
Version of 16.03.2020

0. INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization declared a pandemic in connection with the spread of the COVID19 virus. The Government of the Netherlands published recommendations that people throughout the Netherlands are encouraged to work from home or stagger their working times if possible. All meetings of more than 100 people as of 12 March 2020 are to be cancelled. People are advised to maintain social distancing whenever possible.

1. INFORMATION ON COVID19

Based on the currently available information, COVID19 has a number of special traits which require special response measures to minimise the inevitable socioeconomic impact of the pandemic. These are:

- ease of transmission, through contamination, touch, or by air through aerosol or dust particles. It is believed that COVID19 is more contagious than season flu or common cold;
- high rate of mutations, which complicates the development of an effective vaccine;
- the possibility of asymptomatic transmission and a relatively long incubation period.

These features indicate that the virus may spread rapidly in a closely connected community, infecting many people before the first case is detected.

Individual risk. It is estimated that the average fatality rate of COVID19 is higher than that of a seasonal flu. However, it appears that the individual risk depends a lot on the age and the general level of health. The current indications are that people below the age of 65 with no pre-existing serious medical conditions are at a very low risk of developing a serious disease resulting from COVID19 virus.

Community risk. The specific features of the COVID19 virus do create a significant community risk, where a large percentage of people in a community can be infected quickly before any mitigation and control measures can be taken. A high rate of contagion in a community can have a significant socioeconomic impact through at least two channels:

- some healthy people not falling in the risk group may still develop a serious condition as a matter of statistics;
- aged people and those with existing medical conditions will face a high risk of contracting the disease.

It is therefore possible that a large community outbreak may quickly overwhelm existing healthcare facilities, leading to significant loss of life and unprecedented hardship. Preventive mitigation measures are necessary to reduce the risk of such developments until more effective treatments or vaccines are available.

Recommended mitigation measures aim to reduce the rate of transmission to below the epidemic level. These measures include:

Personal hygiene recommendations aim to minimise an individual risk of contracting the disease, such as washing hands, sanitizing surfaces, covering with an elbow when sneezing or coughing;

Community measures aim to minimise the rate of contagion in the community. These include:

- reducing physical social contact to the minimum, eg. avoiding handshakes and hugs;
- keeping distance between people when in public places;
- restricting meetings to family circle only;
- self-quarantine if showing flu-like symptoms.

2. MEASURES CURRENTLY BEING TAKEN BY THE CFC

Measures adopted by the CFC pursue the following outcomes:

- minimising the undue risks to the country representatives, experts and staff working in the CFC;
- acting responsibly with respect to the host country;
- minimising, to the extent possible, the impact of the pandemic on the operations of the CFC.

In implementing its measures to mitigate the impact of COVID19 pandemic the CFC carefully monitors the approach and steps taken by other international organizations to address the situation. The following policies are currently in operation at the CFC:

- all non-essential duty travel is cancelled; any exceptions will be assessed on case-by-case basis by the Management;
- the staff are encouraged to postpone or cancel any private travel plans;
- all meetings organized by the CFC will be postponed, or organized by video conferencing;
- all staff are advised to work from home wherever possible;
- all staff are advised to follow the guidelines published by the Government of the Netherlands regarding the COVID19 pandemic.

These measures are continuously monitored and re-assessed to maximize their effectiveness in preventing the impact of COVID19 on the CFC.

3. THE IMPACT ON THE WORK OF THE CFC

The CFC is fully equipped to work effectively without interruption while implementing measures outlined in the previous section. All aspects of the work of the CFC are fully digitized and based in the CFC cloud environment with 100% functionality accessible regardless of physical presence in the CFC office.

ADMINISTRATION AND DOCUMENTS

All document management in the CFC is 100% cloud based, and any regular administration tasks can be completed in the cloud using pre-programmed work processes with all necessary levels of authorisations, checks and balances and approvals. The processes have been reviewed by the CFC Internal auditors who expressed a generally positive opinion about their findings.

The CFC uses industry-standard Microsoft Virtual Desktop service provided by an authorised Microsoft provider in the Netherlands, and a cloud based document management system provided by M-Files, now a partner company of Microsoft.

MEETING AND COMMUNICATION FACILITIES

CFC telephone system is now redirected to the mobile telephones of staff. A duty roster has been developed for at least one duty officer to be on CFC premises to address any issues that require physical presence.

CFC has practiced videoconferencing to minimise travel in its project work since 2014, and the CFC has good practical experience in both holding presentations and meetings online. The CFC will now use this experience to reduce the need for physical face-to-face meetings in all its usual functions. The CFC is now using Zoom platform for its videoconferencing and webinar needs.

The CFC has deployed Microsoft Teams and Microsoft SharePoint collaboration suites so that all staff members can maintain immediate contact in their daily routine functions without the need for a physical meeting.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND PAYMENT FUNCTIONS

All financial management and payment functions have been transferred to the cloud environment since a number of years and will not be affected by the measures introduced in response to COVID19 pandemic.

PROJECT OPERATIONS.

Project administration, like the rest of the administration functions at the CFC is cloud based and will not be affected. Project implementation does require physical visits by project managers to the project sites for monitoring and this travel is currently suspended. Such visits do not, generally, have tight time restrictions, and their postponement by a few weeks or months will not impact project implementation.

Any implications of a longer pandemic-related travel suspension may need to be re-assessed in due time.

RECEIVING COUNTRY OFFICIALS AT THE OFFICES OF THE CFC.

Country representatives wishing to discuss any urgent or essential matter with the CFC, are encouraged to take advantage of video conferencing facilities so as to reduce the risk to public health resulting from a physical meeting and its related travel.

The CFC Secretariat will make the necessary arrangements for a physical meeting at the CFC office should this become absolutely necessary.

4. CONCLUSION

The CFC does not expect its work to suffer any serious negative effects as the result of COVID19 mitigation measures. While the pandemic will obviously have deep effects on Country Members of the CFC, the Fund will continue its functions contributing to the global socioeconomic development, and will do its part in the global effort against pandemic. As new information comes in and the pandemic situation is developing, the mitigation measures will be re-assessed and adjusted where necessary to maintain CFC work with maximum efficiency.