This document, so-called Synergie guide, has been prepared by the Joint Secretariat of the Interreg MED Programme, aiming to facilitate the use of the on line monitoring tool of the Programme, Synergie CTE, during project implementation. It describes the steps to follow for the actions that must be carried out in the system as well as recommendations and complementary information useful for the partner. It should be used as a support to the Programme Manual.

How to certify expenditure and issue a FLC certificate in Synergie CTE

Before submission to the Joint Secretariat, expenditure must be verified and validated by an independent controller. This process is carried out by a qualified First Level Controllers (FLCer) to verify that the expenditure incurred for the project implementation complies with the relevant EU, national, regional, institutional and programme rules as well as with the provisions of the Subsidy Contract and the approved application form.

It is the responsibility of each Participating State to designate the FLCer for partners located on their territory and participating in a project. In practice, this means that each partner needs to have a controller authorised by its National/ Regional Authority.

In the framework of the Interreg MED Programme, two types of control system exist:

- ❖ centralised control, implemented at national level
- ❖ decentralised control, implemented through an internal or external controller selected by the project partner and approved by the national/regional approbation body or selected from a central shortlist.

For the decentralised systems, partners are invited to get in touch with the approbation bodies to get informed on the first level control process and understanding the requirements and planning for certification.

For more information, please refer to the Factsheet of Programme Manual « Control, audits and verifications ».

Background (What, Why, Who, When)

The present guide covers the certification process to be undertaken by the designated FLCer of each partner. This procedure is divided in 4 steps: (1) Access to the list of expenditure to control and transfer them to certification phases; (2) Certify expenditure; (3)Create, Fill in and Validate an FLC certificate; and (4) Print, sign and stamp the FLC certificate.
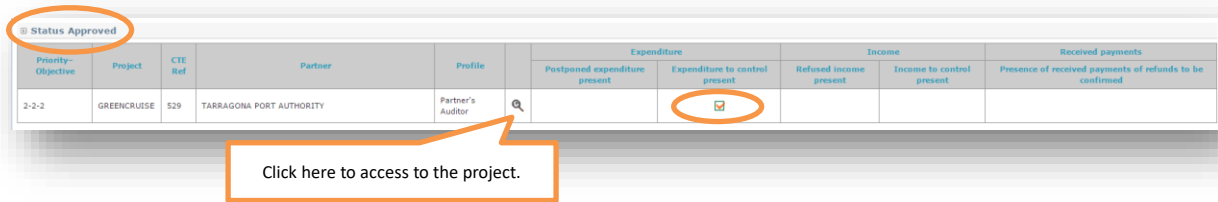
All partners, including the Lead Partner, have to get their expenditure controlled by a designated FLCer during the whole project implementation.

It is highly recommended to enter the expenditure progressively during the full implementation period without waiting its end. Each partner must request the validation of the expenditure by the Lead Partner as soon as possible in order to give enough time to the FLCer to carry on all requested verifications.

As provided by article 23.4 of Regulation (EU) Nº 1299/2013, regardless of the control system in place, FLCer verifications have to be made within 3 months from the submission of documents by the partner.

Kindly remember that the dates of the implementation periods are included in the Subsidy Contract (article 5.1). And that the Lead Partner has to submit the payment claim, including all FLC certificates, within 3 months after the end of the implementation period, according to the same article.

For more information, FLCers are invited to read carefully the Factsheets of the Programme Manual « Control, audits and verifications », « Eligibility of expenditure » and « Reporting procedure » as well as any relevant national information published in the national section of the web side of the Interreg MED Programme (http://interreg-med.eu).

For information purpose a courtesy FLC certificate in Word version is available on the Interreg MED Programme website (www.interreg-med.eu). Kindly note that the document has to be filled in and validated through the on-line monitoring tool, Synergie CTE. Word version would not be accepted.

In case of doubt, do not hesitate to contact the Joint Secretariat or your National Authorities. Contact details can be found on the web side of the Interreg MED Programme (http://interreg-med.eu).

▲ Note that this guide covers the certification of the expenditure. In the case of validation of incomes and net revenues, kindly contact the Project Officer at the JS accompanying the project in order to receive relevant information about how to proceed.

How

Please follow the different steps detailed here after in order to certify partner's expenditure on Synergie CTE.

This procedure is divided in 4 steps: (1) Access to the list of expenditure to control and transfer them to certification phases; (2) Certify expenditure; (3) Create, Fill in and Validate an FLC certificate; and (4) Print, sign and stamp the FLC certificate.

Furthermore, a 5th step about « things to be done by the partner once the FLC certificate has been validated by the FLC » has been included as well in the present document.

Important information, READ BEFORE STARTING:

- Yellow boxes must be filled in. If they are kept empty, you might have problems to save the information.
- No upload of expenditure documents on Synergie CTE is foreseen. Therefore, the invoices and any other relevant document should be transferred by the project partner to the FLCer by other means (e.g. by post or e-mail).
- Amounts should be reported with or without VAT depending on the VAT status of the partner declared in the Application Form. In case of mistake of the status declared in the Application Form, kindly contact your Project Officer at the JS accompanying the project (via your LP) before starting the certification tasks.
- Reporting of project expenditure shall be made solely in Euro. Any expenditure incurred in a currency other than the Euro entered in the system will be automatically converted into Euro through the existing functionality of Synergie CTE.

Step # 1. Access to the list of expenditure to be controlled and transfer them to certification[1]

1. After having entered your login and password, you access to the following screen:

Click here to access to the project.

▲ Before entering in the project, you can see that there is expenditure to control through a mark that appears in column « Expenditure to control present ».

If you are FLCer for several projects you would have a list of all of them. Click on the magnifying glass 🔍 in order to access the project you want to control.

Three different subdivisions appear in the home page of the approved project:

★ **Access application form data** → allows you to access to the last version of the Application Form and to the administrative information & contractual documents.

★ **Access expenditure data** → allows you to access to the different elements that compose the reporting procedure (financial and technical).

★ **Financial monitoring** → allows you to access to different financial tables filled in automatically by the system based on the last updated data entered by the project partner.

Enter in the second subdivision of the home page of the approved project, « Access expenditure data » to start controlling and certifying partner's expenditure.

▲ If you want to read the last version of the Project application form approved by the Programme, you can go to the first subdivision « Access application form data », and click on the magnifying glass 🔍.

2. In order to access the partner expenditure, click on Expenditure in the second subdivision. A new page will appear.

A flashing red comment informs the FLCer that there are expenditure to be controlled.

---

[1] The transfer of the expenditure to certification is an important step in the case of expenditure paid out in a currency different than Euro. This step is used by the system to recalculate the application of the correct exchange rate. For more information see the Factsheet of the Programme Manual « Eligibility of expenditure – Use of Euro » and Step # 1.4 of this guide.

3. Access the list of « Expenditure submitted to the FLC » of your partner by clicking on the magnifying glass 🔍 next to the name of the concerned partner. A new page containing the list of expenditure will appear.

▲ As First level Controller you can access as reader only to expenditure under sections « New expenditure » and « Expenditure in validation process ». If you plan to certify this expenditure, kindly ask the partner to send them to the validation of the Lead Partner (in the case of « New expenditure ») or to ask the Lead Partner to validate them (in the case of « Expenditure in validation process »).

4. Select all the expenditure by ticking on check all at the bottom of the page and click on TRANSFER the selected expenditure for certification. Official exchange rate applied (when needed).

Expenditure will appear now under « Expenditure in certification process »: the certification work can start.

Kindly note that this click means that you take acknowledge the submission of the expenditure by the partner to carry out the review of the documentation presented and the control of the expenses. Under no circumstance this click means that you have verified the expenses and that you are confirming their eligibility.

In the case of expenditure incurred in a currency other than the Euro the date of transfer of the expenditure for certification would be used by the system to automatically convert them into Euro. Kindly see the comment here below after the screenshot.

▲ Kindly keep in mind that reporting of project expenditure shall be made solely in Euro. In consequence, any expenditure incurred in a currency other than the Euro shall be entered in original currency by the concerned project partner in Synergie CTE, and converted into Euro using the existing functionality for this purpose in Synergie CTE; in accordance with Article 23 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 (b), the monthly accounting exchange rate to be taken into account is the one of the Commission in the month during which the expenditure is submitted for verification to the First Level Controller.

For information, when the expense is entered by the partner the system proposes a conversion into Euros using the monthly accounting exchange rate of the Commission in the month during which the expenditure had been paid out. At that moment, the amount provided in Euros was indicative. This amount is correctly updated only when the FLCer transfer them to certification.

 The official EC rate is published electronically each month at:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/inforeuro/index.cfm?Language=en

Programme cofinancé par le Fonds européen
de développement régional (FEDER)

Programme co-financed by the European
Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

Synergie guide for projects – How to certify expenditure and issue an FLC certificate in Synergie CTE
– V.1 (June 2017)

5

Step # 2. Certify expenditure

1. Access to the list of « Expenditure in certification process » by clicking on the magnifying glass 🔍 next to the name of the concerned partner. A new page containing the list of expenditure will appear.

2. Verify the information entered by the partner by accessing to each expenditure's details through the magnifying glass 🔍 .

FLCer can select all expenditure in block or one by one by ticking on the box next to each expenditure on the right. Then, s/he can certify them – nothing, totally or partially – (green button on the left) or send them back to the partner (red button on the right cancel the expenditure submitted to FLC for certification). By clicking on that button, expenditure will appear as « new expenditure » and the partner will be allowed to modify them. More detailed information is available here after.

▲ When checking the eligibility of an expenditure, FLCer is invited to verify more specifically the following information: payment date, the allocation to the project, the location of the expenditure, the link to the correct outsourcing contract and that the comment inserted by the project partners allows to identify correctly the nature of the expenditure; the FLC must request the partner to correct it if it is inaccurate.

As result of the expenditure control by the FLCer, one of the following 4 possible situation may occur to each expenditure.

- ▪ **Possibility 1:** The expenditure is eligible and the expenditure data is correctly entered in the system.
- ▪ **Possibility 2:** Some expenditure data entered in the system is inaccurate.
- ▪ **Possibility 3:** The FLCer requires more information and/or supporting documents to decide on the eligibility of the expenditure.
- ▪ **Possibility 4:** The expenditure (fully or partially) is ineligible.

▲ Kindly note that the certification of an expenditure linked to an outsourcing contract implies that the contract procedure has been controlled and that it is eligible according to the public procurement rules and principles established in the framework of the programme. For further information see the Factsheet of the Programme Manual « Public procurement ».

Possibility 1: The expenditure is eligible and the expenditure data is correctly entered in the system. FLCer should tick on « certify » and include a comment in the comment box, if necessary.

Possibility 2: Some expenditure data entered in the system is inaccurate.

The FLC has the possibility to modify the following information: allocation to a budget line, allocation to a WP and location of the expenditure (within or outside the cooperation area). To do this, click on 🖉 . A pop-up will appear. Once the changes are made, click on save.

For the rest of the cases, FLCer should request the partner to modify the inaccurate information by selecting the concerned expenditure in the column « cancel », and by clicking on Cancel validation of selected expenditure. The expenditure will appear under section « New expenditure ».

Once the modifications are performed, the partner should request once again to its Lead Partner the validation of the concerned expenditure before arriving to the FLCer.

Possibility 3: The FLCer requires more information and/or supporting documents to decide on the eligibility of the expenditure.

FLCer should put the expenditure on hold by ticking on « In expectation » and request additional information to the partner. Requests for additional information are not managed automatically in Synergie CTE. For more information about how to certify an expenditure on hold see point 4 of this step.
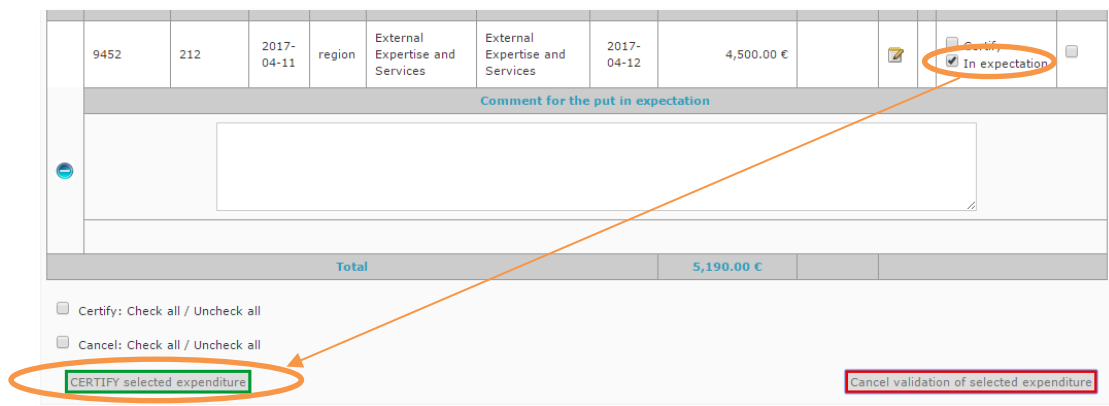
Possibility 4: The expenditure (fully or partially) is ineligible.

FLC should correct the amount declared by the partner by decreasing the amount of the expenditure

In order to do that, first FLCer should tick on « certify ». A box under the expenditure line appears. There, FLCer should include the amount considered correct (eligible), and the amount rejected will be automatically calculate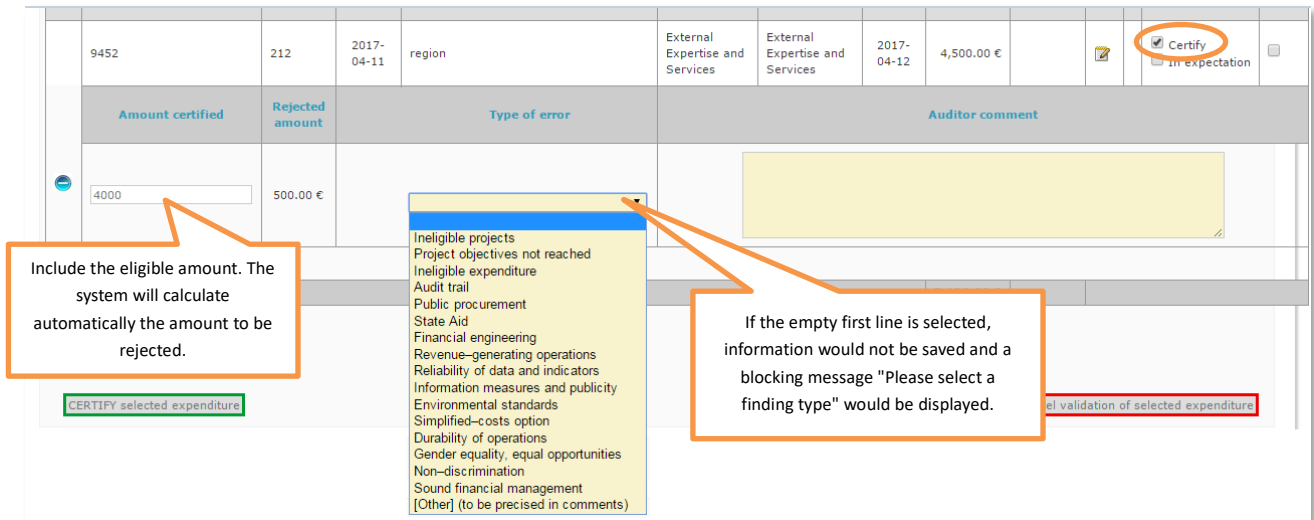d by the system. Finally, FLCer should select the type of error in the drop-down menu2 and include a comment explaining the finding.

▲ Based on the 2007/2013 experience, the most common types of findings are the following ones:

3. Ineligible expenditure → European, programme or national rules are not respected (e.g.: a travel outside of the programme area not foreseen in the Application Form, without a prior approval of the JS).

4. Audit Trail → A document that composes the audit trail of an expenditure is not available for the FLC (e.g.: in the case of staff costs (Methods C and D) the timesheet is missing).

5. Public procurement→ European and/or national (internal) is not respected (e.g.: the selection of a service provider is done through a direct contracting when the national law requires a tender).

10. Information and publicity measures → European and programme information and publicity measures are not respected (e.g.: the logo of the programme in not included in a brochure declared as an expenditure in the framework of the project).

<u>As a general rule, the rest of the options are not to be used by FLCers in the framework of the First Level Control. Should you need to use any other option, kindly contact the JS in order to verify together the well understanding of the finding.</u>

---

3. Certify or reject expenditure

To validate the expenses and to be allowed to integrate them into the FLC certificate, tick for each controlled expenditure « certify » or « in expectation », and click at the end of the page CERTIFY selected expenditure.

Once validated, certified expenditure will automatically appear under section « Expenditure certified but not included in a validated certificate ». Those expenditure can now be included in a FLC certificate by the FLCer.

Expenditure in expectation will automatically appear under section « Expenditure awaiting additional information ». This expenditure remains available for the certification by the FLCer in the future. For more information about how to certify this expenditure, see point 4 here after.
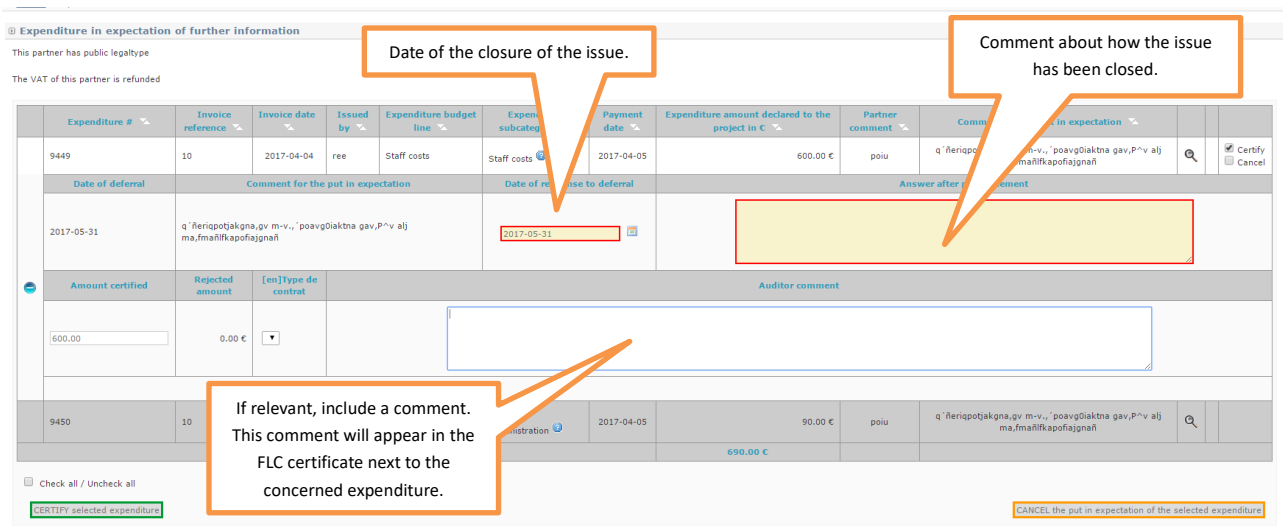
Expenditure not *ticked* will remain under section « Expenditure in certification process ».

4. Certify « Expenditure awaiting additional information »

If you want to work on expenditure appearing under section « Expenditure awaiting additional information », go to the list of expenditure by clicking on the magnifying glass 🔍 next to the name of the concerned partner. A new page containing the list of expenditure will appear.

In the list of expenditure, you will be able to certify/reject the expenditure (Possibilities 1 and 4 of the previous point) or to send them back to the partner (Possibility 2 of the previous point).

In any case, FLCer must include the date of the closure of the issue and an explanation about how the issue has been closed. Information about the final decision regarding the eligibly of the expenditure should be included in the auditor comment box.

Step # 3. Create, Fill in and Validate an FLC certificate

Once expenditure have been certified, the FLCer has to establish a FLC certificate. This document is composed of a first level controller commitment, a first level controller checklist, a list of expenditure, and several financial tables.

At that stage the FLCer must (1) create a FLC certificate for the relevant period; (2) include certified expenditure; (3) fill in the FLC certificate; and (4) validate the FLC certificate.

1. Create an FLC certificate for the relevant period

Click on Certificates in the second subdivision of the project home page in order to create a FLC certificate. A new page appears.
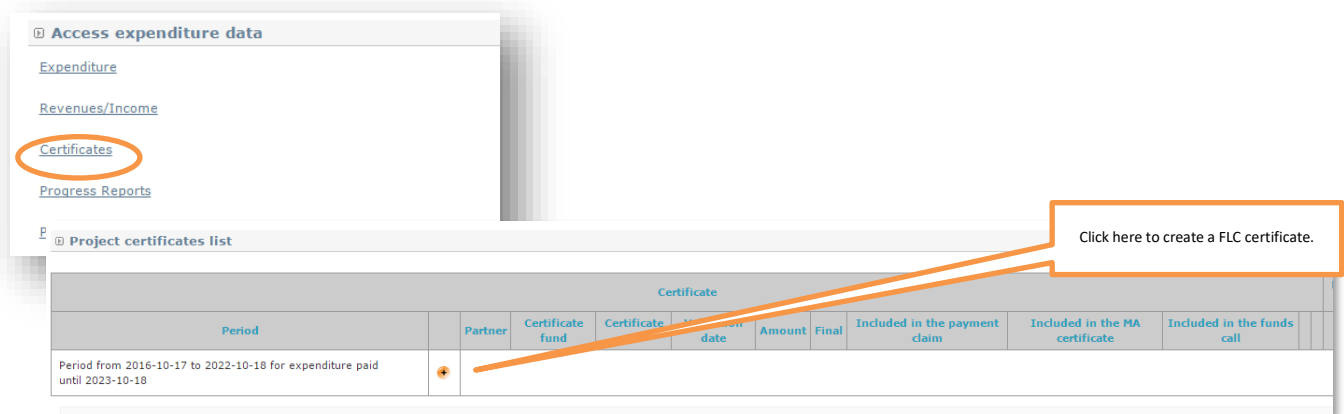
Create a FLC certificate by clinking on ✚ next to the implementation period of reference. If an FLCer has to certify expenditure relevant for two implementation periods, s/he must open the more recent one in order to include all expenditure in the latest period and to produce a single FLC certificate.

▲ As a general principle, the activation of the implementation periods will be done the first working day after the end of the implementation period. For example, if the implementation period ends on June 30th, the creation of FLC certificates would be possible by July 1st (or the first working day). Kindly remember that you can certify expenditure at any time regardless if the FLC certificate for the period is available, only the creation of the FLC certificate will be conditioned by this rule.

2. Include certified expenditure by clicking on Add expenditure to this certificate in the index of the FLC certificate. A list of certified expenditure will appear.

▲ You can include expenditure gradually until the final validation of the document.

Select the expenditure to be included in the certificate in block or tick the boxes one by one. Then click on Add checked expenditure.

Checked expenditure will appear in section Annex 3: List of expenditure. You can access from the index of the FLC certificate.

▲ In case there is expenditure paid out after the end of the implementation period, the system will prevent its inclusion in the FLC certificate. However, it will remain certified in the system and available for the next FLC certificate.

If you need to remove an expenditure already included in a certificate, you should go to the list of expenditure by clicking on Annex 3: List of expenditure in the index of the FLC certificate. A list of certified expenditure will appear. Select the expenditure to be removed from the certificate by ticking the box of the concerned expenditure. Finally click on Remove selected expenditure from the certificate. This action is only available before the validation of the certificate.

3.   Fill in the FLC certificate

The FLC must compile the results of the verifications undertaken in order to provide the project partner and the Interreg MED Programme Authorities with information on the control work carried out, the errors detected, the conclusions drawn and the recommendations and follow-up measures identified.

The FLC certificate is composed by a FLC commitment to be signed by the approved FLC, a checklist, several financial tables and the list of expenditure included in the relevant FLC certificate.

Programme cofinancé par le Fonds européen
de développement régional (FEDER)

Programme co-financed by the European
Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

Synergie guide for projects – How to certify expenditure and issue an FLC certificate in Synergie CTE
– V.1 (June 2017)

12

▲ A courtesy FLC certificate in Word version is available on the Interreg MED Programme website (www.interreg-med.eu). Kindly note that the document has to be <u>filled in and validated</u> through the on-line monitoring tool, Synergie CTE. Word version would not be accepted.

The FLC commitment to be signed by the approved FLC, the financial tables and the list of expenditure included in the FLC certificate are automatically filled in by the system. **The FLC must complete the FLC checklist.**

On the top of each page of the FLC certificate, you will find three links to go to the previous chapter of the FLC certificate, to the Index of the FLC certificate and to the Next chapter of the FLC certificate.

Previous chapter | Index | Next chapter

Remember to click on the bottom Save in each page. You have the possibility to log out and restart your work later.

The FLC certificate must be filled in in one of the two official languages of the Interreg MED Programme, English or French. The same language must be used in the full document.

Text boxes in yellow must be filled in. If they are kept empty, you might have issues to submit your certificate.

If the system requests to provide any information in both languages, kindly include the same text in both boxes or enter "N/A" in the empty box in order to continue the fill in of the certificate.

Kindly remember that in some sections a maximum number of character to be respected has been established. If you exceed this limit the system usually doesn't proceed to save.

▲ On the top of each page you will find the relevant guidance on how to fill in each section. You are invited to read with attention and follow this guidance.

If you log out or go to other page without saving the entered information will not be saved by the system.

4. Verify and Validate the FLC certificate

Before validating the document, retrieve a PDF version of it (by clicking on the PDF symbol 📄) in order to verify that all information has been correctly saved in the system.

▲ Only when validating the last certificate to be issued for your partner in the concerned project, you'll have to click on Switch certificate type to "final" (only 1 final certificate per partner). In all the rest previous certificates, the mention of <u>intermediate certificate</u> must appear.

Finally, click on Validate the document permanently, at the bottom of the page to finalise your certification work, and to be allow to print, sign and stamp the validated certificate.

▲ If you realised that you made a mistake in the certificate and that you need to modify it, kindly contact your National Authority or the JS (programme_med@regionpaca.fr) as soon as possible. No modification would be possible after the inclusion of the document in a payment claim by the Lead Partner.

Step # 4. Print, sign and stamp the FLC certificate

RETRIEVE and PRINT the FLC certificate. The FLC commitment page must be DATED, STAMPED and SIGNED by the approved FLCer.

▲ For more information about how to retrieve a PDF document, kindly see the Synergie CTE guide « How to retrieve a PDF in Synergie CTE ».

Finally send the original FLC certificate to the controlled partner in order for him to archive the document with the rest of the documents of the project audit trail.

Step # 5. Things to do by the partner once the FLC certificate validated by the FLC

After obtaining the signed FLC certificate, and in order to allow the inclusion of such certificate in a payment claim the partner must:

- Get the original FLC certificate and file it in the project audit trail
- Upload a scanned version of the **FLC certificate signed and stamped** in Synergie CTE. For more information about how to do it, please see the Synergie CTE guide « How to upload a document in Synergie CTE »
- When needed[3], send the FLC certificate to the National Authorities in order to get it validated
- If the partner is not the Lead Partner, communicate to the Lead Partner that the FLC certificate has been validated, and uploaded in the system, in order to include it in a Payment Claim

More information…

→ **Link to other documents, factsheets and Synergie CTE procedures**

- ❖ Factsheet of the Programme Manual « Control, audits and verifications »
- ❖ Factsheet of the Programme Manual « Eligibility of expenditure »
- ❖ Factsheet of the Programme Manual « Reporting procedure »
- ❖ Synergie CTE guide « How to enter an expenditure in Synergie CTE »
- ❖ Synergie CTE guide « How to validate expenditure in Synergie CTE as Lead Partner »

---

[3] In the framework of the Interreg MED Programme, this procedure is to be followed in the case of Spanish and Portuguese partners.

Programme cofinancé par le Fonds européen
de développement régional (FEDER)

Programme co-financed by the European
Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

Synergie guide for projects – How to certify expenditure and issue an FLC certificate in Synergie CTE
– V.1 (June 2017)

14