



Frequently Asked Questions  
on the impact of Covid-19 on the implementation of grants awarded with  
calls for proposals for Preparedness and Prevention projects under the  
Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM)

**1) Is there any possibility to modify activities under ongoing Preparedness and Prevention projects due to the Covid-19 emergency?**

*In the current situation, beneficiaries may, without a formal amendment, substitute physical activities with virtual activities as long as the objectives and results of the project remain the same and those modifications remain within the project budget flexibility provided in the Grant Agreement. The changes should be explained in the final report. See also questions n° 4 and 8 below.*

**2) My project has made savings initially budgeted e.g. for travel and subsistence costs due to Covid-19. Can I use these savings to finance additional activities?**

*The additional activities need to fit into the objectives of the project and add value to the planned results. Each such case will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by DG ECHO, either in advance or ex-post at reporting stage.*

*It is therefore recommended that beneficiaries consult informally their Project Officer in DG ECHO on any such changes before the change is implemented. If the change goes beyond the budget flexibility provided for in the Grant Agreement, a formal amendment is required in any case.*

**3) Is there a possibility to extend the project duration of grants due to the Covid-19 emergency?**

*Beneficiaries may request an amendment to extend the initial project duration due to the Covid-19 situation. DG ECHO will assess each request (case-by-case) based on the stage of implementation of the project and the need of the beneficiary in the light of the justification and the updated planning provided. In any case, the maximum grant amount indicated in Article 5 of the Grant Agreement cannot be increased.*

*Extensions should be limited in time. Depending on the developments of the Covid-19 situation in 2021, if extensions of more than 6 months may still be justified, the beneficiary will be requested to provide an additional progress report.*

**4) What happens to costs in grants when there are difficulties in implementing the action due to the Covid-19 emergency?**

*Given this unprecedented pandemic situation, the necessary flexibility will be given in relation to the action implementation. Whenever possible, beneficiaries should continue implementing activities through other forms of working, e.g. telework or other forms of remote working. Staff costs related to work performed under teleworking conditions during the confinement period could be accepted as eligible even if it is not the beneficiary's usual practice to telework, under the condition that they respect the eligibility criteria set in Article 6 of the Grant Agreement.*

*If not already foreseen, beneficiaries are strongly encouraged to shift activities and tasks whenever possible. For instance, when physical presence is needed on the ground (e.g. lab work/data collection, etc.), an activity may be postponed after confinement measures are over and, meanwhile, remote work could be done instead (desk work, drafting of reports, etc.). Such rescheduling of activities and deviations from the initial timing set out in Annex 1 will not be a reason to refuse the eligibility of costs.*

**5) What happens to costs already incurred for services that had to be cancelled because of the Covid-19 emergency?**

*For ongoing 2018 and 2019 projects, beneficiaries may have had to cancel, reschedule and / or reorganise some of their activities (e.g. meetings and other events) due to the Covid-19 crisis. If Beneficiaries have already incurred costs for services that had to be cancelled, such as travel tickets, bookings for hotels, meeting rooms or catering, they should first try and have these costs reimbursed by the travel agency, insurance or other source. If Beneficiaries cannot get a reimbursement, they should include the costs in their final financial statement and keep adequate justification and evidence for claiming these costs under force majeure (e.g. regional or national decisions to suspend gatherings in the areas affected at the time of the event, proof that the reimbursement was refused, etc.). Where ongoing projects have been extended and new activities are planned, Beneficiaries should apply the rule for new projects as per the second paragraph.*

*For new 2020 projects, Beneficiaries should use flexible arrangements when organising activities in order to ensure that the cost can be recuperated if the activity has to be rescheduled or cannot take place.*

**6) How will the Commission handle possible delays in submitting deliverables and reports?**

*Flexibility can be given for possible delays in submitting deliverables and reports as well as reaching milestones due to the confinement measures of the Covid-19 crisis. The coordinator will have to communicate potential and actual delays together with their reason and the updated timing to the project officer in DG ECHO. In particular, for reports linked to payments, flexibility may still be allowed as regards the 60 days period for the submission of the report. Any late report linked to payment will subsequently lead to later payment.*

*In this context, beneficiaries should be aware that costs incurred for project implementation after the project end date are not eligible. Therefore, the flexibility as per above applies to late submission of reports, and not to late implementation of the action. In case of unfinished tasks within the action's implementation period, the project coordinator must request in due time an amendment for an extension of the action's duration.*

**7) Is it possible to postpone the starting date of the action?**

*For grant agreements already signed but with a starting date in the future (i.e. no work has started yet), postponing the starting date is possible only via an amendment to the grant agreement. Any such request from the beneficiary will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by DG ECHO. A starting date fixed later in time may delay the pre-financing payment.*

**8) What can be done in case it is not possible to implement all activities under the Grant Agreement?**

*Beneficiaries should consider in the first place to postpone those activities to a later date and request an amendment. In case not possible, the project coordinator should contact, at as early a stage as possible, the responsible Project Officer in DG ECHO to explain which activities and corresponding deliverables and results cannot be implemented. Costs incurred in relation to non-implemented activities, unless they are covered under question n° 5 above, are not eligible for Union funding.*

*If it is not possible to carry out work under the action, beneficiaries may request to suspend the implementation of the action (Article 33(1) of the Grant Agreement). However, costs incurred during the suspension period are not eligible for Union co-financing.*