

**Cross-programme Analysis on irregularities, recoveries and decommitment; Kick-off meeting**

23 March | Brussels, Belgium

Ideas on avoiding decommitment

Participants at the kick-off meeting discussed possible ways of avoiding decommitment on different levels of the programme implementation cycle. The ideas were summed up and will be a basis for future work on this topic. Below you can find the ideas given by the participants during the meeting. Please note, that this is just a list of ideas that came to our mind during the brainstorming session and was not modified by INTERACT.

Programming phase

- Decide on a minimum project size based on programme area specifics, programme resources and potential types of projects;
- Agree on strategic projects/topics/priorities before programme approval in order to have a fast start to the programme;
- Prepare a fast payment system, agree on potential pre-payments;
- Decide on the co-financing rate (possibly a flexible rate, high or low rate - it might have a big input on the decommitment risk);
- Agree on strict/flexible reporting rules - to ensure timely reporting in future;
- Estimate the number and size of potential projects (based on the regions' needs and partners capacities);
- Adapt the spending plan from the OP to the project life cycle (less resources to be allocated in the first two years and in the last year of programme implementation);
- Be ready with all necessary materials/procedures/templates to open the 1st call for proposals as soon as possible.



Project assessment and selection phase

- Make the inclusion of milestones in the application form obligatory (MC should include an obligation to follow the milestones - with a detailed budget allocated accordingly. This gives the opportunity to decommit funds from the projects immediately when milestones are not reached - opportunity to make recycling of funds faster);
- Favour the involvement of the private sector in assessment;
- Calls for proposals with deadlines speed up the process of getting projects on board (you are more able to start to control the process);
- Preparatory costs should be 100% refunded once the project is approved - this would also enable more private partners to be involved;
- Cluster similar projects (also new projects with those that are already in the process of implementation) to make joint/flexible budgets;
- Accept projects only for a pilot phase and continue only the successful ones.

Project implementation phase

- Make use of a waiting (reserve) list;
- Reduce unrealistic projects' budgets (at the assessment stage especially);
- Contract the projects as quickly as possible;
- Overcommit the programme budget if possible;
- Ensure that in decentralized systems First Level Controllers are quickly approved - shorten the procedure;
- Prepare a monitoring plan on the basis of a risk management model;
- Check if First Level Control is performing checks within time limits;
- Check if project spending forecasts are realistic;
- Control the work plan / milestones of the project;
- Monitor projects' savings and contract these savings;
- Use unofficial additional quarterly/weekly/monthly beneficiaries reports - call partners to ask for sending the report even if there is only 1 invoice;
- Organize N+2 meetings with the projects;
- Intervene (at project and programme level) in cases when it is need;
- Monitor closely large projects;



- Make sure JTS/MA have the capacity to check the claims (do not organize e.g. MC meetings in busy periods).

Project closure phase

- Use empirical rates to foresee spending (on project and programme level);
- Offer flexibility between budget lines/work packages;
- Make strategic decision on who should use recycled funds;
- Apply recycling of unused funds:
 - Early decision on recycling;
 - Additional calls for projects to use unused funds;
 - Waiting (reserve) list of projects;
 - More money for good/strategic projects;
- Be aware of the spending target of the programme - what do we aim at?