Ref. Ares(2024)1857366 - 11/03/2024

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
REGIONAL AND URBAN POLICY

The Director-General

Brussels,
REGIO.F/SS/hk

Subject: Towards the successful completion of the 2014-2020 programming period

Ref.: Commissioner Ferreira letter of 20 July 2023 (Ares(2023)5059762)
Letter from DG REGIO and DG EMPL of 15 February 2023 (Ares(2023)1096008)

Your Excellency,

Having reached the end of the eligibility period for the programming period 2014-2020 in accordance with Article 65(2) of the Common Provisions Regulation, I am writing to you to ensure the successful completion of the ERDF programmes. This includes reducing the risk of decommitment or recovery at closure in view of the final accounting year running from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024.

By 31 January 2024, the Commission received your updated forecasts regarding the expected payment applications to be transmitted in 2024 and 2025. Based on the current state of play (as result of the last accepted annual accounts available) and remaining expenditure to be declared according to these forecasts, there appears to be a risk of decommitment or recovery at closure now standing at about EUR 4.2 million for the ERDF. This estimate nevertheless is indicative and does not take into account the potential use of the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP) Regulation and the closure flexibilities, such as 15% flexibility between the priorities. The final absorption will depend on the actual submission of the claims and their assessment at closure.

Given the reassuring levels of contracting and spending in the Netherlands, coupled with the opportunities deriving from the recent entry into force of the STEP Regulation, final efforts should be made to avoid decommitments under the 2014-2020 programmes. I would therefore encourage the Dutch authorities, where relevant and possible (respecting Article 129 of the Common Provisions Regulation at closure), to make use of the possibility of 100% co-financing for the last accounting year, as well as the extended deadlines for the submission of the final interim payment request for the accounting year 2023-2024 and the closure documents.

His Excellency Mr Pieter Jan Kleiweg de Zwaan
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative
Permanent Representation of the Netherlands
Kortenberglaan 4-10
B-1040 Brussel

I would like to remind you that, in order to ensure sound implementation of the Union budget and respect for the payment ceilings, amounts from resources other than REACT-EU reimbursed by the Commission as interim payments in 2025 shall not exceed 1% of the total financial appropriations of the programme concerned by the Fund. Amounts due that exceed the ceiling of 1% of programme appropriations per fund for 2025 should not be paid in 2025 nor in subsequent years but only used for the clearance of pre-financing. Unused amounts should be decommitted in accordance with Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 at the time of closure. I would therefore strongly encourage to submit all interim payment claims in 2024.

The managing authorities have received an invitation to attend a webinar on STEP organised by DG REGIO on 25 April and have been invited to submit their questions in advance so that replies can be provided at the webinar. Please note that the webinar will be web-streamed and recorded to ensure it reaches the widest possible audience.

In line with previous communications (mentioned in reference above) on the financial implementation of the 2014-2020 period, I would like to remind you the flexibilities included in the Closure guidelines, such as the increased 15% flexibility between priority axes and more flexible rules for phasing as well as the option of overbooking.

My services remain at your disposal to provide any assistance that you may need to achieve a successful completion of the programming period.

Yours faithfully,

Themis CHRISTOPHIDOU

Electronically signed on 11/03/2024 10:30 (UTC+01) in accordance with Article 11 of Commission Decision (EU) 2021/2121