



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR RESEARCH & INNOVATION

The Director-General

Brussels,  
DG RTD/R3/PW

## **NOTE TO COORDINATORS OF PROJECTS UNDER THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S 7<sup>TH</sup> FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME**

**Subject: Restrictions on extensions to the duration of grant agreements, and respect of reporting deadlines**

In accordance with the FP7 Grant Agreement it is an obligation of the consortium of beneficiaries to carry out the work as identified in Annex I (Article II.3.a)) and within the duration of the project fixed in Article 3. Reports and deliverables should be provided within the deadlines set in Article II.4 of Annex 2. In accordance with FP7 policy the consortium may request the modification of the duration of the project to the Commission via an amendment.

An extension to the length of a Grant Agreement delays the availability of research results and their dissemination and exploitation. So while they may be necessary in certain cases they are clearly not desirable and should be kept to a minimum.

However, recent experience has shown that nearly 50% of grants are not completed in the timescale set out in the Grant Agreement, but are extended through an amendment. This level of amendments shows that it is no longer the exceptional procedure that it was intended to be, but has become a common practice in the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme.

For this reason, the Commission services will, in future, more closely examine each request for an extension to the duration of the project to ensure that they are only given where there is a clear added value for the project, or where external events (not reasonably foreseeable at the point of signing the grant) mean that it is impossible to complete the work in the agreed timeframe.

In addition, there is a widespread non-respect of the reporting deadlines set out in the Grant Agreement. This also delays the availability of research results and the closure of projects. The Commission already has the possibility to terminate a Grant Agreement or the participation of a beneficiary if the required reports are not submitted (see Annex 2, Article II.38 of the Grant Agreement) and, while the Commission would only intend to use this provision as a last resort, it may use it more than it has in the past.

Guidelines that have been given to the Commission services can be found in the annex. However, coordinators are being informed in advance of the new guidance so that you can play your part in ensuring that the project is brought to an end in the agreed timeframe. You can expect to be asked for a better justification of your requests for amendment, and see prompter moves towards termination of a Grant Agreement if reports are not provided in due time.

Finally, you are reminded that Article II.2.3 a) of the grant agreement stipulates that the coordinator shall ensure that all the appropriate payments are made to the other beneficiaries without unjustified delay.

DG Research & Innovation

Enclosure:            Annex 1 - Guidelines for the acceptance of an extension to the Grant Agreement and respect of reporting deadlines that have been given to the Commission services

## **Annex 1 - Guidelines for the acceptance of an extension to the Grant Agreement and respect of reporting deadlines that have been given to the Commission services**

- (a) In general, amendments of contracts on extensions should only be allowed in exceptional cases
- (b) Any demand for a grant extension may only be accepted for well-justified reasons<sup>1</sup>
- (c) Retroactive demands for grant extensions should not be accepted.
- (d) A grant extension should only be accepted if it is caused by events that were not reasonably foreseeable at the point of signing the grant.
- (e) Grant extensions should not be granted to allow the continuation of projects without a high scientific or replication value, nor should they be extended because participants or consortia wish to undertake actions (e.g. applying for external authorisation or registration) for their own benefit.
- (f) Grant extensions must not be granted because the participant or coordinator has not reacted to proposals or demands from the Commission.
- (g) In principle, a grant extension of more than six months could be considered as disproportionate if not due to exceptional reasons. Extensions of longer than six months, or a second extension, must be absolutely exceptional.
- (h) Requests for extension of the grant to undertake additional work should not be accepted, even if it is claimed to be without additional cost.
- (i) Where reports are not received within the deadlines, services should promptly and systematically move to post-reminder letters, formal notice and finally termination of the agreement.

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<sup>1</sup> For Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions specific conditions for extensions may be explicitly laid down in the grant agreement.