



Subject: Q&A on the activation of the Emergency Support Instrument in the context of COVID-19 Pandemic – DG ECHO November 2020

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The present set of Q&As is shared for information purposes only.

1. EMERGENCY SUPPORT INSTRUMENT AND OTHER SUPPORT FUNDS

1.1. What is the difference between Joint Procurement Agreement, rescEU and the Emergency Support Instrument?

The Emergency Support Instrument is a different instrument than the Joint Procurement Agreement and rescEU; it aims to complement them. The main differences between the three instruments in the context of COVID-19 are:

	Joint Procurement Agreement	rescEU medical stockpile	Emergency Support Instrument
<i>What is it?</i>	The Commission launched four different calls for tender for medical equipment and supplies: 1) gloves and coveralls; 2) personal protective equipment for eye and respiratory protection; 3) ventilators; 4) laboratory equipment.	Under rescEU, the Commission is elaborating a European stockpiling of medical countermeasures aimed at combatting serious cross-border threats to health. It will include: vaccines or therapeutics, intensive care medical equipment, personal protective equipment, laboratory supplies.	The Emergency Support Instrument is a flexible and broad financial instrument to support the healthcare sector of EU Member States in their efforts against the coronavirus pandemic. Procurement of medical items is one of the actions to be financed, but the Emergency Support Instrument encompasses a wider package of measures.
<i>Funding</i>	National budget of each Member State taking part in the Joint Procurement Agreement.	100% financing.	Support 100% funded by the European Commission being strictly complementary to other existing instruments.
<i>Budget</i>	So far (May 2020): EUR 3.3 billion of Member States funds.	Up to EUR 370 million from the EU budget.	EUR 2.7 billion from the EU budget. Possible additional contributions by Member States and other public/private donors.
<i>Decision-</i>	At least 4 Member States and	The Commission decides,	Commission takes decision on

<i>making</i>	Commission to engage in a specific joint procurement procedure. Member States place individual orders and purchase the needed medical equipment with their own budget.	together with the hosting MS and the affected Member State, on the deployment of rescEU capacities in case of a request for assistance via the Union Civil Protection Mechanism. At least one Member State must host the rescEU capacity.	actions to be deployed and financed and is in charge of implementation, in continuous dialogue with Member States and the European Parliament.
<i>Timescale</i>	For preparedness and response to COVID-19, including for possible next waves.	For immediate response to COVID-19 and for longer term (future disease outbreaks).	For immediate response to COVID-19, exit and recovery phases (1 February 2020 – 31 January 2022).
<i>Scope of geographical application</i>	The 27 EU Member States, European Economic Area countries (Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein), the UK, Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo ¹ .	The 27 EU Member States, the UK under the transition period and 6 Union Civil Protection Mechanism Participating States (Iceland, Norway, Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Turkey).	The 27 EU Member States and the UK under the transition period.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE “MOBILITY PACKAGE” UNDER THE EMERGENCY SUPPORT INSTRUMENT

2.1. What is the “Mobility Package”?

In line with the Financing Decision adopted on 24 April, the Commission will implement the following three actions under the Emergency Support Instrument, which relate primarily to transport, referred to as the “Mobility Package”:

- 1) Cargo transport (e.g. assistance and relief items) to the EU from third countries and within the EU (this is not foreseen for sending in-kind assistance from the EU to third countries);
- 2) Facilitation of transfer of patients within the EU and from the EU to third countries (from a Member State to another Member State or to a third country welcoming patients);
- 3) Facilitation of transport within the EU and to the EU from third countries of medical personnel and teams and operating costs (this is not foreseen for sending assistance in terms of personnel from the EU to third countries).

There is no element of priority between the three actions, the Commission will pursue the implementation of all three with the same importance and urgency.

2.2. What is the EU’s added-value in the implementation of the Mobility Package?

Regarding the transport of cargo items to the Union from third countries and within the Union, the Commission adds value by supporting and coordinating urgent transport

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

needs. Regarding the facilitation of transfer of patients and medical personnel between Member States, the EU's intervention can bring tangible benefits given the cross-border dimension of the actions.

For the implementation of the three actions, the Commission (through DG ECHO) can rely on three essential strengths: 1) An already established protected information system (CECIS) for real-time information exchange of required and available assistance between Member States' authorities; 2) A capacity to organise transport logistics, either with Member States or through the private sector with the help of the Commission's transport broker; 3) A 24/7 operational service that can follow operations in real time, the Emergency Response Crisis Centre (ERCC).

Furthermore, the Emergency Support Instrument fills gaps that cannot be financed by any other EU instrument.

2.3. What are the support modalities?

The two main support modalities, depending on the Member States' needs, are:

- *Reimbursement of the costs* incurred for transport (and operational support for mobile medical response capacities) organised by Member States (via direct grant agreements);
- *Donation of procured services*: In cases where the direct implementation of a transport operation by a Member State is not possible, the Commission may offer transport options via its broker that would be paid directly by the Commission.

2.4. What is the role of Mobility Package national focal points in the implementation of the Mobility Package?

The role of national focal points is to channel requests from applicants to the Commission via the Common Emergency Communication and Information System (CECIS). They will be asked to give an opinion confirming whether the proposed action is of public benefit and fits into the national response plan of the Member State; and to confirm the status of a requesting entity as a private law body with a public service mission if the entity has identified itself as such.

National focal points will not be asked:

- to fill the application form: this will be done by the applicant;
- to perform an overall assessment on the eligibility of the request: this will be done by the Commission.

3. THE GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS FOR THE MOBILITY PACKAGE

3.1. Which costs are covered?

The Commission may finance up to 100% of the eligible costs of the transport operation, depending of funds available.

In the case of transport of medical personnel, as well as transport costs, the Commission may cover operating costs for mobile medical response capacities, defined as any mobile

unit of medical personnel, as appropriately supported by all required equipment and supplies, capable of delivering the intended medical assistance and relief.

3.2. What are the conditions for eligibility?

In order to be eligible for support, operations must:

- be directly related to the response to the COVID-19 emergency;
- be of public benefit and fit into the national response plan;
- be cross-border;
- be consistent with sound financial management; and
- have not received other EU funding related to transport.

Due to the dynamic nature of the situation and therefore the response needs, the Commission reserves the right to update the applicable conditions and procedures. Any such changes will be appropriately communicated to interested parties.

3.3. Can the funding be used to support operations that are already completed?

For retroactive applications for operations already completed, expenditure will only be eligible for transport that arrived at the country of destination on or after 24 April 2020 (the date of entry into force of the Financing Decision). In addition, for cargo transport, expenditure will only be eligible with respect to items ordered after 1 February 2020 (date from which the Council Regulation activating the ESI allowed retrospective application). The requirement that items are ordered after 1 February 2020 refers in particular to when the items themselves were ordered (the assumption being that transportation of the items has either been ordered on the same date or at a later date - should this not be the case, the attention of the Commission should be specifically drawn to it, as transportation costs incurred before 1 February 2020 are ineligible).

Furthermore, for all cargo operations, expenditure will only be eligible for transport that will arrive at its final destination within two months (10/09/2020 17:00 CET) of the deadline given to Member States for submission of applications (10/07/2020 17:00 CET).

In the case of the mobile medical response capacities of the transport of medical personnel, operational support (in the form of operating costs) will only be eligible for operations starting on or after 24 April 2020.

3.4. Who can apply for support?

3.4.1. Which Member State authorities are eligible for support?

Funding will only be available to the 27 EU Member States. This is any Member State authority (national, regional and local authorities and other public bodies or private law bodies with a public service mission²). The United Kingdom is also eligible during the transition period under the Withdrawal Agreement (until 31 December 2020).

² Private law bodies with a public service mission as defined in footnote 5 of the document *Conditions for Awarding Grants Without a Call for Proposal – Activation of Emergency Support Instrument in Response to the COVID-19 pandemic*

3.4.2. *Can private entities (NGOs, private for-profit companies) or international organisations apply for support?*

The Commission will provide funding and support only to Member States, given the important needs expressed by Member States. This is any Member State authority (national, regional and local authorities and other public bodies or private law bodies with a public service mission³). The United Kingdom will be eligible during the transition period under the Withdrawal Agreement (until 31 December 2020).

3.4.3. *What is a private law body with a public service mission?*

Private law bodies with a public service mission are considered as such provided they satisfy the following criteria:

a) they have legal personality under the private law of a Member State (including Member State Organisations); and

b) they have been entrusted with a public service mission:

(i) which must be acknowledged through a dedicated legislative or administrative/executive legal act of a public authority; or, in case of doubt

(ii) which can be established if they fulfil the following cumulative substantial requirements:

i). they are established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character,

ii). they are (1) financed, for the most part, by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other public law bodies; or (2) are subject to management supervision by those authorities or bodies; or (3) have an administrative, managerial or supervisory board, more than half of whose members are appointed by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other public law bodies.

3.5. How can Member States apply for support?

All templates and technical documents for application have been sent to the national focal points. Member State authorities can contact ECHO-ESI@ec.europa.eu for further details.

3.5.1. *How can Member States apply for support for cargo transport?*

When applying for support for actions related to cargo transport, the requests for funding will be submitted by the national focal point via the Common Emergency Communication and Information System (CECIS). CECIS is a platform provided by the Commission for national civil protection authorities to communicate, supported by the 24/7 Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC).

³ Private law bodies with a public service mission as defined in footnote 5 of the document *Conditions for Awarding Grants Without a Call for Proposal – Activation of Emergency Support Instrument in Response to the COVID-19 pandemic*

Applications must be submitted via CECIS from 19/06/2020 09:00 CET until 10/07/2020 17:00 CET. The time the request is sent in CECIS will be considered the official submission time.

One application can be submitted for multiple cargo operations, however the details of each operation must be clear (for complementary information see 2.14).

3.5.2. *How can Member States apply for support for transfer of patients or transport of medical personnel and teams?*

When applying for support for actions related to transfer of patients and transport of medical personnel and teams, the Commission's [Guidelines on EU Emergency Assistance in Cross-Border Cooperation in Healthcare related to the COVID-19 crisis](#) apply. Taking this into consideration, prior to the encoding of the request for transport support in CECIS, the competent authority of the Member State in need of assistance notifies the Member States and the European Commission through the Early Warning and Response System (EWRS), which national health authorities have access to. Please note that in cases where Member States have already arranged a transfer/transport bilaterally, they will still be required to enter this into EWRS to be eligible for transport support.

Member States will then need to submit the application for ESI transport funding through CECIS.

3.6. How should Member States submit applications?

DG ECHO interlocutors in terms of the ESI Mobility Package are the national Mobility Package focal points appointed by the Member States. Their role is to confirm whether the actions for which funding is requested are directly related to the COVID-19 emergency, of public benefit and in line with the national response plan as well as potentially confirm that requesting private law bodies have a public service mission in their Member State.

The role of the Civil Protection authorities (which in most cases also act as Mobility Package focal points) is to channel applications from eligible Member State authorities to the Commission. This must be done via CECIS.

Member States should enter the information transmission case in CECIS titled "Emergency Support Instrument (ESI) Mobility Package" and create a new request for their country (technical instructions on exactly how to do this are available on the emergency synopsis page in CECIS).

If you have several actions that you will be requesting support for at the same time (including if these actions are in separate application forms), please only make one "new request" in CECIS.

This request should only include, in one attachment, a brief summary of all the actions support is being requested for. This brief summary shall include a list of all transport operations envisaged with key details e.g. place of departure and arrival, what is being transported, number of rotations / segments (by plane, train, road or boat), amount requested for operations, and requesting entity, as well as the grand total requested for all operations.

Please note that:

- It is not necessary to upload the application forms and supporting documents in CECIS. These documents should be sent at the same time as the request is entered in CECIS to the functional mailbox ECHO-ESI@ec.europa.eu. One email should be sent per application form, attaching all documents related to that application form.
- One grant application form may include several transport operations, including those being implemented by different modes of transport (air, land, sea). In order to expedite the application and evaluation process, we encourage Member States to include several actions in one application form where possible, to reduce the number of application forms submitted, the more so when these actions have been implemented by the same Member State entity.

3.7. What are the eligible operating costs?

In the case of transport of medical personnel, operating costs can be funded for any mobile medical response capacities, defined as any mobile unit of medical personnel, as appropriately supported by all required equipment and supplies, capable of delivering the intended medical assistance and relief. This funding can be for an initial maximum duration of 3 months (renewable under express approval from the Commission).

Operating costs may include all the costs of running a capacity during an operation that are necessary to make it operationally effective. Such costs may encompass, as appropriate, costs related to personnel, transport, logistics, consumables and supplies, maintenance, as well as other costs necessary to ensure the effective use of such capacities.

3.8. How is funding distributed among Member States?

There may be two modalities:

- a) Transfer of patients and transport of medical personnel: Applications for funding for transport of medical personnel and patients will be evaluated on a first come, first served basis, given the emergency and potential lifesaving nature of these requests.
- b) For applications for funding for transport of cargo, Member States can submit proposals within the deadline set out above. The Commission will then apply criteria, using Member State population and epidemiological data, to ensure an equitable distribution of funds between those Member States that have applied.

3.9. Are there visibility obligations linked to ESI funding?

Yes, there is an obligation to ensure appropriate public awareness of interventions funded by the EU. Member States receiving funding under the Mobility Package of the Emergency Support Instrument should:

- Publicise in national media and on social media channels the funding received from the Emergency Support Instrument;
- When possible, display the EU Emblem on means of transport and/or medical personnel transported.

3.10. Do applicants need to register for ABAC?

Applicants need to have their details registered in ABAC. This is usually a relatively simple process. If an applicant is not already registered, they should fill out the legal entity form and the bank account identification form by following the links provided in the Grant Application request form and sending these to the Commission with the Grant Application. By filling out these documents, the relevant details will be registered in the ABAC system.

3.11. If an applicant is submitting multiple applications, do they only need to submit the financial identification, legal entity form and declaration on honour once, or for every single application?

As there is only one applicant for the financial identification, the legal entity form only needs to be sent once, if the applicant is not already registered with the Commission.

Regarding the Declaration on Honour, the applicant is only required to submit the declaration once. The applicant is not required to submit this if the same declaration has already been submitted for the purposes of a Civil Protection award procedure, provided the situation has not changed, and that the time that has elapsed since the issuing date of the declaration does not exceed one year.

3.12. If a project has received funding from another EU instrument, can the Mobility Package cover the remaining costs?

In order to be eligible for ESI support under the three actions, operations cannot have received other EU funding. Therefore, if a Member State's operation receives funding from another EU instrument, it will not be eligible for ESI funding.

3.13. Does the applicant need to sign the application form?

The applicant does not sign the grant application form or the request for use of the transport broker.

If a grant application is successful, the applicant will sign a formal grant agreement, to which the original grant application form will be annexed.

3.14. What is the implementation period under the three strands?

For retroactive applications for operations already completed, expenditure will only be eligible for transport that arrived in the country of destination on or after 24 April 2020 (the date of entry into force of the Financing Decision).

In addition, for cargo transport:

a. expenditure will only be eligible with respect to items ordered after 1 February 2020 (date from which the Council Regulation activating the ESI allowed retrospective application).

b. expenditure will only be eligible for transport that will arrive at its final destination within two months (10/09/2020 17:00 CET) of the deadline given to Member States for submission of applications (10/07/2020 17:00 CET).

In the case of transport of medical teams including their mobile medical response capacities and transfer of patients, only operations that arrive at the country of destination on or after 24 April 2020 are eligible for funding. Due to the emergency nature of this type of operation, there is no deadline for applications, meaning Member States may apply for funding relating to the transfer of patients and transport of medical personnel when the need arises. For operating costs, only operations that started on or after 24 April 2020 will be eligible, and in this case, actions may not last more than three months (renewable under express approval from the Commission). The three-month rule relates only to the operational costs of medical personnel. Should the Member State wish to continue using operational support for the medical teams transported, before the third month of the operation has passed, the Member State needs to request the Commission for a renewal of funding for their operation.

3.15. Is there a template to explain whether the action relates to the public benefit and fits within the national response plan?

Section 2.3 of the Grant Application form asks the national focal point *“Is the action directly related to the response to the Covid-19 emergency and does it have a public benefit? (please include details of how this will assist the response and what the public benefit will be).”*

This requires the national focal point to confirm that the action part of the national response to the COVID-19 emergency, and how the action has a public benefit. The Member State focal point decides how it determines if the action meets these points, and the level of detail they feel is necessary to provide in the application form to support this. No further documentation is required, however the Member State may provide complementary information if it wishes. There is no separate form or template for this.

3.16. Can I apply for ESI Mobility Package support to transport items purchased under the Joint Procurement Agreement?

Member State authorities can apply under the ESI Mobility Package for the refund of the transport costs of goods purchased as part of the effort to combat COVID-19, including items purchased under the Joint Procurement Agreement.

If items are being transported under the Commission's Joint Procurement initiative, it is recommended to add this information in headings 2.4 and 2.5 of the Grant application form.

3.17. What if agreements signed with subcontractors do not distinguish between the costs of transportation and the costs of purchase of the items?

The claim for the reimbursement of the transport costs must indicate the specific amount dedicated to each transport operation. If the transport costs are not presented in a separate invoice, the breakdown of transport costs must be identifiable. If there is no separate invoice for transport, the Member State will be asked to provide an explanatory note provided by the service provider clearly specifying the transport costs.

3.18. What are the visibility obligations for operations that are already completed?

For operations where funding is provided retroactively, the following communication actions still apply, to be taken retroactively:

- An announcement of the operation under the ESI to the national and regional media in the Member State. The press text must clearly state that the action is funded by the European Union, and can include, where relevant, a quote from a Commission representative. This national press communication, as well as examples of subsequent media coverage, should be sent to echo-comm-cp@ec.europa.eu.
- When promoting the operations on the authority's social media channels, the relevant Commission's social media accounts should be tagged (@eu_echo for Twitter and Instagram; @ec.humanitarian.aid for Facebook). However, in any social media communication, the Commission should always be referred to as the EU or the European Union.

Given the requirement to include a reference to European Union support, the communication action has indeed to take place retroactively after the positive funding decision was given by the EU. This communication action shall take place in a timely manner to ensure a clear link for the public, between the operation carried out to respond to a crisis and the communication action via media / social media channels.

3.19. What is the timetable regarding the applications for cargo transport?

The indicative timetable regarding the applications for cargo transport is the following:

- Deadline for submitting applications: 10 July 17:00 CET
- Commission informs applicants of outcome: Before 11 September 2020.
- Commission sends Grant Agreement to successful applicants: Before 2 October 2020.
- Beneficiaries to return signed Grant Agreement to the Commission, ideally accompanied by the Final Report (see 2.26 below): During the week of 12 – 16 October 2020.

3.20. Which documents are required to be sent by private law bodies with a public service mission to demonstrate sufficient financial capacity?

As set out in section 8.1 of the document *Conditions for Awarding Grants Without a Call for Proposal – Activation of Emergency Support Instrument in Response to the COVID-19 pandemic*, for private law bodies with a public service mission, a declaration on honour is required for grants totalling less than EUR 60 000.

For grants totalling more than EUR 60 000, in addition to a declaration on honour the following is required:

1) EITHER

- the profit and loss account as well as the balance sheet for the last financial year for which the accounts were closed;

- for newly created entities: the business plan might replace the above documents;
- 2) OR
- a table which can be provided on request, filled in with the relevant statutory accounting figures, in order to calculate the ratios as detailed in the form.

However, for grants totalling over EUR 60 000, if the action has been completed, requirements under 1) and 2) are not necessary if it can be verified by the Commission that the action has been completed and the costs actually incurred.

4. THE PROCESS FOR THE GRANT AGREEMENT AND FINAL REPORT

4.1. What information is required by the Commission for projects that are awarded grants under the ESI Mobility Package?

Following the award of a grant and completion of the action, beneficiaries should send the Commission the Final Report. The Final Report consists of:

- payment request;
- invoices and proof of payment;
- Annex IV: the technical implementation report;
- and Annex V: the financial statement.
- For projects receiving grants of more than EUR 750 000, Annex VI: the certificate on the financial statement should also be sent to the Commission.

4.2. What is the deadline for the signature of the Grant Agreement?

Applicants are requested to return one copy of the Grant Agreement, dated and signed (and initialled on the right bottom corner of each page) by your authorised representative within 15 calendar days of receipt of the Cover Letter.

4.2.1. Should the grant agreement be received in hard copy or could it be sent via e-mail?

The Grant Agreement must be received in hard copy by courier.

4.2.2 Should the Grant Agreement and its associated documents be filled out by hand?

The Grant Agreement and its associated documents can be filled in by hand or electronically.

4.3. What is the deadline for receiving the Final Report including the request for payment?

Ideally, the Final Report will accompany the Grant Agreement. However, the Final Report can follow after the Grant Agreement. It must arrive within 60 calendar days of

the end of the action. The payment can be processed more quickly the sooner the Final Report is received.

4.4. Should the Final Report be submitted via courier or via email?

Beneficiaries are required to submit the Final Report either in hard copy via courier or electronically. If sending the Final Report electronically, the Commission can read .pdf and .jpeg files. Applicants may send these documents in a zip file, with a table of contents, to help the Commission understand which invoice correlates to which operation. Applicants are requested to keep the original versions of the documents in case of future auditing.

4.5. What information should be provided in the Final Report?

4.5.1. Should the final report consist of information regarding the eligible amount or the full amount requested?

Beneficiaries are requested to provide information on the total eligible costs in the Final Report. This is the eligible amount stated in the Grant Agreement in Section I.2.2. The eligibility period is defined in point I.2.3 of the Grant Agreement.

4.5.2 If Applicants have already submitted the Certificate on the Financial Statement prior to completing the project, are they required to resubmit this document?

The certificate on the financial statement must be produced after the period that generated the eligible final costs. Therefore, beneficiaries that have sent a Certificate on the Financial Statement at the application stage will need to make a new certificate and send it to the Commission.

4.5.3 In the Technical Implementation Report, which details are required regarding the route of the transport?

The route description only needs to specify the details of departure and arrival of the transport.

4.5.4 Concerning the Certificate on the Financial Statement, which authority is competent to certify this document?

Article I.4.4.d of the Grant Agreement states that the “certificate must be produced by an approved auditor or, in case of public bodies, by a competent and independent public officer and drawn up in accordance with Annex VI”.

4.5.5 Does the Final Report need to be channelled through the ESI Mobility Package Focal Points?

Beneficiaries must channel their paperwork directly to the Commission, without first channelling the paperwork through the Mobility Package Focal point. They may put the focal point in copy for information.

4.5.6 Can unpaid invoices be included?

Only costs incurred during the duration of the action or work programme are eligible, thus the cost must be generated during the lifetime of the action. However, this does not

necessarily mean that the cost has to be paid by the beneficiary or recorded in its accountancy during that lifetime.

It may be that some costs have not been paid when the request for payment of the balance is sent, in particular because the beneficiary is waiting for the balance of the grant in order to be able to pay this expenditure. This situation is acceptable if the services of the authorising officer responsible have made sure that a debt exists (invoice or equivalent) for services or goods actually supplied during the lifetime of the action and the final cost is known.

4.5.7 What evidence is needed for the proof of payment?

On the proof of payment, we require evidence that the payment has been made, for example, a bank transfer. An invoice is proof that costs have been generated, and the contract is proof of contractual obligations between the parties, therefore is not sufficient in this case.

4.5.8 Do you accept Annex IV in Excel format?

The report can be submitted as an Excel file, but requires a manual signature. A manual signature on the letter accompanying the report would be sufficient.

4.5.9 What is the implementation period and are personnel time sheets requested?

The implementation period is defined in point I.2.2 of the Grant Agreement. We ask you to fill in personnel details and costs in Annex V, but it is not obligatory to send timesheets at this point. The Commission may ask for them at a later stage.

4.6 Does the national focal point distribute funds to applicants, or will the Commission reimburse the applicants directly?

The Commission will reimburse successful applicants directly. The national focal point does not need to act as a distributor.

For any further questions or suggestions, contact the Commission at: ECHO-ESI@ec.europa.eu