19-pandemic situation, projects are requested to **properly document** those cases and to **identify alternative solutions to implement the activities in question**.

**Costs of preventive measures are, in general, eligible** (such as purchasing thermometers, masks, sanitizers etc.). **The direct link between the COVID-19 situation and the necessity of purchasing such safety, preventive measures and/or services has to be always clear, well documented, and proven** by the partnership.

Please bear in mind that above the EU funds already available in the project **no extra EU funding is to be provided** for such provisions.

Purchasing services through **conditional public procurement procedure** with a suspensive clause is advisable. In this **suspensive clause**, you can regulate the service depending always on the given circumstances of public health situation.

As an overarching rule, projects should **always try and reach the goals and indicators** as set out in the Subsidy Contracts to the best of the present possibilities. The MA/JS will be open to case-by-case solutions with regard to each project that has had issues with attaining certain goals and outputs planned in the project.

Should you need any further information or clarification, please contact your designated JS Programme Manager by e-mail or phone.

Best regards,

Managing Authority  
Interreg V-A Hungary-Croatia Co-operation Programme 2014-2020