

NON PAPER ON COVID-19 SPECIFIC INDICATORS

Questions and Answers

Brussels, 18/08/2020

On the basis of applicable EU law, this document provides technical advice for colleagues and bodies involved in the monitoring, control or implementation of the European Structural and Investment Funds on how to apply the EU rules in this area. It aims to provide explanations of the said rules in order to facilitate programme implementation and to encourage good practice(s). It is without prejudice to the interpretation of the Court of Justice and the General Court.

The CV indicators were proposed in a Commission non-paper to EGESIF on 13 May 2020. The non-paper was also presented to the REGIO Evaluation Network on the same day and the ESF Evaluation Partnership on 9 June.

On 17 June 2020, a technical webinar was held to which there were around 500 participants from the EGESIF, the REGIO Evaluation Network, the ESF Partnership and programme representatives.

This Q+A document contains the questions posed and answers offered with additional clarification made since 17 June 2020. It is without prejudice to the existing replies posted on the CRII platform.

1. CV INDICATORS

The list of proposed COVID-19 programme specific indicators are grouped as follows:

1.1. HEALTH

1.1.1. (CV1-CV5) VALUE OF INVESTMENTS IN THE HEALTH SECTOR (ALL IN TOTAL PUBLIC COST)

1.1.1.1. Question: Disaggregating CV indicators. CV4 ('Value of IT equipment and software/licences financed in COVID-19 response') can the indicator be disaggregated only for these 3 sub-indicators (CV4a, CV4b, CV4c), or the disaggregation might be wider, also for different groups than SMEs, health and education?

Answer: The disaggregation may be extended also for different groups, but the codes used should be different from those proposed already in the non-paper. (i.e. CV4d, etc.)

1.1.1.2. Question: In the context of total public cost (CV 1, CV 2): what kind of cost should be measured within - only qualified public cost or qualified + non-qualified costs? Question: What is the definition of total public costs? Eligible costs or total cost of project? (including CV30 "Value of ESF actions to combat effects of the COVID-19")

Answer: The Commission suggests in the non-paper to measure the total public eligible cost. We are interested in the total programme contribution. We considered that most, if not all, of

these measures would be solely publicly funded and that it would be easier to identify the public cost rather than the EU share.

If this is a challenge, because there is a small fraction of private financing, you could clearly qualify in your national definitions that a small amount of private financing may be present (i.e. 10-20%). If the private fraction is higher we ask programmes to use a separate national CV indicator.

1.1.1.3. Question: Total public cost of PPE: In relation to setting targets, a proposal to use the flexibility to co-finance purchase of PPE, the overall cost will be multiples of the ERDF available to finance. The target will be a function of the value of total public expenditure available, is that acceptable?

Answer: In more developed regions, the programme will ideally contribute a significant amount to a discrete part of the PPE effort. In that way the EU co-financing would represent a significant share and the supporting documentation could be more limited. In case that is not practical, then the target may indeed be a function of a high total public costs compared to the EU contribution.

1.1.1.4. Question: Are the CV programme-specific financial indicators expected to be reported in EUR and not in million EUR?

Answer: The CV programme-specific financial indicators proposed by the COM Non-paper are expected to be reported in EUR (not million EUR), and to reflect the value of the total public cost.

1.1.1.5. Question: Could financial-type CV programme-specific indicators be enough to report on the actions taken by MS in response to the COVID-19 crisis?

Answer: The CV programme-specific financial indicators reflect only the financial dimension of the planned and implemented actions for tackling the COVID-19 crisis. For transparency and traceability purposes, the Commission services consider it of utmost importance that the programmes also measure the direct outputs generated by and linked to the financial resources involved by these actions.

1.1.2. (CV6-CV11) INDICATOR OF THE PHYSICAL INVESTMENTS IN THE HEALTH SECTOR

1.1.2.1. Question: In relation CV8 Additional bed space created for COVID-19 patients - is it implied that they are ring-fenced for use for treating patients with Covid related illnesses?

Answer: It is intended that the indicator measure any increase in intensive care units bed capacity (beds, monitors, etc.) but not necessarily that the bed capacity is uniquely for COVID-19 patients.

1.1.2.2. Question: Is it possible to use the CV7 Ventilators to support treatment of COVID-19 (ERDF) for ESF?

Answer: No. In the 12 May non-paper, certain indicators have an asterisk indicating that they are relevant under ESF, excluding CV7. If you want to use this indicator name, you have to manually encode it and assign to it an indicator code, different from CV7.

The CV indicators metadata and translations are found in this ESIF OPEN DATA dataset and will be added to SFC2014 as a controlled list (July – August 2020): <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/2014-2020-Indicators/COVID19-specific-monitoring-indicators-2020/pz85-ptis>.

1.1.2.3. Question: CV10 Testing capacity supported for COVID-19 - what period of time does this indicator refer to? Number of possible tests but measured daily, weekly or monthly?

Answer: CV10 was intended to capture the number of tests available to be used as a result of EU support. No specific time limit is foreseen.

Certain laboratory testing may have a high nominal capacity, but that capacity is only usable if the reagents and testing kits are available. If the EU support is to the equipment alone then indicator CV9 - Number of laboratories supported to test for COVID-19 - should rather be used. Where the EU support is used, in addition, to secure the reagent and other materials necessary to conduct tests, it is that number of tests that is sought under CV10.

Should home diagnostic / antibody test kits become available, the number purchased would also be relevant to be reported.

1.1.2.4. Question: Which indicator includes disinfectant (finance and material)?

Answer: Indicators CV6-CV11 are not intended to cover disinfectant. The CV indicators do not cover all potentially eligible activities.

If there is a question about eligibility, it should be posed through the relevant geographic desks.

1.1.2.5. Question: Are the ERDF indicators applicable also to Cohesion Fund?

Answer: The Commission considers that the CRII/CRII+ eligibility changes and the thematic focus of the main elements of the COVID-19 response fall under the scope of the ERDF and ESF. The CV indicators are not considered relevant for the Cohesion Fund.

1.1.2.6. Question: Can CV8 be used under ESF?

Under the proposed indicators, CV8 (additional bed space created for COVID-19 patients including acute and ICU beds, also in field hospitals) is not marked as being relevant to ESF. Bed spaces are dependent on availability of NHS staff to support them. Can this be included as an ESF relevant indicator, as ESF indicators that support persons (e.g. CV31, CVST and CVHC) will contribute to the number of beds that hospitals can provide?

Answer: ESF interventions in the health sector make use of direct output and direct result indicators. In the case described, the direct output of the action is the number of participants, in this case, health care personnel. Bed space is not created through ESF support. In the 12 May non-paper, certain indicators have an asterisk indicating that they are relevant under ESF, excluding CV8. CV8 will not be available in SFC2014 for ESF use. Therefore, if you want to use such an indicator name, you have to manually encode it and assign to it an indicator code, different from CV8.

1.1.2.7. Question: The answer to question 1.1.1.4 it is said that indicators CV6-CV11 were not intended to cover disinfectant. Is disinfectant an eligible costs? It is possible to fund projects, whether or not such liquids would be eligible for funding? Do you have a list of cost items that are suitable for financing?

Answer: In defining the list of non-paper CV indicators the Commission services have chosen indicators on that basis that they were clearly eligible, relevant and could be measured with reasonable effort. The indicators in themselves do not determine eligibility of all actions. If you have doubts on eligibility, your formal question(s) should be addressed to the relevant Geographic desk in DG REGIO or DG EMPL.

1.1.2.8. Do programmes have to strictly specify the final list of personal protective equipment during the preparation of the national monitoring system? Is it possible to use "another one"?

Answer: The Commission services have not provided full definitions. The non-paper points out that these are specific indicators and there is therefore scope for the programmes to more clearly define what is covered, in particular in order to guide their project promoters and take account of programmes circumstances.

1.2. SMEs

1.2.1. (CV20-CV25) Indicators on the support provided to enterprises

1.2.1.1. Question: Regarding SME specific indicators, are the inclusion of such indicators linked to additional monetary allocation?

Answer: The use of the SME specific CV indicators is not restricted only to additional financial allocations. Their purpose is to try and capture the full scope of working capital supports to SMEs. It is highly likely that existing schemes and financial allocations may also be adapted to support SMEs in such a way.

1.2.1.2. Question: Should the CV specific indicators for SME be added to the ERDF common indicators CO01, CO02 etc., or are they additional and related to new actions?

Answer: Ideally the SME CV indicators would be counted as a subsets of CO01-CO02-CO03-CO04.

Indeed, some existing operations contributing to the common indicators may adjust their focus to also justify the use of the CV indicators.

Where it is not possible to include the CV indicators in the common indicators the programmes are asked to document the exclusion of the CV values from the common indicators in order that a full picture could be constructed later (i.e. during evaluation). (NB In the AIR, Table 3A for ERDF outputs allows the addition of short comments for specific indicators.)

1.3. ESF

1.3.1. CV30-CV33 concern output indicators related to ESF investments

1.3.1.1. Question: What are considered ‘entities’ in CV 33 ‘Number of entities supported in combating or counteracting the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic’?

Answer: ‘Entities’ is a broad concept, can be enterprises, public institutions like hospitals etc. Self-employed though are counted under ‘participants’, not entities. In the context of the ESF, entities are understood not as physical individual persons but as organisations. That is, a group of people formally organised to pursue a collective objective.

1.3.1.2. Question: Can self-employed be counted within entities?

Answer: No, self-employed should be counted as participants, not entities.

1.3.1.3. Question: It is not possible to estimate the size of the ESF target group today (i.e. how many unemployed there actually will be). Can the setting of targets be optional?

Answer: It is important that ESF targets are as reliable as possible. Including reliable targets in the programmes is useful for monitoring and evaluation. The minimum requirement for ESF is at least one result and, related to that, one output indicator with quantitative target by specific objective.

1.3.1.4. Question: Should we use ‘CV30 Value of ESF actions to combat or counteract the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (total public cost)’ for all ESF COVID operations?

Answer: Yes.

1.3.1.5. Question: Could CV30 include the costs of restarting the activities that were stopped because of COVID-19?

Answer: As long as the activities that are restarting are linked to combating or counteracting the effects of COVID-19, yes. Otherwise, no.

1.3.1.6. Question: For ESF operations in general, and for short-term working arrangements in particular do we need to collect specific microdata?

Answer: For ESF operations in general, the need to collect microdata and reporting common indicators depends on whether the operation supports participants in the meaning of Annex I in the Regulation.

In case the programme supports the training of healthcare personnel: individual results, e.g. ‘gaining a qualification’, as listed in Annex I of the ESF Regulation, are expected. You need to collect microdata and, in addition to reporting that participant to ‘CV31 Number of participants supported in combating or counteracting the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic’, common output indicators and common result indicators are collected and reported, too.

In the case of a large-scale, low-intensity support (such as, the distribution of PPE): you register the outreach without recording microdata, if you do not want to.¹ In this case, no common indicators are reported. In any event, microdata may be helpful for evaluations.

For short-time work arrangements in particular, cf. the existing Q&A from the CRII platform is quoted below.

'As short time work arrangements (STWA), by definition, do not change the participant's labour market situation, MAs will report common result indicators, by default, with zero. The common output indicators are applicable. The minimum requirement is the recording and reporting of the set of non-sensitive data on labour market status: employment situation (by default: employed), age and educational attainment, broken down by gender.

'Specific result indicators, especially if a specific aim is sought (e.g. "workers still in employment 6 months after the support" or "number of workers kept in full-time jobs") may be considered for communication purposes and for the evaluation of the scheme's effectiveness.

'In the context of the regulatory changes proposed in the Corona Response Investment Initiative, the Court of Auditors have recalled the necessity to sustain the accountability for spending EU funds². The absence of microdata means that no quantitative method can be used for evaluations purposes and thus limits seriously the robustness of evaluations.

'In the absence of the complete set of non-sensitive data, participants are reported only to the grand total of participants. For this emergency support, the resulting cumulative increase in the mismatch between the common output indicators and the grand total of participants in the concerned parts of the programme will not be considered as a serious deficiency in the quality and reliability of the monitoring system or of the data on common indicators.'

1.3.1.7. Question: can we use CV31 "Participants supported to combat COVID-19 pandemic" added to common indicators just in use, without microdata?

Answer: It depends on the nature of the support that is reported through CV 31. For example, in case of trainings targeting healthcare personnel (number of participants to support fighting COVID-19), the OPs are expected to generate individual results. There you would collect microdata and you report individual participants in CV31 and in the common output indicator. The collection of microdata will possibly be very useful also later, during the evaluation of the operations. However, in case less intensive and broader support is given to participants, this would not entail the collection and use of microdata and can still reported as an output in CV 31.

1.3.1.8. Question: Can 'CV33 Number of entities supported in combating or counteracting the effects of the COVID-19' pandemic also be used as result indicator? For example, when the operation is about purchasing and distributing PPE?

Answer: The selection of suitable indicators in general and result indicators in particular depends on what the programme wants to achieve. Suppose the programme wants to achieve that PPE is distributed in selected public institutions. For instance, the expected result in the programme may be the "increased number of public administration bodies with sufficient

¹ For additional interpretation on low-intensity support, refer to section 4.1.3 Minimum threshold for counting individuals as participants in Annex D - Practical guidance on data collection and validation published at https://ec.europa.eu/sfc/en/system/files/ged/Annex%20D%20-%20Practical%20guidance%20on%20data%20collection%20and%20validation_0.pdf.

² Opinion No 3/2020 (pursuant to Articles 287(4) and 322(1)(a), TFEU) on the proposal 2020/0054(COD) for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 as regards specific measures to provide exceptional flexibility for the use of the European Structural and Investments Funds in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

personal protective equipment”. The result indicator in this case may be ‘CV33 Number of entities supported in combating or counteracting the effects of the COVID-19’ and the output indicator may be ‘CV 30 Value of ESF actions to combat or counteract the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (total public cost)’.

1.3.1.9. Question: Setting targets for ESF: We do not know the exact size of the target group today (for example, how many unemployed there actually will be), can the setting of targets be optional?

Answer: It is important that the 2023 targets are as reliable as possible. We would like to encourage setting up targets as much as possible as they would be a very useful source on achievement.

In case a reliable target estimate cannot be made, the indicator is included in the programme without a target. On the basis of the data gathered during implementation, the target estimate may be provided later. We would like to draw attention that if a new SO is introduced for the COVID-19 related measures, according to the regulation in force, the OP should include at least one-output and one-result indicator with quantitative estimation of the target for the respective new SO.

1.3.1.10. Question: Some of the ESF specific indicators can be used for the interventions financed by the Interreg programmes, which are financed by ERDF. Would you encourage Interreg programmes to use them, if they are applicable?

Answer: Indeed, some of the ESF CV programme specific indicators seem to be relevant for ERDF investments as well. The following indicators will be available for use under Interreg:

- CV31 Participants supported to combat COVID-19 pandemic
- CV33 Entities supported in combating COVID-19 pandemic

1.3.2. (CVR1, CVR2) RESULT INDICATORS RELATED TO ESF INVESTMENTS

1.3.2.1. Question: should CVST + CVHC = CV31? Or can we have other type of persons which do not fall in CVST and CVHC?

Answer: The values for CVST+ CVHC do not need to equal CV31. There can be additional breakdowns (with programme specific CVxx codes, different from those used in the Non-paper) that do not fall under CVST or CVHC and that could be considered sub-sets of CV 31.

1.3.2.2. Do we understand correctly, indicator CV30 “Value of ESF actions to combat or counteract the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (total public cost)” total must be covered by indicator CV31 (CVST – Number of participants who benefitted from support in short-time work arrangements and CVHC – Number of health care personnel who benefitted from ESF support)?

Answer: CV30 “Value of ESF actions to combat or counteract the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (total public cost)” relates to the total amount of ESF allocated to direct COVID-19 response capturing the total cost of the ESF programme budget. CV31 (and its subsets CVST and CVHC) are designed to capture the related values for participants. It is possible that there would be other ESF outputs other than “participants” (i.e. CV6 Number of PPE items, etc.).

2. DEFINING CV AND OTHER RELEVANT INDICATORS

2.1.1.1. Question: Can programmes use other CV prefix indicators?

Answer: Yes. Programmes may also create other “CVxx” indicators provided they do not use the codes listed in the non-paper.

2.1.1.2. Question: Will the Commission amend the ERDF regulation, the ERDF/ESF Guidance or the non-paper list?

Answer: No. Given the need to integrate the indicators quickly into programming the Commission does not propose to further modify legislation, guidance or the list. Rather we will work with the authorities on the integration of the codes into the programmes based on national definitions.

2.1.1.3. Question: Will the EC provide some definitions of those proposed programme specific indicators?

Answer: Definitions will not be provided by the Commission for these COVID-19 programme specific indicators – each Member State would need to decide on definitions at national level (in some cases mapping existing national indicators to the COVID-19 specific list). A swift response on making use of these indicators is of the essence in order to ensure that meaningful information is captured and later on reported. A technical webinar was organised on 17 June to answer questions. The Q+A sessions from that webinar are integrated here.

2.1.1.4. Question: Can programmes use other indicators to capture Covid-19 response? In case an OP has planned to use a specific indicator that is not covering all relevant actions, could we use indicators from the list you suggested along with our own specific indicators?

Answer: Yes, the list included in the non-paper is non-exhaustive, it includes programme specific indicators that the Commission considered of interest on a horizontal level across the EU. Other programme specific indicators chosen by each programme should reflect the expected achievements of the actions.

2.1.1.5. Question: Will the Commission propose result indicators? Considering that the main aim of all MS is to take measures and prevent the expansion of the COVID-19, could the EC also propose specific objectives and result indicators as well?

Answer: The non-paper does not contain proposals for specific objectives and ERDF programme specific result indicators (impacts).

There is a proposal for ESF programme specific result indicators included in the non-paper.

2.1.1.6. Question: Can programmes use the CV coding for other indicators? In case outputs are not covered by the EC’s list in case we are financing COVID-19 related actions? For example, a code like CVxx100?

Answer: Yes, but it is important to bear in mind that, from a technical point of view, SFC2014 allows for indicator codes of a maximum of 5 characters.

3. MONITORING PROCESS

3.1.1.1. Question: Manual monitoring (Excel). The implementation of new indicators in the electronic monitoring system at this stage of the programming period might be technically challenging. If the indicators are not included in a modification to the OP, in what format (other than the AIR through the SFC) can any progress be reported to the EC? Would manual monitoring (in Excel) be a possible alternative?

Answer: The Commission is aware of the possible administrative burden that might be entailed for the MAs by the introduction of these new indicators. But in the long term this will be compensated by the streamlined reporting that will be made within each OP and across potentially hundreds of programmes. It will be difficult to follow and aggregate at EU level if reporting is done outside the framework of SFC2014 and the AIRs.

Also, it should be taken into consideration that the data on the COVID-19 programme specific indicators (proposed through the non-paper) will be made public on the Open Data Platform. We should avoid having discrepancies between the communication of these outputs to the general public (the ODP will be fed directly by the information in the AIRs) and avoid as far as possible ad-hoc reporting or manual provision of the data.

Programmes are free to determine how they will collect the data from the supported operations.

3.1.1.2. Question: How to map national indicators to the CV indicators? If MS have already introduced some indicators on the national level (very similar to the one proposed now through the non-paper) should programme again introduce EC indicators and match them together?

Answer: In such cases:

- if the scope of the already introduced indicator matches with one indicator of the non-paper, it would be appreciated if the title and code of the national indicator is changed so as to match the Commission's proposal;
- if the already introduced indicator encompasses more than one indicator of the non-paper, it would be appreciated if the relevant indicators proposed by the Commission are introduced in the OP.

4. PROGRAMME MODIFICATION : SFC2014

4.1.1.1. Question: Do programmes encode the non-paper CV indicators in SFC2014 themselves or will it be available as a controlled list?

Answer: The Commission will soon add (July - August 2020) the non-paper CV list to SFC2014 as a controlled list fixing the codes and the short titles.

Until then, programmes are asked to introduce the codes and short names themselves from the dataset on the ESIF OPEN DATA platform: <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/2014-2020-Indicators/COVID19-specific-monitoring-indicators-2020/pz85-ptis>

4.1.1.2. Question: What if a modification is already agreed nationally without CV indicators? The amendments to some of the programmes have already been approved by the respective Monitoring Committees and the Council of Ministers (and are validated in SFC2014). These amendments include programme specific indicators and common output indicators (as listed in the Regulation). How should we proceed in order not to cause any delays in the adoption of programme amendments and in the implementation of the COVID-response measures?

Answer: In case the OP amendment is already at an advanced stage, the Commission would recommend to consider the introduction of the relevant COVID-19 indicators from the non-paper with the next OP amendment (ideally by the end of 2020, so that the OPs will be able to report on these outputs in AIR 2020).

4.1.1.3. Question: How to select the relevant programme specific indicators from the non-paper if it is unclear which are the specific actions that will be funded by the OPs to tackle the COVID-19 crisis?

Answer: Programme modification should only be undertaken when there is some clarity about the financial sums being transferred, the actions and the objectives.

4.1.1.4. Question: How do programmes change indicator values under the simplified and flexibility amounts provided for under the CR II regulatory amendment?

Answer: Financial changes within the flexibility limits (8% and 4%) of the CR II regulatory amendment do not require a decision of the Commission amending the programme. However, changes to previous indicator targets and the addition of new indicators would need to be made at a later stage and ideally before end-2020.

4.1.1.5. Question: Can programmes use the CV indicators in the performance framework?

Answer: In order to simplify programme modification as far as possible, the Commission services recommend that the performance frameworks (PF) be modified as little as possible (i.e. pro rata changes linked to financial increased or reductions, etc.).

If it is unavoidable that the some performance framework output indicators be changed, then the CV indicators linked to real outputs could be used. The non-paper CV indicators linked to total costs or other EUR values, or other national equivalents, should not be used as they are already captured in the PF financial indicators for each performance framework.

5. ANNUAL REPORTING IN THE ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORTS

5.1.1.1. Question: Is the AIR 2020 a short / simplified report format?

Answer: The 2020 AIR indeed is the “light report” described in Part A of Annex V of the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/207 and will be available in SFC2014, which includes reporting of ERDF/ESF output and result indicator values. No changes were made in the CRII modifications to reporting formats or templates.

5.1.1.2. Question: Will the indicators be reported after the AIR 2020 (i.e. after May 2021)?

Answer: In principle, once the indicators are formally included in the programme they will remain there and implementation can be updated each year. It is possible that some actions could be discontinued because they are no longer needed. This is possible and can be explained shortly in the narrative section of the AIR. In most cases, it is likely that these actions will continue, and even be reinforced under REACT-EU.