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<Commission>{PETI}Committee on Petitions</Commission>

<Date>{07/03/2023}7.3.2023</Date>

<TitreType>NOTICE TO MEMBERS</TitreType>

Subject: <TITRE>Petition No 0678/2022 by Marta Winiarska (Polish) on behalf of Polski Związek Innowacyjnych Firm Biotechnologii Medycznej, on the timetable of implementation and settlement of EU projects in Poland</TITRE>

1. Summary of petition

The petitioner points to the need to make the timetable for implementation and the settlement of projects from EU funds (for the period 2014-2020) more flexible in the field of research, development and innovation. In her opinion the COVID-19 Pandemic and the war in Ukraine made almost impossible the efficient implementation of projects in many areas, and the closure of ongoing R & D & I projects, only for formal and not substantive (research) reasons will be detrimental for the progress in whole area and contradictory to the values of the European Union and sound management of public funds. The petitioner advocates that the support provided must take into account not only the original needs and project assumptions, but also the objective factors affecting all beneficiaries that can influence the implementation of the projects and the efficient management of EU funds, and suggests extending the implementation and settlement of projects by a minimum of 12 months (optimal by 24 months).

2. Admissibility

Declared admissible on 14 December 2022.

3. Commission reply, received on 7 March 2023

Regarding the difficulties faced on the implementation of investments supported by cohesion policy and the requested extension of the eligibility period for the 2014-2020 programmes, the Commission confirms that it is fully aware of the projects implementation difficulties. The Commission is aware of the difficulties, including timetables for implementation and the settlement of projects from EU funds for the period 2014-2020, that Poland, as well as other Member States, have been encountering - stemming from the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian aggression on Ukraine. The Commission also acknowledges the call of the medical biotechnology industry (represented by BioInMed’s Innovative Medical Biotechnology Association) for more flexible conditions for implementing projects under the 2014-2020 perspective, in particular in the field of research, development and innovation in the Operational Programme Smart Growth.

The Commission proposed a number of measures to address these difficulties and on 19 October 2022, the European Parliament and the Council amended Regulations (EU) No 1303/2013 and (EU) 2021/1060 as regards additional flexibility to address the consequences of the military aggression of the Russian Federation FAST (Flexible Assistance for Territories) – CARE[[1]](#footnote-1). This package entails a comprehensive set of measures, introducing further flexibility to the regulatory framework of cohesion policy for addressing the consequences of the war in Ukraine and to contribute to alleviating the burden on public budgets, through increased pre-financing and co-financing rates for the concerned projects. As regards projects suffering from delays and cost overruns due to shortages of construction material and labour force triggered by the war, the amended regulation now enables such projects under certain conditions[[2]](#footnote-2) to be completed with the support from 2021-2027 programmes, even in a situation where they would not have been eligible under the new programmes.

While extending the eligibility period for the programming period 2014-2020 was one of the assessed possibilities, it was not the option chosen given the limited resources in national and regional administrations for this programming funds. Furthermore, this option would have prolonged the overlap of the two programming periods, and thereby delayed the effective take up and implementation of the 2021-2027 programmes. Further delays in 2021-2027 programme implementation would severely impede on the capacity of Polish regions to become more resilient, by engaging in a future-proof growth pattern driven by the digital and green transition. The delay would also put in question the possible use of the flexibility offered by FAST (Flexible Assistance for Territories) – CARE to support the previous programming period projects on which its support is fundamental for their completion. The Commission strongly encourages the Polish authorities to make the best use of these flexibilities in order to accelerate the completion of 2014-2020 programmes and devote all necessary efforts to the rapid start of the new programmes.

Conclusion

We are confident that this exceptional flexibility will effectively contribute to overcome the difficulties the different regions are experiencing and believe that an extension of the programming period is therefore not justified.

1. Regulation (EU) 2022/2039 - <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022R2039&from=EN> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Article 118a(1) of the Regulation (EU) 2022/2039 inserted conditions for operations subject to phased implementation that were selected for support before 29 June 2022 under Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)