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Subject: Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE  
Programme guidance to national  
controllers on how to deal with issues being  
faced by controllers due to COVID-19 outbreak

Dear National Control Bodies,

due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Managing Authority (MA) and Joint Secretariat (JS) of the Interreg Central Europe Programme (CE) have received a number of queries related to various issues that the national controllers are being faced with during their verifications. In light of this, the MA/JS would like to provide the following guidance and exceptional measures:

### On-the-spot verifications

According to the Interreg CE rules (implementation manual chapter A.4.1), on-the-spot verifications have to be performed as follows:

- For **centralised control systems** either on each beneficiary or on a sample basis as defined in the Article 23 questionnaire of the respective Member State.
- For **decentralised control systems** on-the-spot verifications of all beneficiaries are compulsory at least once and they have to take place in the first half of the project implementation period.
- For both **centralised and decentralised systems**, beneficiaries realising investments in thematic equipment with a value of more than EUR 2.000 per cost item and/or any investment in infrastructure/works need to be verified on-the-spot.

Given that the above-mentioned rules form part of the Interreg CE Programme Management and Control System, it is not possible to completely waive the obligation of performing such on-the-spot verifications.

However, the MA/JS has consulted with the Programme Audit Authority and have agreed that, for those projects that are still being implemented, it is possible for the national controllers to postpone the on-the-spot verifications until a later date and continue with the desk-based verifications (this mainly relates to Call 3 and Call 4 projects). On-the-spot verifications will have to resume once the COVID-19 situation is cleared.

If the on-the-spot verifications were planned to be performed during the verification of the last Progress Report (this mainly relates to Call 1 and Call 2 projects) and it is therefore not feasible to postpone the check, the national controllers are kindly requested to implement comparable measure. These could include photo documentation (e.g. for the verification of equipment, physical archiving, compliance with publicity/communication rules, existence of outputs/deliverables etc.) or screenshots (e.g. for the verification of the accounting system, e-archiving etc.).

#### **Verifications of hard copies and the annulling of documents**

In case the verification of hard copies is required and it is not possible to be performed, the verifications can be carried out on soft copies (e.g. scans of originals).

According to the Interreg CE rules (implementation manual chapter A.4.4.2), irrespective of the control system in place in the different Member States, the practice of annulling the originals of invoices and other probative documents is compulsory. The MA/JS agrees that the annulling of original documents can for the time being be postponed. The annulling of documents would then have to be carried out as soon as the situation returns back to normality.

The above-stated exceptional measures have been put in place in order to mitigate the issues brought about by the COVID-19 outbreak. As soon as the situation clears, the national controllers are to resume their verifications in line with the Interreg CE rules.

Yours sincerely,  
Managing Authority  
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(electronically signed)

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