



## IMPACTS OF COVID ON FORHEAL

Current situation of Covid-19 pandemic significantly affects the activities within FORHEAL project, which is being implemented by three major forestry European universities and three universities from Laos. The measures taken to prevent the spread of the SARS-COV-2 virus have a negative impact, in particular on the international mobility of students or the organization of international meetings, which also form a substantial part of the FORHEAL project.

The impacts of coronavirus outbreak on the project are especially very significant, because 2020 is the last year of the implementation and all project goals are to be met by the end of October. Czech University of Life Sciences Prague was the first organization in the Czech Republic whose employee was positively tested for the new type of coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. It occurred on March 01, 2020. A series of restrictions adopted by the university management and a nation-wide lockdown of Czechia followed very quickly. Czech government adopted the state of emergency, borders were closed for all foreigners, movement of persons was restricted only to the necessary transfers to work, doctor's appointments or purchases. Most flights, train or bus connections with foreign countries were canceled. Beyond the Government action, all facilities of the CZU were closed for almost two months, the work moved from offices, laboratories and classrooms to the home environment and to electronic forms of communication.

All these adopted measures have had the greatest impact on foreign cooperation, including mobilities of representatives of the Savannakhet University in Laos to CZU Prague through the FORHEAL project.

The Czech University of Life Sciences Prague planned to host three representatives from Laos for several weeks, to improve their skills in forest resource planning, forest harvesting, silviculture, and forestry economics. The Lao representatives were supposed to work in tandem with Czech experts on improving the quality of higher education provided at the Savannakhet University for students majoring in study programs focused on forestry and forest-based bioeconomy. With all the formal necessities resolved, invitation letters signed and sent to Savannakhet, all, it seemed, that was left to do was buy the plane tickets. Nevertheless, we hope to welcome the Lao in Prague, if the situation permits, and carry out all the activities planned for the mobilities. We are however prepared to build the capacities of Savannakhet University via remote technologies.

The project coordinator, University of Helsinki, had the plan to host two incoming staff from National University of Laos in between April to May. The adopted measures in Finland affected this planned visit, the project will set new dates for staff exchange once the exceptional period over. The lockdown in Germany has so far affected the planned visit of a delegation from Souphanouvong University to ALU-Freiburg that was scheduled for May. However, ALU-Freiburg representatives hope that the visit will be able to take place as soon as possible in an alternative term.

