# Submit and Update
# Bilateral Initiatives information

# GrACE User Manual for
# National Focal Point, Programme Operator and
# Fund Operator

Version 2.1, November 2024

## Table of contents

# 1. Introduction to Bilateral Initiatives

The purpose of this manual is to support the National Focal Points (NFPs), Programme Operators (POs) and Fund Operators (FOs) to draft, submit and review Bilateral Initiatives information in GrACE. For general information about bilateral cooperation, please refer to the Bilateral Guideline[1].

Bilateral Initiatives are all the activities performed at national or programme level that are funded from the Bilateral Funds (BFs). The Bilateral Initiatives budget is separate from the budget for programmes and projects.

A different set of rules applies to the Bilateral Initiatives, and therefore they are monitored and registered separately.

Both the EEA Grants and the Norway Grants finance the Bilateral Initiatives except those for Portugal and Greece, which are financed by the EEA Grants only.

Bilateral Initiatives dates of importance:

- Upon launch of an initiative, submit information in GrACE no later than the Interim Financial Report (IFR) for the respective Bilateral Fund, i.e., by 15th March or 15th September. Preferably, however, as soon as the initiative is contracted.
- Upon completion/termination of the initiative, submit the information within 4 weeks after the activity has ceased or the final report has been approved.

When the FMO has received the information, it will be reviewed and validated for publishing on eeagrants.org.

For further help and support, please contact grace.support@efta.int. This user manual and other manuals can be found at our website https://eeagrants.org/gracemanuals, be sure to check in sometimes for updated versions.

## For Programme Operators and Fund Operators
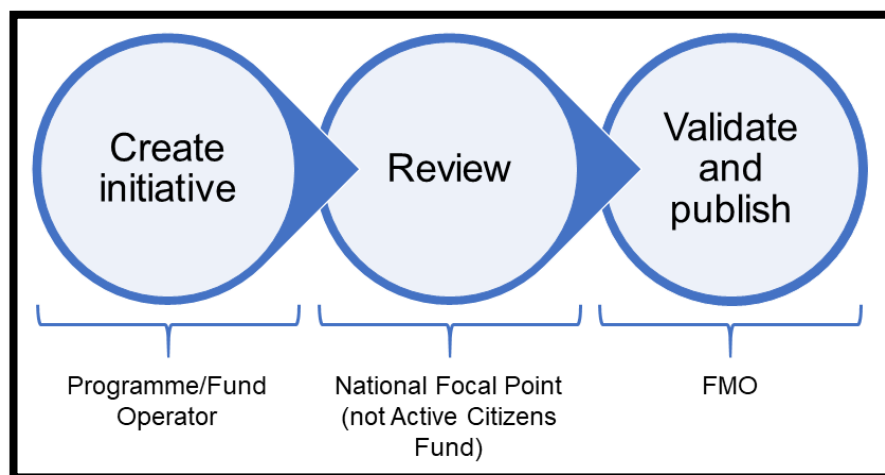


Bilateral Initiatives at programme level from the Bilateral Fund are reported by the PO, then reviewed by the NFP. This also applies to directly contracted programmes. The exception is the Active Citizens Fund (ACF) where the FO reports directly to the FMO. The FMO validates and publishes the initiatives on eeagrants.org. If the FMO returns the initiative for corrections, it goes to the NFP, except for ACF in which case it goes to the FO.

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[1] https://eeagrants.org/resources/2014-2021-bilateral-guideline
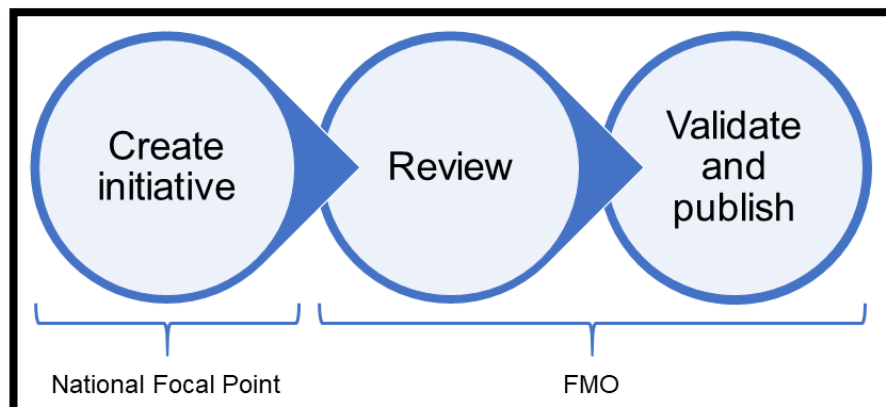
Bilateral Initiatives at country level, from the Bilateral Fund, are reported by the NFP and sent to the FMO for validation and publication on eeagrants.org.

## 2. Bilateral calls in GrACE

For information on how to submit, update and view Bilateral Calls in GrACE, please see the separate Bilateral section in the user manual for calls. You can find this on our website https://eeagrants.org/gracemanuals.

When a call has ended and the selection process is done, this results in a Bilateral Initiative.

## Regarding the €3000 threshold

The 3000 EUR threshold is intended to reduce the administrative burden on POs/NFPs.

Depending on the nature of the initiative(s), there are three options:

1. Not to report on an initiative separately, notably if it is a very small activity, such as one flight ticket under a travel grant scheme.

2. If possible and if it makes sense, we encourage you to report on related initiatives jointly, i.e., cover several related initiatives in one GrACE entry. This could be the case, e.g., for a travel grant scheme supporting several trips, each of them below 3,000 EUR. In this case, they can be included in one GrACE entry, and the description can mention e.g., the number of supported trips and possibly the list of partners. Similarly, if several small activities are part of a series of joint actions involving the same partners, they can be combined in one GrACE entry.

3. Use rounded figures. Indeed, the Bilateral Initiatives reporting is not formal financial reporting, unlike the IFR, but serves the purpose of having an overview of the use of BF. Thus, an initiative using e.g., 2,800 EUR can be reported on as 3,000 EUR. In the description field, or later in the second part of the template, it is possible to add a mention that the actual used amount was 2,800 EUR. Such discrepancies will not cause any problems at the level of the Bilateral Initiative entries in GrACE.

## 3. Create a new Bilateral Initiative

As a user from Programme/Fund Operator organisations, you can create a new Bilateral Initiative. The process starts from the Bilateral Initiatives link in your programme:

1. Enter your programme from the main menu dashboard under **My programmes**
2. Once in the programme, click the **Bilateral Initiatives** (1) link under Modalities in the Programme
3. To create a new Bilateral Initiative, click on the button **Create new** (2)



## 4. Step 1 Upon launch of the initiative

The system will open the form to insert the information for the initiatives. The information is classified in sections, please see illustrations below. Each section can be expanded or collapsed using the buttons "**+**" or "**-**".

First, fill in the title of the initiative (1). Next, fill in the following sections (2). When the mandatory information is filled in, you can **Save** (3) and **Edit** later. Saving does not submit the information to the NFP/FMO. Step 1 can be edited as many times as needed and will stay in status **Draft** until you **Submit** it. Submission is done by clicking **Submit** (not shown in the picture below). The yellow warning boxes tell you which fields are required for submission.

*NB*: New from April 2022 are mandatory fields under the Initiative details concerning the Russian invasion of Ukraine. If you hover over the text, a tooltip will display.

- *To which Programme Area under the EEA/Norway Grants is it related:* Select the Area from the drop-down list.
- *Grant awarded from Bilateral Fund:* What is the grant amount from the Bilateral Fund?
- *Implementation period from – to:* When is the implementation period, from when to when?
- *Website of Promoter/Beneficiary (if available with information on specific activity):* if there is a website for the Promoter/Beneficiary covering this initiative or activity within the initiative.
- *Promoter:* Select the Promoter from previously registered organisations. You can start typing in this field, to search. Please check different spellings and names before creating new organisations, to avoid duplicate organisations in the system.
- *Type of initiative:* What is the type of the initiative? The list contains a selection of commonly used types, but you are also free to select "Other" in which you will see a box to describe the initiative type. You can select several if needed.
- *Was the initiative selected through an open call?* If yes, please select the call from the list as shown in the illustration below. This list is populated by calls that share the same programme area as you just selected for this Bilateral Initiative.
- *Related to a specific project financed by the EEA/Norway Grants?* If the initiative is related to a specific project, please select it from the list of your previously registered programme Project Level Information (PLIs), as shown in the illustration below.

- In the section named **Partners**, please provide information about partners if applicable. Select the country, write the English name of the organisation, and select a suitable classification.

- *Has there been previous cooperation between the partners or is the partnership new?*

- *Brief description of the initiative (aims, expected bilateral benefits and planned activities):* This should not be too technical, detailed, or lengthy, but rather a short description. Also, please ensure to include some words about the aims, the bilateral benefits, and the planned activities.



Step 1 can be edited as many times as you want, and it will stay in status **Draft** until you **Submit** it.

When ready to submit the information, click **Submit for review by [NFP/FMO]** (1) button next to the Save button. You will receive a confirmation pop-up similar to this picture – click **Continue** (2).
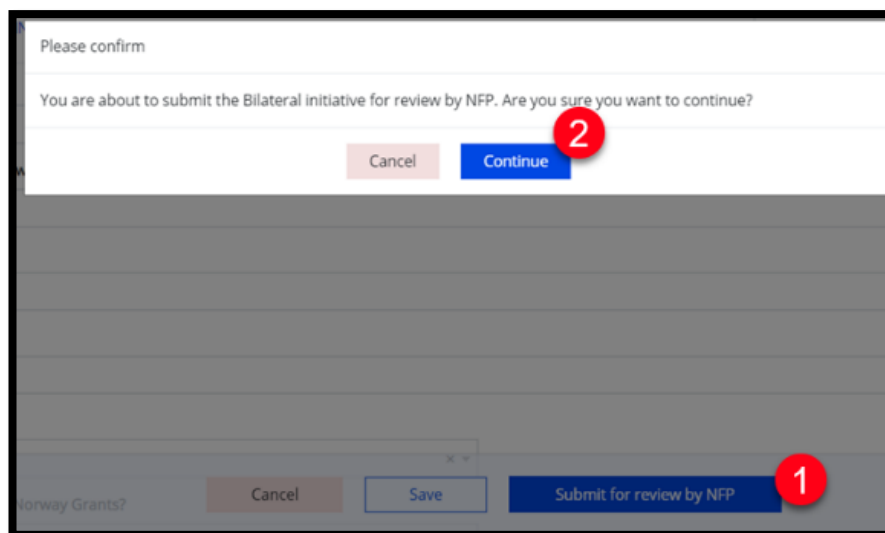


The status of the Bilateral Initiative changes to **Under review by [NFP/FMO]** and you can no longer Edit.
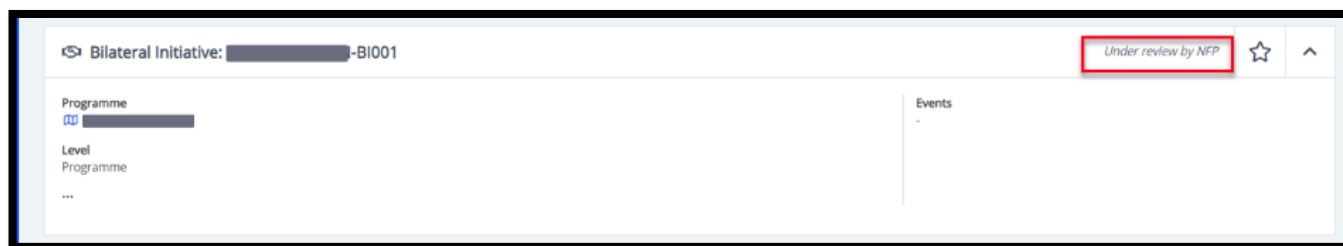


During the review, the NFP or FMO (depending on the type or programme) can add and amend the details before publishing the initiative. They can also send it back for further details or corrections, please see the next chapter for information on how to update and make corrections.

## 5. Review Bilateral Initiatives (NFP)

As the NFP, you will receive initiatives for review before publishing, except for ACF initiatives. When you log in you will find the **Bilateral initiatives waiting for my review** on your dashboard. Click on the title of the initiative to open the task.
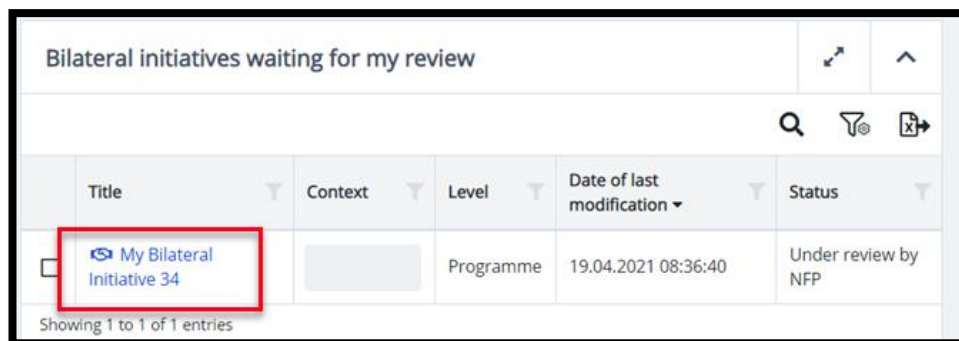


In your reviewer role, you have the possibility to edit the initiative by clicking **Edit**. You can then either return the initiatives for corrections (see instructions below) or send it to the FMO for review. Please see instructions for both options below.

## 5.1. Return for correction

If further information or corrections are needed, the reviewer can send the initiative back to the PO/FO with comments. Click on **Return for corrections** (1) and **Continue** (2).



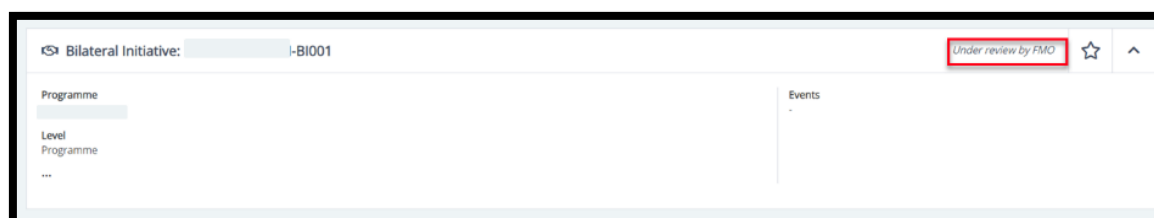Enter a comment for the correction needed (3) and click **OK** (4). Please provide a thorough description about the correction requested.

## 5.2. Submit for review by FMO

When the Bilateral Initiative is ready to be published, you can click the **Submit for review by FMO** button in the task (1) and then **Continue** (2).
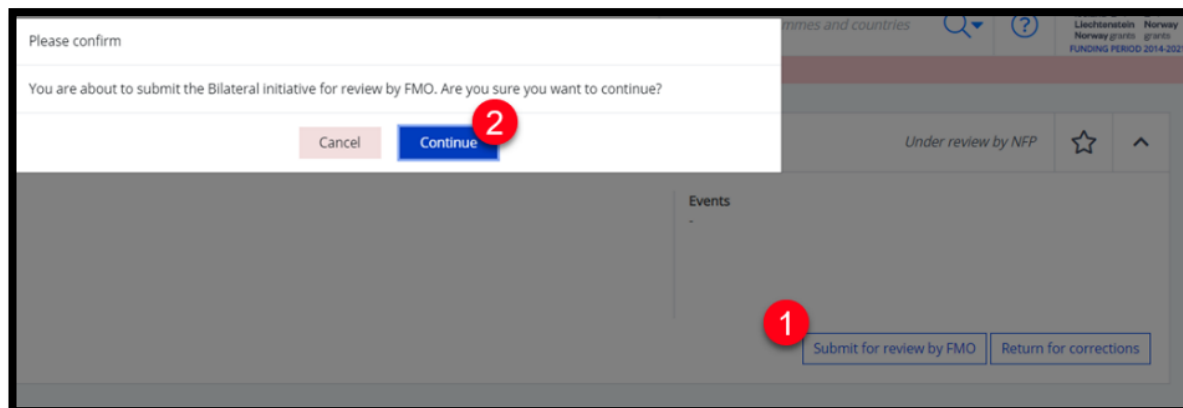


The initiative now shows the status **Under review by FMO**.



# 6. Update the Bilateral Initiative

There are two ways for an update to start – either the PO/FO can initiate it themselves, or the FMO can ask for an update. The NFP can ask for updates for non-directly contracted initiatives on programme level.

If the initiative has already been published on eeagrants.org, and you want to update the information, you have the option to **Initiate update** from inside the initiative. Please be aware that this will require to send the initiative for review once more so only use this to make corrections to previously submitted information. Note: If you want to register the *completion* details of the Bilateral Initiative, select **Initiate completion** and not Initiate update.
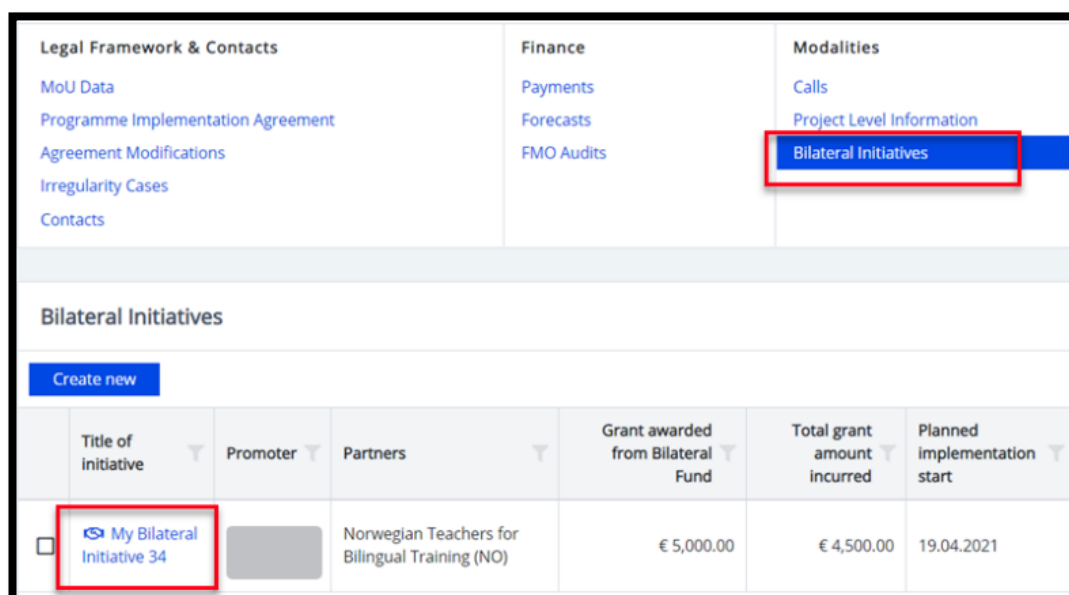
## 6.1. For the PO/FO:

To start the update and the review process, click **Initiate update** (1), provide a comment (2) and click **OK** (3). The initiative will be set to status **Draft** again and the fields can be updated.



You will find the update workflow as a task in your GrACE dashboard (4). Click on the task name (5) to see the details.



In the task you will see the comment from the reviewer (6) and the Bilateral Initiative it is regarding (7). Click on the title of the initiative (7) to open the text and edit it.
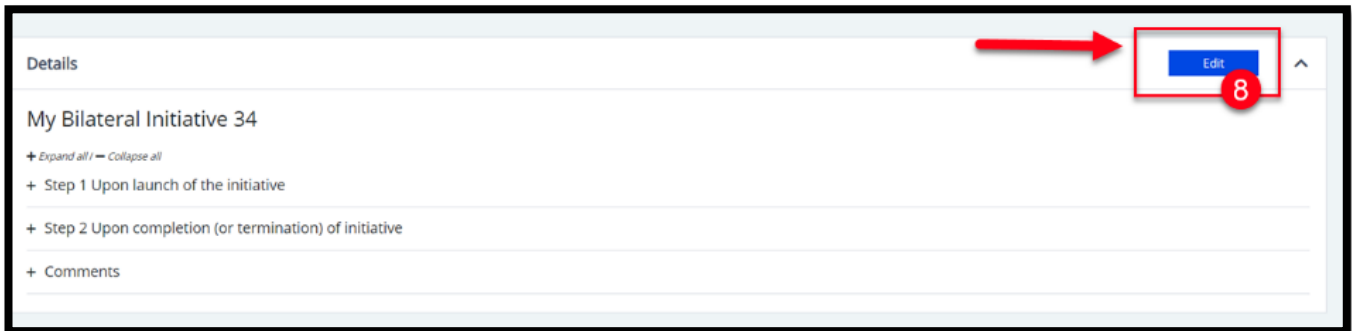
Click **Edit** (8) and update your initiative text (9) and **Save** (10).



When you have finished editing the initiative, go back to the task. You find the task by opening the GrACE dashboard, see the above steps (4) and (5). Once the task has opened, click on the **Actions** drop-down menu, and select **Submit for review to the NFP** (11). Provide a comment (12) and then click the **Submit** button (13).
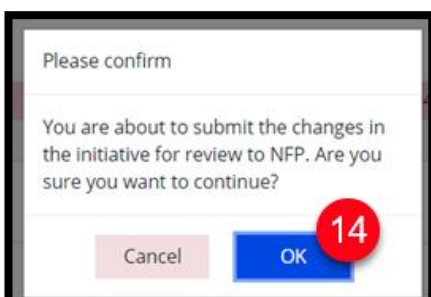


Confirm the submission of the details by clicking **OK** (14).

## 6.2. For the NFP:

The NFP can either update the initiative themselves, send it to the FMO for validation and re-publishing, or send it to the PO/FO for updates. First, open the initiative and click **Initiate update** (1) then **Continue** (2).



Give a reason for the request for correction (3) and click **OK** (4).



If you wish to edit the initiative, click **Edit** (5). Otherwise, if you want to send it directly back to the PO/FO to allow them to update, skip to step 6.

Open your dashboard (6) and open the task by clicking on the name (7).
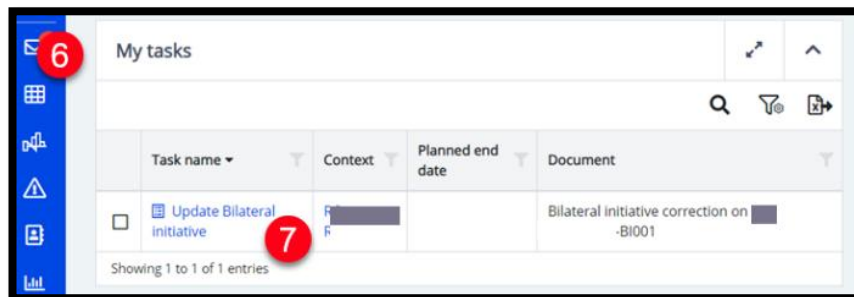


Once the task has opened, click on the **Actions** drop-down menu, and select either **Assign task for updates to PO/FO** or **Submit for review to FMO** (8). Provide a **Comment** (9) and click **Submit** (10).
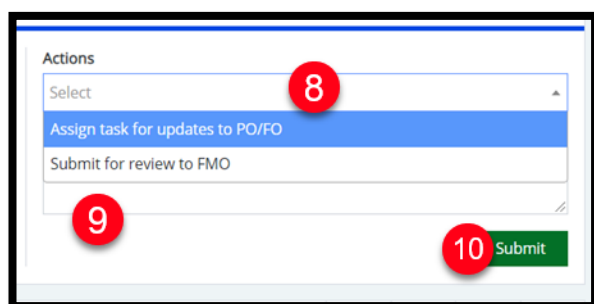


Depending on your selection, you get a confirmation box for the choice you made. Click **OK** (11) to continue.

If you chose **Assign task for updates to PO/FO** they will now receive it as a task and can follow the instructions earlier in this chapter to update the initiative.
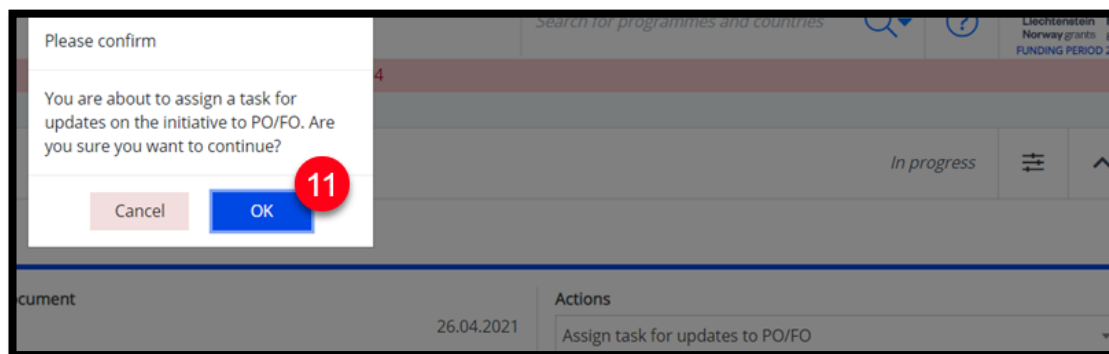


If you chose **Submit for review to FMO** the FMO will receive it and republish it on eeagrants.org when validated.
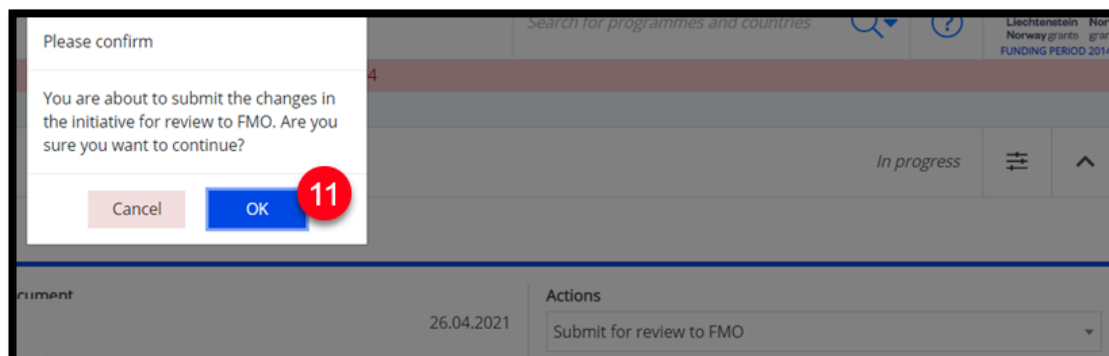
## 7. Step 2 Upon completion (or termination) of initiative

When the initiative is finished, either by completion or termination, the FO/PO can send it for completion. Open the initiative from the **Bilateral Initiatives** link under Modalities in the Programme page. Click on the title of the initiative to open it.



Click on **Initiate completion** (1) and confirm by clicking **Continue** (2).



The initiative will become change status to **Draft Completion** (A). You can click **Edit** and amend **Step 2 Upon completion (or termination) or termination of initiative** (B). The yellow warning boxes will let you know which fields are mandatory for submission.

You can **Save** and come back to this section as many times as you want. When ready for submission, click **Submit for review by [NFP/FMO]** (D).

*NB*: New from April 2022 are mandatory fields under the Initiative details concerning the Russian invasion of Ukraine. If you hover over the text, a tooltip will display.

## Comments tab

You can include **Comments** (1) by clicking on the button **Edit** (2) and then **Add comment** (3) and afterwards **Save** (4). In this box, it is useful if you comment on the achievements of the aims, bilateral benefits, and activities. In this section you can also explain any deviations from the approved initiative. Furthermore, you can include in the comments any relevant information that does not fit the structured format, including information about "rounding up" of budgets for small initiatives or joint submission of several small initiatives. You can edit a comment afterwards, even if it is sent back to you from the FMO for corrections.

## 8. View your Bilateral Initiatives

The initiatives can be found in your Programme's page, under **Bilateral Initiatives**. Below you can see the different statuses:

- *Draft: Draft Completion* when you have started Step 2
- *Under review by NFP: Completion under review by NFP* for Step 2
- *Under review by FMO: Completion under review by FMO* for Step 2
- *On-going:* this means the current initiative is "live" on eeagrants.org
- *Completed*



To filter the data and view more columns and rows in the display, click on the filter symbol (1). You can turn on/off columns by ticking/unticking the box in front of the name of the column (2). You can filter by selecting dates or entering words in the **Column filter** sections (3).

You can decide how many entries you want to see at the same time by entering a number in the **Show** box (4). Note: Choosing **All** might slow down the GrACE website for you, so we do not generally recommend it. When satisfied, click on **Apply** (5). You can save the changes to be your default view of the Bilateral Initiatives page so that it shows this way every time – click on the down-arrow next to **Apply** (5) and select **Apply and save as my default**.