

The Summary of the Minutes of the 1st Annual Meeting of the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021

Date:

13th March 2018

Venue:

Government Office premises, Mánesová Street 1, Košice

Agenda

11:45 – 11:55	Opening remarks (NFP, donors)
11:55 – 12:30	Status of the preparation of the Concept Notes (submission and donor assessment) and Programme Agreements development Discussion on the Strategic Report 2017 on the EEA FM and the NFM 14-21
12:30 – 12:45	Bilateral relations, status of the JCBF and Bilateral Work Plan
12:45 – 12:55	Status of the Management and Control Systems at national level
12:55 – 13:10	Recommendations, discussion and expectations for upcoming period
13:10 – 13:15	Closing remarks

General

The 1st Annual Meeting was aimed at evaluating the progress and discussing further steps to be taken in the preparation of new programming period of the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 in Slovakia as well as reviewing the Strategic Report 2017.

Summary

Opening Remarks

A short opening speech was made by the representative of the National Focal Point (NFP). He welcomed all participants at the 1st Annual Meeting and briefly reminded the important milestones of the new programming period 2014 – 2021.

Status of the preparation of the Concept Notes (submission and donor assessment), Programme Agreements development and Discussion on the Strategic Report 2017 on the EEA FM and the NFM 14-21

The NFP summed up the current status of preparation of the Concept Notes of each Programme operated by the Government Office of the SR. Two Concept Notes have been already assessed by the Donors and proceeded to the Programme Agreement phase (Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency/Cross-border Cooperation and Domestic and Gender-based Violence), one Concept Note has been rejected (Local Development, Poverty Reduction and Roma Inclusion) and one is still under preparation (Cultural Entrepreneurship, Cultural Heritage and Cultural Cooperation). A new stakeholder and strategy meeting on the Local Development programme will take place in mid-March and the revised Concept Note will be submitted to the Donors, in line with the agreed conditions (including the active involvement of relevant stakeholders). The Concept Note for the Culture programme will be submitted to the Donors very soon. The foreseen external appraisal of the pre-defined projects will take place in parallel with the programme agreement phase and will therefore not delay the submission of the Concept Note.

The Concept Note of the Programme operated by the Research Agency (Business Development, Innovation and SMEs) has been submitted to the Donors while the Concept Note elaborated by the Ministry of Environment of the SR (Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation) is still pending. The NFP pointed out that process of preparation of the Concept Notes takes longer than expected. The FMO informed that the Programme

Operator of the NGO Programme has already been sent the Concept Note to the Donors for their comments and is likely to proceed to the Programme Implementation Agreement phase very soon.

The NMFA mentioned that Slovakia was one of the first countries where the process of preparation of the Concept Notes has already started. The NMFA confirmed that the process takes longer but good quality of the Concept Notes is expected. However, after all these procedures the Concept Notes are well prepared. The Donors also emphasised that the process to be followed and the requested level of information during the Concept Note and programme agreement phase is uniform across all BSs.

The Donors thanked the NFP for the timely submission of the first annual Strategic Report. Despite the short deadline, the report fulfilled all the formal requirements and included the necessary level of information at this early stage of programme preparation/implantation. The Strategic Report was formally approved.

Recommendations, discussion and expectations for upcoming period

Further, the NMFA welcomed the NFP's recommendations and suggestions as regards the process. The NFP appreciated the application of the Quality-At-Entry principle, while also stating that the current approach is a bit different from the expectations of the Slovak NFP. In the opinion of the NFP, the main challenges lie with finding a proper balance between the level of details of information requested as well as with the timing of when this information is necessary in the process. As an example, some information is very relevant for the so-called Detailed Description of Management and Control System stage, but might not necessarily be relevant for the Concept Note stage.

Bilateral relations, status of the JCBF and Bilateral Work Plan

The NFP briefly informed that the Technical Assistance Agreement and the Bilateral Fund Agreement were signed on 15 February 2018. The 1st official meeting of the Joint Committee for Bilateral Fund (JCBF) took place at the end of October 2017. The Rules of Procedure of the JCBF were successfully adopted. The process of the preparation of the Work Plan has been mentioned too. The members of the JCBF have decided to organise the 2nd meeting of the JCBF in the first half of April 2018, at which the draft Work Plan will be discussed in detail.

Status of the Management and Control Systems at National Level

The NFP informed that the Detailed Description of Management and Control System (DDMACS) needed to be revised based on the FMO's comments on the first draft, and the updated version has already been submitted to the FMO (end of February). The FMO responded that comments of the FMO on the revised draft will be sent by mid-March at the latest. The NFP informed that after finalizing this process the DDMACS needs to be re-audited. The aim of the NFP is to have the DDMACS approved by Donors as soon as possible, therefore the flexible communication have to be kept.

Decisions adopted

- **The Donors approved the Strategic Report 2017 for EEA FM and NFM 2014 - 2021**
- **2nd meeting of the Joint Committee for Bilateral Fund will take place in first half of April 2018**