

**Summary Report on “Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative Plus (CRII+)”**  
**GoToMeeting 19-05-2020 | 8:30-10:00**

A one-hour and thirty minutes videoconference on “Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative Plus (CRII+)” was hosted online by European Clusters Alliance in the European Alliance Against Coronavirus Forum. Its main aim was to present the updates and modifications of the Cohesion policy funds to meet the needs of the Member States and tackle their challenges during the Coronavirus emergency.

There were more than 60 attendees. Tereza Krausova, expert from DG REGIO European Commission, started the discussion by presenting in details all modifications of the Cohesion policy legislative framework. The Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative Plus (CRII+) modified the Common provision regulation to accommodate to the flexibility needs of Member states to be able to suitably tackle the impacts of the pandemic. The package facilitates the use of the not-yet-utilised support from the cohesion policy funds for the sectors and regions severely hit by the COVID-19 crisis. Simplification of the procedural steps of the programme offer sufficient flexibility to Member States to tackle their challenges always under the legal certainty and general scope of the funds. The amendments also allow the increase of EU co-financing rates to 100% during the 2020-2021 accounting year with minor administrative burdens and without transfer limitations between categories of regions and between funds.

In addition, Esteban Pelayo, the Director of European Association of Development Agencies (EURADA), which is a public entity that supports companies with a private management, presented the regional development agencies and their activities. Their focus during the COVID-19 crisis was to guarantee liquidity and employment. The development agencies are using their own resources to support local stakeholders and meet their needs during this time. The CRII should have greater flexibility for times like this of urgent economic response. It is crucial to rethink the management procedures to have more flexibility with the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

Finally, Marek Przeor, expert from DG GROW European Commission, explained how the modifications are used by different Member States. He explained budgetary constraints and different countries have different funds available subject to their actual contracting for 2014-20. Some have very little available funding from the cohesion policy funds like France, Belgium, Netherlands and the public support comes mainly from the national sources. Some other countries like Spain and Italy have still significant amounts but the calls at the national level have not been launched yet like for Spain and Italy. Poland and Portugal, also with significant amounts, have already launched Covid-19 related calls. The most popular measures used by member state are:.. Hospital equipment/personnel, wages, purchase or support for the production of personal protection equipment, ventilators, testing kits, support for SMEs in the form of grants and financial instruments for working capital in SMEs, unemployment schemes and salary subsidies.

**Main points:**

- The modifications introduced to the legislation are not obligatory for the member states who can use on voluntary basis the cohesion policy funds modifications
- The funding is not additional funding, but funding redirected to COVID related spendings from other priorities like research and innovation, renewable energy, transport etc.

- COVID-19 emergency accelerated the process of operational programme modifications, but still the process takes a while to reach the ground in shared management as it is in the hands of member states how and when they use the proposed modifications,
- Member States notify state aid to the European Commission using the Temporary Framework for State Aid measures. They all are public at:  
[https://ec.europa.eu/competition/state\\_aid/what\\_is\\_new/covid\\_19.html](https://ec.europa.eu/competition/state_aid/what_is_new/covid_19.html)

#### **Reactions from Participants:**

- Need to establish effective dialogue between different regional actors to set the priorities and invent the way to support their activities and needs
- Implementation process of the program is crucial
- Operational programmes, in particular at regional level, are moving fast to launch calls with their available funding and procedures. The example of Andalusia was given with global grants which can be managed by regional development agency to modify themselves many of their activities to support SMEs
- COVID shows, EU needs funding to cope with such a crises like pandemia and cohesion policy funding is not sufficient to react quickly across the EU
- Recovery plan is not a unilateral decision, all Member States should agree and propose solutions
- The flexibility in the implementation of calls , enables the participation of all stakeholders to propose tailored made measures to regional authorities to support the economic recovery
- Effective dialogue should be built between the clusters community and regional development agencies in order to reinvent our communities. This is a good time while smart specialisation strategies are being revised and its governance requires entrepreneurial lead.

#### **Next steps/actions:**

- [Discussion webpage](#) available for further updates on the subject by the EAAC (European Alliance Against Coronavirus) forum in the European Cluster Collaboration platform