

Strategic Report for Slovakia 2019

EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2014-2021

Assessment of the contribution of the EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanisms toward reducing economic and social disparities and strengthening bilateral relations

in the Slovak Republic

Version 1.0



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC



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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report covers the period from January 2019 till the end of the year.

Effects of the Grants

Due to the early stage of the implementation, there are no results to report in relation to progress towards reducing social and economic disparities and strengthening bilateral relations with Donor State entities.

Status of Programmes

Three remaining Programme Agreements were signed in 2019: Local Development and Social Inclusion – LDI, Climate Change Programme – ACC and Business and Innovation Programme – BIN. The first Calls for proposals were launched under Culture Programme – CLT, Domestic and Gender-based Violence Programme – DGV, Good Governance and Cross-border Cooperation Programme – GGC and Climate Change Programme – ACC. Two pre-defined projects were contracted and all the remaining pre-defined projects have been positively appraised by the Programme Operator.

Status of Bilateral Funds

At the beginning of August 2019, two calls for proposals were published: Open Call for cultural, political and institutional cooperation and Call for smaller scale activities – travel grants. Both Calls have been opened during 2019. The pre-defined initiative No. 2 “SK Presidency in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – 2019” was successfully implemented and finished in 2019. Other predefined initiatives are under preparation. During 2019, one regular meeting of the JCBF was taken, in February. Four Calls were published at Programme level.

Major risks

Key risks identified at this stage of implementation are related to potential low interest of applicants under some Programmes and delays in the public procurement.

Changes in political, economic and social context

During 2019, several organisational changes within the Government Office of the SR became effective. There have been no major changes that would affect the design and setup of the Programmes supported by the Grants.

Changes in the management and control system

The Detailed Description of Management and Control System at national level accompanied by the Audit Report and the Opinion has been acknowledged by the FMO on 29 March 2019 as meeting the minimum requirements as requested by Article 5.7.5 of the Regulations.

2 POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

This chapter reflects the political, economic and social changes and trends in Slovakia in 2019, with focus on those that have had or might have an impact on the implementation of the Financial Mechanisms. This chapter covers the development in the areas of climate change, good governance and cross-border cooperation, culture, local development and social inclusion, business and innovation and education.

As part of its monitoring functions, the National Focal Point approached several independent experts to provide background information and their opinion on the recent development in the above mentioned areas, as well as on the recent set-up of the Programmes.

2.1 Culture

In October 2019, the Interim Report of the Ministry of Finance of the SR and the Ministry of Culture of the SR “Revision of Cultural Expenditure”¹ has stated that there are demerits in the state of immovable cultural heritage preservation, specifically 1/4 of immovable national cultural monuments are in a desolate state and according to the revision, their restoration would require from € 1.8 to € 5.5 billion.² In terms of support for the protection of the cultural heritage fund, the only systematic and long-term financial support from the Slovak state is the subsidy mechanism Let’s renew our house, but it is not sufficient to cover a neglected part of the immovable cultural heritage. Other sources co-financed from the state budget are EU funds and EEA Grants.

Other major national projects in 2019 were the creating of the PAMIS – the Monuments Information System within the Monument Board of the SR, which is aimed in consolidation and centralization of the data of the Monuments Board and Regional Monuments Offices, including the outputs of the national heritage research and creation of the Archaeological Map of Slovakia (2019-2022), the Digital Monuments Fund project as well as the completion of the Central Depository of Archaeological Finds.

In the field of Cultural and Creative Industries, which is supported by the Integrated Regional Operational Program 2014-2020 and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, several calls were issued in 2019 for submitting the applications for a non-repayable financial contribution to mobilize creative potential in regions; for establishing creative centres and boosting the demand for creative activities. Utilization of the EU funds to support the creative industry in the Slovak Republic has been assessed as one of the most problematic in terms of the use of EU funds.

The year 2019 was also the year of the 30th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution. A number of national, local and regional activities were organised on this occasion. Within the Slovak National Gallery in Bratislava, an interactive website www.1989.sng.sk was launched with a digital project “Time-description 1989”.

On December 17th 2019, the Ministry of Culture of the SR issued a Call for Applications for the European Capital of Culture event in the Slovak Republic for 2026. This prestigious title will be shared by two cities from two EU member states: A Slovak and a Finnish one.

¹ <http://www.mksr.sk/ministerstvo/institut-kulturnej-politiky-/revizia-vydavkov-33c.html>

² <http://www.culture.gov.sk/aktuality-ministerstva-kultury-36.html?id=2007&fbclid=IwAR2ZsQkyxe-BGYDloofY3aoEUSqWg9bYVnYIXHGbeobOeWjrMJ0x7MabFVQ>

2.2 Climate Change

In the present, the Slovak national climate policy is closely intertwined with the European climate policy. Slovakia welcomes the European Green Deal³ and supports the European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy – A Clean Planet for all⁴. The country understands the urgency for climate action and arguments the science has provided.

At national level Slovakia is already reflecting its ambitions towards low carbon development and climate neutrality in strategic planning, particularly in the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan until 2030⁵ and in the Low-Carbon Development Strategy of the SR until 2030 with a view to 2050⁶. The national energy and climate plan was elaborated under the Regulation 2018/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action and adopted by the government in December 2019. Another important strategic document setting goals for climate policy is the Strategy of the Environmental Policy of the SR until 2030⁷, stating increased national reduction commitment up to 2030 in Non-Emission Trading Sectors (transport, households, agriculture and waste) from 12 % to 20 %. The country is about to increase its targets for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy up to 2030. In addition, the national environmental strategy proposes measures for the continuation of Greenhouse Gas Emission Allowance Trading and for the implementation of sustainable solutions in transportation. To support the national ambitions in this decade, Slovakia has allocated additional € 2.5 billion for climate and environmental investments by a recently adopted amendment to the Emissions Trading Act. Internationally, in 2019 for the first time, Slovakia has made a contribution of \$ 2 million to the Green Climate Fund and plans to continue to do so in the coming years.

In the field of climate change adaptation the main strategic document is the revised Climate Change Adaptation Strategy of the SR⁸. The main goal of the national adaptation strategy is to fulfill the requirements of the Paris Agreement, to improve the readiness of Slovakia to address the adverse impacts of climate change, to provide guidance on adaptation processes, to establish an institutional framework and coordination mechanism and to raise awareness about climate change. Implementation of the priority adaptation measures in specific areas will be based on the Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan, which is currently under elaboration and on the Action plan to address the consequences of drought and water scarcity⁹.

Recently, Slovakia has made a politically bold decision: to cease subsidies for domestic coal-fired electricity production by 2023. This will lead to phasing-out of inefficient coal extraction in the country and transformation of the entire coal-mining region of Upper Nitra, based on just transition approach. As a result, the future of this region will go hand-in-hand with smart and low-carbon innovations. The Action Plan for the Transformation of the Upper Nitra Coal Region¹⁰ aims to ensure the transformation of the region's economy by existing economic, social and institutional measures, to minimize the negative effects of such a transition and to support employment in the region.

The assessment of the national climate policy of Slovakia, whether in the field of climate change mitigation or adaptation, shows that the country is an ambitious EU Member State, supporting climate

³ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/european-green-deal-communication_en.pdf

⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0773&from=SK>

⁵ <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/24390/1>

⁶ <https://www.slov-lex.sk/legislativne-procesy/SK/LP/2020/1>

⁷ https://minzp.sk/files/iep/greener_slovakia-strategy_of_the_environmental_policy_of_the_slovak_republic_until_2030.pdf

⁸ <https://www.minzp.sk/files/odbor-politiky-zmeny-klimy/strategia-adaptacie-sr-zmenu-klimy-aktualizacia.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.minzp.sk/files/sekcia-vod/hodnota-je-voda/h2odnota-je-voda-akcny-plan-riesenie-dosledkov-sucha-nedostatku-vody.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/24029/1>

neutrality and the transition to a carbon neutral economy and society. The Programme “Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation” (SK-Climate) aims to increase resilience and responses to climate change, improve the adaptability of ecosystems and decision-making tools for natural risk prevention and civil protection. These areas show strong convergence especially with the goals of the national adaptation policy, while supporting the ambitions in the field of climate change mitigation. Strategies, action plans and contingency plans, measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, climate change adaptation measures and the improvement of preparedness to extreme weather events supported by EEA and Norway Grants will contribute to achieving Slovakia’s ambitions, commitments, targets and goals in the field of climate change.

2.3 Good Governance and Cross-border Cooperation

Good Governance

The Slovak Republic has a high fragmentation of government at municipal level which, according to the EU’s Country Report Slovakia 2019, creates high overheads and harms the effectiveness of local government. The weak capacities (financial, personal...) of its often-overburdened municipalities hinder the performance of the local self-government to deliver good quality services to its citizens.¹¹ Despite the efforts carried out within the Better Regulation Strategy (RIA2020), the above reasons make self-government less effective.¹²

In 2019, presidential elections took place and Slovakia and Zuzana Čaputová has been elected as the fifth president and first female president of the Slovak Republic. At the governmental level, general elections will take place at the end of February 2020.

Corruption and its prevention

Corruption is perceived as a long-term problem in Slovakia. These factors are minimizing the effects of Slovak impressive economic development since EU accession. According to the “Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International”, Slovakia was ranked on 59th place in 2019.

Since number of measures aimed at combating corruption has been taken by the government, some positive trends in Slovak society are observed. However, longer-term, structural efforts that have been started by the government need years to settle in a provide for a visible societal change. These issues require a systematic approach at all levels of public administration, active civic society and involvement of relevant stakeholders that are able to improve anti-corruption environment. The Government Office has declared its ambition to set a positive example in this regard. Cooperation with OECD in the field of integrity of public administration is a positive step forward.

Public procurement

Almost 90 % of conducted public procurement’s in 2019 were based on lowest price and the use of quality criteria in awarding the contracts dropped from 8 % to 4 %. Second biggest problem of public procurement procedures is average length of procedures, which increased to average 200 days in 2018 (last data). The Office for Public Procurement made an effort to simplify and increase the efficiency of public purchases, but further steps are needed. Increase in the use of quality-related criteria and lower bureaucratic burden would be greatest challenges in public procurement procedures, which would be beneficial for whole society. The National Focal Point hopes that the pre-defined project of the Public

¹¹ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/slovak-republic>

¹² <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/22063957/ec-slovakia-lags-in-several-fields.html>

Procurement Office will, in an active cooperation with the OECD, increase the use of the so-called MEAT criteria, as well as it will bring on board positive examples from abroad.

Effectiveness of judiciary

In the justice sector, the World Bank ranked Slovakia in 2018 as 19th of the EU countries (and 52nd internationally) on the indicator Rule of Law¹³. In this ranking Slovakia dropped by one place compared to 2017.

Effectiveness of judiciary was main topic of various projects financed in previous and current programming period by EU funds. In general, the aim of the projects was to implement new electronic services in relation to justice (upgrade of ICT, development of web portals, digitalisation of archives), to speedup court proceedings, improve the quality of human resources of prison personnel and improve analytical capacities as well as internal processes in courts and in the Ministry of Justice. Although the introduction of modern technical equipment in justice sector led to overall increase of efficiency in the sector, unequal distribution of work is still a problem by some district court's work.

From the Slovakian citizens' perspective, general level of trust in the justice system is still on a low level. The Eurobarometer survey requested by the European Commission (EC) that was published in December 2019 shows up to 72 % of Slovak citizens do not trust the country's legal system. Out of all EU member states, Slovakia recorded the second worst figure after Croatia, where 76 % have no trust in the justice system.¹⁴ Such a high value of distrust remains the greatest challenge for upcoming period. Specialisation of courts and judges shall be seen as one of the key elements of a more effective judiciary system, and the pre-defined project of the Ministry of Justice might bring positive signals in this regard.

Cross-border cooperation Slovakia – Ukraine

Highest risk in mutual cooperation between Slovakia and Ukraine is still unstable security situation in eastern regions of Ukraine, which is affecting political, economic and social situation in whole country. Main political change in Ukrainian politics led to win and election of new Ukrainian president Mr. Volodymyr Oleksandrovyč Zelenskyj in April 2019. The new president highlighted the de-escalation of tensions with Russia and structural reforms of the Ukraine as his priorities. Slovak Republic could help Ukraine in bilateral relations to strengthen the public administration capacities, which are still one of the major problems in cross-border cooperation. Building capacities and mutual cooperation of authorities and people on both sides of borders are best ways to increased cross-border cooperation, what will result in better relationships between people living close to Slovakia-Ukraine border.

2.4 Local Development and Social Inclusion

The stable macroeconomic growth within the last six years and unprecedented registered unemployment rate (4.92 % in December 2019) mirrors its effects also in the area of poverty and social exclusion risk rate. However, close to 200 000 Roma people still live in marginalized communities often without access to basic infrastructure and public services. Despite almost unrivalled economic growth compared to most EU countries, regional disparities remain large ranging from 4.7 % in western Slovakia to 14.7 % in eastern Slovakia.

In 2019, early childhood education and care has been reformed to increase enrolment in particular of children from less well-off families. The National Council of the Slovak Republic has approved in May 2019 the bill on compulsory education to five years-olds. The changes will come into effect as of

¹³ https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/wb_ruleoflaw/

¹⁴ <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/22303221/slovakia-eurobarometer-autumn-2019-trust-police-justice.html>

September 2021. This is likely to have a positive impact on disadvantaged children from marginalized Roma communities.

In October 2019, the European Commission sent a reasoned opinion to Slovakia urging the country to comply with EU rules on equal treatment of Roma schoolchildren. In Slovakia, a disproportionate share of Roma children are placed in special schools or classes for children with mental disabilities and there are also different ways of marginalization in mainstream education, by placing Roma children in separate Roma-only classes or in Roma-only schools. Following the letter of formal notice sent in April 2015, Slovakia has undertaken several measures intending to tackle this problem. However, after carefully assessing the measures and monitoring the situation on the ground, the Commission concluded that they are not yet sufficient to resolve the problem.

In September 2019, a new edition of the Atlas of Roma communities in Slovakia came out. When collecting data for the atlas, researchers asked 1,177 villages and towns about the Roma community. Numerous Roma communities live in 804 villages and towns included in the atlas. The overall number of Roma people in Slovakia is estimated at 440,000. The comparison of the data between the Atlas 2013 and Atlas 2019 demonstrates a negative trend. The 2013 edition reported 4,131 shacks with 31,601 citizens living in them. The 2019 edition found that there were 5,067 shacks and 34,402 citizens living in them. Out of the 804 villages listed in the atlas, Roma in 27 localities do not have standard access to drinking water. About 16 % of people have drinking water from their own well, another 10 % use a public well.

Large-scale systematic progress is hampered by the lack of social housing. While some improvement is expected in response to the non-governmental sector projects based on micro-credits and self-construction, and to a newly launched EU-funded call, further investment in non-segregated social housing is crucial.

The health status of marginalised Roma communities is still worse compared to the majority population. This reflects the lower accessibility of healthcare services (UNDP, 2014). The life expectancy for Roma is 70, six years lower than the majority population. The infant mortality rate is almost three times higher for Roma than in the majority population (12.3 compared to 4.2 per 1000 infants, Ministry of Finance of the SR). While positive spill overs have been observed under the EU-funded 'Healthy regions' initiative, introducing health mediators, often recruited from Roma communities, continuous investment is necessary to ensure lasting improvements.

Within less developed regions, large intra-regional differences with heterogeneous socio-economic challenges persist. The most structurally disadvantaged districts, often depopulating, are concentrated in the South-East, North-East and the South-Central part of Slovakia. The Law on Social Economy and Social Businesses (Act No. 112/2018 Coll.) which should give job opportunities to disadvantaged people with low level of education and skills has been gaining on weight. It might become a much more effective tool for activation than the current system of activation works which do not offer many opportunities for learning a new set of skills useful for potential employer in the open labour market. At the end of 2019, the registration to social business has undergone almost 70 companies. In total, they employ several hundred disadvantaged workers which seems a good starting point for the development of social economy in Slovakia.

2.5 Business and Innovation

Business environment

Business environment in the Slovak Republic in 2019 had been dramatically influenced by various factors. The most important ones are still relatively high regulatory burden, low law enforcement and

quite frequent legislative changes in the country. Regarding to the Global Competitiveness Report produced by World Economy Forum in 2019 Slovakia's business competitiveness is slowly losing ground. Regarding to the Business Alliance of Slovakia and its Business Environmental Index Slovakia dropped by 2.2 % comparing to the last year. One of the most concerning aspects of Slovakia's business environment is still the relatively complicated tax and custom system, which have to be reflected by entrepreneurs of Slovak origin and also international. The limiting factor is also a relative lack of qualified workforce in Slovakia which is essential to the vast development of the economy and entrepreneurship with high added value. The good news is that innovation-driven companies are performing relatively well – this goes mainly for a SME's segment and companies with more 10 employees.

Development of the SME's

Business environment in Slovak Republic consists mainly from the small and medium-sized enterprises which represent more than 99 % of all companies in country's economy. These companies generate 55.1 % of value added in the economy, while EU average is 56.4 %. The important issue is the average annual productivity of SMEs which reaches almost € 19,000 per person and the EU average reaches almost € 45,000. According to the need of sustainable economic progress, Slovak economy needs to transform its high dependency on the car manufacturing industry towards segment of SME's which is mainly represented by the matters of stronger integration in global value chains, in-house innovation and digitalization. In a word – there is a strong need of overall support of SME's in the aspect of improving the skills and adaptability of the labor force. The Ministry of Economy of the SR delivers several tools such as innovation vouchers, support of clustering processes in the industry and last but not least supporting the SME's operating in the field of innovations focusing on the Smart Cities Agenda. However, the system of support of SME's is still fragmented and has to be standardized because of the need to understand that the most important and defining issue connected to the SME's sector is the access to financing.

Welfare Technology and Ambient Assisted Living

The field of innovative, companies should not lose their attention to the elderly or socially disadvantaged people and their interest should be aimed to implementation of innovative solution to these target groups.

The subject welfare technology and ambient assisted living is reflected in several policies on the national level. However, innovative and technological support for healthy ageing and inclusion of vulnerable persons living are supported only through the OP Research and Innovation 2014-2020 – support of Health Technology aiming at research institutions and businesses.

In the last years, the attention to the field welfare technology has been paid by several municipalities in Slovakia. It is related to the implementation of Smart cities solutions. The municipality of Trnava is considered as one of the best examples where many successful projects in that field were realized and others are being prepared.

2.6 Education

The development of effective education system belongs to the top government priorities but significant reforms have not been adopted so far. Spending on education remains low and is reflected in low teachers' salaries and poor learning equipment - including for digital skills. The government has decided to increase teacher salaries by 10 % as of January 2019 and another 10 % in 2020. Despite gradual salary increases, the teaching profession remains unattractive. Upper secondary teachers working in public

institutions earn only 64 % of the average salary of a full-time full-wage worker with tertiary education.¹⁵

The crucial issue in the field of development innovation oriented economy and progress of SME's is connected to the need of efficiently functioning dual education system implemented both at the secondary schools and universities. Currently, the system of dual education is not used efficiently according to the information from the Ministry of Economy of the SR. This tendency has a vital connection to the current lowering interest in studying of technical secondary schools and universities which is threatening the future labor market in Slovakia. Solutions may be reducing the administrative burden towards school and their certification in this field and also motivating young people to pay their attention to the need of technical education which happen to be not such a popular.

2.7 Domestic and Gender-based Violence and Work-Life Balance

In terms of gender equality and support for victims of domestic violence, several key issues resonated in Slovakia in 2019. In the area of the prevention and elimination of domestic violence, the most discussed topic was the ratification of the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women, the full name of the Istanbul Convention. The National Council of the SR first halted the Istanbul Convention in late March 2019. In November 2019, the Slovak lawmakers refused to ratify the so-called Istanbul Convention again and ask the government to inform the Council of Europe and EU institutions that country does not agree with the European Union becoming a party to the Council of Europe Convention.¹⁶

In the Gender Equality Index for 2019, the European Institute for Gender Equality notes that progress in the area of gender equality is still progressing at „snail's pace" in the EU. The EU gender equality assessment has increased slightly since 2017. In Slovakia, the index reached a score of 54.1 out of 100 points. This score is 13.3 points below the EU average and ranks us in the third place from the bottom.¹⁷

Even though there is more news about violence against women in Slovakia and there are more places that help in the last years, the protection and support of women experiencing violence is insufficient. One in five women in Slovakia have experienced physical abuse from a partner or husband, one in two women has experienced some form of psychological violence from a partner, one in three women have been stalked by a partner in a physical or online space and one in 12 women have experienced sexual violence by partners. These are the results of the biggest European-wide research on violence on women by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.¹⁸

Prevention and elimination of violence against women, support for victims of domestic and gender-based violence and awareness-raising on gender equality is the subject of support through EU funds under the Human Resources Operational Programme. In 2018, the Institute for Labour and Family Research, launched the activities of the national project "Prevention and Elimination of Gender Discrimination". The national project consists of two main activities. The first one is "The support of effective mechanisms for the elimination of gender discrimination" and is realized through education activities. The second activity of the national project is "Support of the development of services and measures for victims of violence, especially for women", implemented mainly through the Coordinating Methodical Center for Gender-Based and Domestic Violence.

¹⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/2019-european-semester-country-report-slovakia_en.pdf

¹⁶ <https://www.euractiv.com/section/freedom-of-thought/news/slovakia-still-opposes-eu-accession-to-istanbul-convention-preventing-violence-against-women/>

¹⁷ <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2019/compare-countries>

¹⁸ <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/22280145/one-of-five-women-in-slovakia-experienced-physical-abuse-from-a-partner.html>

Despite support from the EU funds, Norway Grants and other financial sources, the sustainability of NGOs in Slovakia remains an issue. The EEA and Norway Grants in the field of domestic and gender-based violence are still considered as one of the most specifically targeted programmes complying with the Council of Europe's standards. However, more sustainable mechanism of the funding of these services would be highly appreciated and might boost the establishment of new services in this field.

3 EFFECTS OF THE GRANTS

Due to the early stage of implementation of the EEA and Norway Grants programming period 2014 – 2021, there are no results to report in relation to progress towards reducing social and economic disparities and strengthening bilateral relations with Donor State entities.

4 STATUS OF PROGRAMMES

In the autumn of 2019, the last three out of six Programmes has been finalised and the Programme Agreements were concluded between the Donors and the National Focal Point. Subsequently, the National Focal Point concluded Programme Implementation Agreements with external Programme Operators – Research Agency (SK-Innovation) and Ministry of Environment of the SR (SK-Climate). At the end of 2019, all Programmes agreed upon in Memoranda of Understanding were running.

4.1 Business Development, Innovation and SMEs

The Programme Agreement for the Business Development, Innovation and SMEs Programme was officially approved by the Donors on 29th August 2019 and was signed on 7th October 2019. The Programme Implementation Agreement was signed on 4th November 2019.

During the whole year 2019, the Programme Operator (Research Agency) was actively cooperating with the National Focal Point in preparation of all documentation necessary for the Programme Agreement approval and start of the Programme implementation (Internal Manual, guidelines, etc.). As a result, the Detailed Description of Management and Control Systems of the Programme Operator was submitted to the Audit Authority at the end of November 2019.

The Programme Operator organized a launching conference and match-making business seminar which was held on 17th December 2019 in Bratislava. Up to 60 Slovak representatives and 4 Norwegian representatives of mainly private sector attended the conference.

There were no calls for proposals opened in 2019, but the Programme Operator started the preparation. A Call for proposals for Travel Grant financed by the Fund for Bilateral Relations and Call for small grant scheme for start-ups were drafted together with de minimis aid schemes. The de minimis aid scheme for start-ups has been approved in November 2019 by the Antimonopoly Office of the SR. Launching of the Calls is expected in the first quarter of 2020.

Special concerns set in the Memoranda of Understanding were addressed in the Programme via:

- Outcome 1 „Increased competitiveness of Slovak enterprises within the focus areas: Green Industry Innovation and Welfare Technology and Ambient Assisted Living Technologies” and
- Outcome 2 „Education and Employment potential enhanced in Slovakia in Green Industry Innovation and Welfare and Ambient Assisted Living technologies”. 15 % of the total eligible expenditure of the Programme is aimed for this so called “Educational component”, which shall be implemented via two small grant schemes.
- Focus on young and female entrepreneurs as prioritized target group has not been specified in details in the Programme Agreement. This will be more specified in Calls for proposals and in selection criteria, where projects with involved young and female entrepreneurs, will be given additional points.

4.2 Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

The Programme Agreement for the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Programme was signed on 23rd September 2019, followed by the Programme Implementation Agreement which was concluded on 7th November 2019. Moreover, the Manual of Procedure of the Programme Operator (Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic) was drafted and finalized which was followed by the Detailed Description of the Management and Control Systems of the Programme Operator. The documentation was submitted to the Audit Authority in December 2019.

The Programme Operator prepared the first calls for proposals in close cooperation with the Donor Programme Partners, National Focal Point and other relevant stakeholders on national level. After issuing all necessary processes the calls were launched as follows:

Call ID	FM	Call launching	Call closure	Allocation
ACC01 – Action plans for mitigation and adaptation implemented by local authorities in urban areas (ClimaUrban)	EEA FM	29.11.2019	31.01.2020	€ 4,176,838
ACC02 – Action plans for mitigation and adaptation implemented by local authorities in urban areas (ClimaUrban)	NFM	29.11.2019	31.01.2020	€ 5,152,207
ACC03 – Awareness raising on climate change mitigation and adaptation carried out by schools (ClimaEdu)	NFM	31.12.2019	28.02.2020	€ 1,000,000

In order to support bilateral partnerships at the project level, the Programme Operator organised two match-making seminars prior opening of the calls. At the end of October 2019 a seminar for municipalities took place in Oslo, with attendance of 16 Slovak and 10 Norwegian municipalities. For elementary and upper-secondary schools the event took place in Štiavnické Bane in November 2019. Representatives of 4 Norwegian schools and more than 50 Slovak schools attended.

To ensure the effective and targeted evaluation process of projects the “Call for expert evaluators” was launched on 9th December 2019 with deadline for submission till 15th January 2020.

As mentioned in previous Strategic Report, the pre-defined project identified within the Concept Note based on special concern set in the Memorandum of Understanding on the EEA FM withdraw from the implementation. There are no other special concerns related to the SK-Climate Programme.

The pre-defined project is being developed with cooperation of donor project partners. The re-eligibility condition stated in the Programme Agreement has not been met yet.

4.3 Cultural Entrepreneurship, Cultural Heritage and Cultural Cooperation

The launching conference of the Culture Programme took place in Bratislava on 8th March 2019. More than 100 participants from public sector, local and regional authorities, professional public and private sector representatives indicated high interest and future demand for the funds from the Programme.

The Detailed Description of the Management and Control Systems of the Programme Operator was submitted to the Audit Authority in May 2019 but the audit was not completed in 2019.

The progress in the programme was highlighted by launching of two open calls for proposals:

Call ID	Call launching	Call closure	Allocation	No. of submitted project applications	Requested grant amount
CLT01 – Open Call on the support of restoration and revitalization of cultural heritage	26.07.2019	29.11.2019	€ 10,539,725	66	€ 58,968,436
CLT02 – Call on the support of contemporary art and culture	26.07.2019	31.12.2019	€ 1,500,000	35	€ 6,074,596

Within the promotion of the open calls, the Programme Operator organised Information Days for potential applicants for both calls in June 2019 in Košice. Match-making events followed on the same days and they were attended by donor programme partners' representatives and 23 Norwegian representatives from the wide range of institutions in the relevant field across the whole Norway. Due to high demand in the calls, the Programme Operator organised additional Information Days in Bratislava in October and November 2019.

After the call CLT01 closure, the excessive demand into the Culture Programme from the owners and operators of the most important cultural monuments in Slovakia turned to 66 project applications. In terms of bilateral cooperation, altogether 35 applications were submitted in cooperation with donor project partner (4 of them with Icelandic entity, the rest with Norwegian institutions). The evaluation procedure started immediately after the call closure during December 2019. The call CLT02 was closed on 31st December 2019 and the results will be brought later.

Within 2019, the pre-defined project No. 2 "Revitalisation of the Gardens of the Estate of Rusovce (ROGER)" was officially withdrawn by the Applicant and therefore only two pre-defined projects will be implemented under the Culture Programme. The reallocation of the funds allocated to ROGER will proceed according to the decision of Cooperation Committee. Programme modification request will be submitted in 2020.

The pre-defined project No. 1 "ProMonumenta II" implemented by the Monument Board of the Slovak Republic started at the end of April 2019. The inspections teams of ProMonumenta were already enforced by 3 members (2 men and 1 woman). Since the beginning of the project implementation, altogether 90 inspections of cultural monuments were carried out by three regional inspection teams.

The project proposal for pre-defined project No. 3 "Red Monastery – Reborn" implemented also by the Monument Board of the Slovak Republic was appraised and approved by the Programme Operator in January 2020.

According the special concerns stated in the MoU, the Cooperation Committee continued with its regular meetings. In 2019, personal meeting of Cooperation Committee members took place in March in Bratislava, followed by 3 per-rollam meetings which brought the issues raised from the actual needs.

4.4 Domestic and Gender-based Violence

The implementation of the Programme Domestic and Gender-based Violence has moved after the Programme Agreement conclusion in 2018 much forward. The launching conference took place on 27th February 2019 and was connected with expert discussion on the appropriate setting of selection criteria for the area of provision of support services to victims of domestic and gender-based violence. There was quite high interest, more than 90 representatives of relevant Slovak organisations (service providers/NGOs) participated, with presence of DPP and IPO. A need to change the eligibility conditions within the Call for proposals No. 1 was identified during the discussions. The condition requesting creation of partnership with at least 3 eligible partners of different kinds turned out to be very binding and threatening the amount of submitted applications. Therefore, the Programme Operator based on the result of further Cooperation Committee discussion requested Programme modification to, among others, change this condition. The modification was approved by the National Focal Point and the Financial Mechanism Office and entered into force on 28th June 2019.

Meanwhile, the Detailed Description of the Management and Control Systems of the Programme Operator was completed and submitted to the Audit Authority in May 2019 but the audit was not completed in 2019.

The first call for proposals was open within the programme area Work-life Balance:

Call ID	Call launching	Call closure	Allocation	No. of submitted project applications	Requested grant amount
DGV01 – Open Call on the support of organisation promoting equality between women and men a work life balance	18.07.2019	On-going: First deadline 15.10.2019	€ 1,440,000	8	€ 1,445,616

After the evaluation process 7 applications out of the total amount of 8 were reviewed by the Selection Committee on 8th January 2020. The project contracts should be concluded approximately by the end of April 2020.

At this moment calls that will contribute to the Outcome 2 (Victims of domestic and gender-based violence protected) are being prepared by the Programme Operator and will be launched within the first half of 2020. The call that will support the specialization of services targeted at vulnerable groups is planned to be launched in the second half of 2020.

The eligibility of pre-defined project DGVPP001 “HER STORY” implemented by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR started in August 2019 and the project contract will be signed at the beginning of 2020.

The pre-defined project DGVPP002 “Improving the victim-oriented approach – a tool enhancing the capacity to fight violence against women and domestic violence” implemented by the Institute for Labour and Family research is being appraised by the Programme Operator and its implementation should start at the beginning of 2020.

Third pre-defined project identified in the Programme Agreement where the Council of Europe should have been project promoter will not be implemented. The Programme Operator is exploring possibilities to implement the activities planned within the project by other entities. The allocation will be disbursed into the Programme accordingly. Thus, a Programme modification request is to be expected in 2020.

Special concerns set in the Memorandum of Understanding are reflected in the Programme Agreement.

4.5 Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency / Cross-border Cooperation

The Programme Operator started the implementation of the Programme with the launching conference that took place on 26th February 2019 in Bratislava with participation of both programme partners – Norwegian Barents Secretariat and OECD. Approximately 56 organisations participated.

The Detailed Description of the Management and Control Systems of the Programme Operator was submitted to the Audit Authority in May 2019 but the audit was not completed in 2019.

Both open calls planned under the Programme were launched:

Call ID	Call launching	Call closure	Allocation
GGC01 – Open Call for Proposals on fostering institutional cross-border cooperation with Ukraine	16.09.2019	31.01.2020	€ 2,000,000
GGC02 – Small Grant Scheme Call for Proposals on fostering institutional cross-border cooperation with Ukraine	16.09.2019	15.01.2020	€ 500,000

The Programme Operator also published an Open call for bilateral relations for establishing and development of the partnership in order to support the donor partnership projects. There was a very low interest in the call for bilateral relations and it is closely related with the expected low interest in the main calls. While the Programme Operator has repeatedly approached all potential project promoters via e-mails, letters from the Head of the Government Office as well as through the Launching conference, calls' Information day and a Match-making seminar, the cooperation with Ukraine seems not to be an attractive topic for the Slovak entities in this area.

The pre-defined project GGCPP001 with the project promoter Government office of the SR named "Improving Integrity of the Public Administration/IIPA" in international cooperation with the OECD had launching conference in September 2019. In accordance with general condition stated in the Programme Agreement, the appraisal for the project GGCPP001 foreseen in Article 6.5.3 of the Regulation was carried out by the external company named Erudio s. r. o. that was chosen based on the result of the public procurement. Erudio s. r. o. evaluated the pre-defined project and submitted the detailed appraisal report to the Programme Operator on 5th September 2019. Public procurement for an external company responsible for the verification of payment claims described in Article 5.6.1 e) of the Regulation and the verification of the project outputs described in Article 5.6.1 g) of the Regulation is being prepared by the Programme Operator and should be finalized by the beginning of 2020.

The eligibility of the pre-defined project GGCPP002 with the project promoter Ministry of Justice of the SR named "Enhancing the efficiency of the justice system through the protection/empowerment of victims and vulnerable parties" started in October 2019 and the project contract should be signed at the beginning of 2020.

For both pre-defined projects – GGCPP003 with the Public Procurement Office as the project promoter named "Responsible public procurement" and GGCPP004 with the Ministry of Interior of the R as the project promoter named "TRIGLAV – Strengthen the fight against CBRN threats at the Slovak-Ukrainian border" the project contract will be signed at the beginning of 2020.

4.6 Local Development, Poverty Reduction and Roma Inclusion

The revised version of the Concept Note of the Programme was approved by the Donors on 20th June 2019. Subsequently the additional information was provided, which led to conclusion of the Programme Agreement. The signing ceremony was part of the Launching conference that took place on 13th November 2019 in Bratislava. Approximately 70 participants attended.

The Programme consists of two open calls, small grant scheme and one pre-defined project. The open call for Youth Centres under the Local Development component is currently under preparation. The launch of the call is expected in the first quarter 2020. The open call and small grant scheme under the Social Inclusion component are planned to be announced in the second quarter of the year. The pre-defined project proposal was submitted to the Programme Operator for appraisal by the project promoter National Institute of Education in January 2020.

Within the PDP cooperation with Donor projects partners The European Wergeland Centre, and The Nansen Centre for Peace and Dialogue was agreed. The partnership will contribute to enhance the bilateral relations in the education field through study visits and trainings and to the exchange of experience and best practices.

There is no Donor programme partner. The Council of Europe is designated as International Partner Organization (IPO). The Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities and the government administrative unit responsible for the development of the Least Developed District are members of the Cooperation Committee.

In compliance with the MoU, funding for infrastructure (hard measures) shall not exceed 60 % of the total eligible expenditure of the Programme which is reflected in Concept Note and Programme Agreement. Establishing multi-functional centers, target at vulnerable children and youth in the least developed regions of Slovakia as a part of special concerns will be a subject of the first call of the programme. The programme shall contribute to fostering local development and to reducing poverty, with a strong focus on vulnerable groups at high risk of exclusion, such as Roma. Predefined projects in line with MoU is focused on innovative education of teachers in order to increase their cultural competences in the educational process of Roma pupils. Under the Social inclusion component, the involvement of the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities will help to achieve synergies with national priorities and funding. The Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities is involved in the preparation and implementation of the programme as a member of the Cooperation Committee and actively cooperate with Programme Operator.

5 STATUS OF BILATERAL FUNDS

The fourth meeting of the Joint Committee for Bilateral Funds (JCBF) took place on 25th February 2019 in Bratislava, Slovakia. The Director General of the Section of Financial Instruments was appointed by the Head of the Government Office new chairman of the committee. As mentioned in the previous Strategic report, the Work Plan was updated and is now valid until 2020. One pre-defined initiative (No. 5 (European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018) was cancelled and Iceland proposed new pre-defined initiative (No. 5 Reducing the Gender Pay Gap), which was accepted by the JCBF. The National Focal Point introduced the Open call text focused on political, institutional and cultural cooperation and Call for Travel Grants, together with the selection criteria. The JCBF approved the selection criteria for both Open Call and Travel Grant call. In addition, rules for financing of the travel costs and per diems within the Fund for Bilateral Relations were agreed.

Once the funds from the Fund for Bilateral Relations have been disbursed to Slovakia, the actual implementation started. On 1st August 2019, two calls for proposals were published, open until 31st December 2020 or until its total allocation is used:

Call ID	Allocation	No. of submitted application*	Requested amount	No. of supported application*	Contracted amount	No. of rejected application*	No. of applications on reserve list*
FBR01 – Open Call: cultural, political and institutional cooperation	€180,000	10	€288,311	1	€26,323	1	3
FBRTG01 – Call for smaller scale activities – travel grants	€50,000	9	€28,749	2	€ 6,790	4	0

* as of 31st December 2019

Within the thematically focused Open Call except of 1 application for institutional cooperation that is currently second on the reserve list, all other applications were in the area of cultural cooperation. In general, the proposed activities are mainly organisation of cultural events such as concerts, exhibitions, organisation of workshops and masterclasses in music, dance etc. Interesting example is activity of Jessenius Faculty in Martin of Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia and University of Akureyri, Iceland that aims to target potential Icelandic students of medicine in Slovakia by introducing the Slovak culture and language in summer course and a series of exhibitions in Iceland. Another very good example is approved bilateral initiative “Artistic Research as a New Way in the Musical Education” implemented by the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava in cooperation with University of Bergen, The Grieg Academy (Norway).

As far as the travel grant scheme is concerned, the main interest was in relation to participation at Oslo Innovation Week (23-27 September 2019), enhancement of cooperation between universities and research institutions as well as in relation to preparation of project proposals for other Programmes implemented in the 14-21 programming period.

From the pre-defined initiatives identified in the Work plan, only the initiative No. 3 “SK Presidency in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – 2019” was implemented, by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic – Permanent Delegation of the Slovak Republic to the OECD. The participation of Norwegian expert in a workshop organised as a follow up to the SK 2019 OECD Ministerial Council Meeting presidency in November 2019 was supported. Second part of this pre-defined initiative “SK PRESIDENCY IN THE OSCE” was not implemented based on decision of Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR (capacity reasons). Current status of implementation of other predefined initiatives will be discussed in detail under JCBF Meeting on March

2020. Based on Decision of the JCBF, potential modification of predefined initiatives is expected. The predefined initiative No. 1 “The strategic cooperation of national theatres” is currently under preparation and implementation is expected in 2Q and 3Q/2020.

Other pre-defined initiatives have not started with preparation (No. 2 Accompanying /business/ activities related to State Visit of the President of the Republic of Iceland in Slovak Republic; No. 4 Accompanying activities /events on the occasion of Celebration of 300 years of Principality of Liechtenstein 2019 /optional/ and No. 5 Reducing the Gender Pay Gap).

At the Programme level, all Programme Operators were provided with an advance payment of 60 % of the total allocation from Fund for Bilateral Relations set in the Memoranda of Understanding. Matchmaking events were organised within the Programmes Culture, Domestic and Gender-based Violence, Good Governance and Cross-border Cooperation, Climate change and Business and Innovation. The first three mentioned had also Open Calls from the Fund, in order to support establishing and development of bilateral partnerships:

Programme	Call ID	Allocation	No. of submitted application	Requested amount	No. of supported application	Contracted amount
Culture	CLTBF01	€ 30,000	12	€ 41,318	9	€ 28,757
	CLTBF02	€ 48,182	17	€ 57,834	14	€ 42,435
Domestic and Gender-based Violence	DGVBF01	€ 10,000	6	€ 9,224	3	€ 6 359
Good Governance and Cross-border Cooperation	GGCBF01	€ 25,000	1	€ 3,826	0	€ 0

In November 2019 the Programme Operator for Domestic and Gender-based Violence Programme (Government Office of the SR) submitted the first Expression of Interest. The JCBF supported the Expression of Interest in December 2019 and allocated to the Programme additional € 90,000 from the Fund for Bilateral Relations, for activities to take place in years 2020-2024.

Next meeting of the JCBF is planned for March 2020; the assessment of the Calls and implementation system is expected, as well as potential identification of new focusing of the Fund for Bilateral Relations at the national level.

6 MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION¹⁹

6.1 Management and control systems

The management and control system in the Slovak Republic is centralised and unified for all programmes operated by Programme Operators designated by the National Focal Point. The purpose of centralisation and unification is to eliminate the imminent risk of a failure to draw the funds allocated for the Slovak Republic.

The Detailed Description of Management and Control System (hereinafter “DDMCS”) at national level accompanied by the Audit Report and the Opinion has been acknowledged by the FMO on 29 March 2019 as meeting the minimum requirements as requested by Article 5.7.5 of the Regulations.

¹⁹ Source: NFP and Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic (MF SR) acting as AA and CA.

On 1st June and on 1st November 2019 two organisational changes within the Government Office of the SR (acting as the NFP) became effective. In the first change, a separate Public Procurement Section was created, dealing with both – public procurement realization and public procurement control, within two separate units. During the second organisational change, the Financial Management Unit under the Department of Management and Control of the Bilateral Financial Instruments has been cancelled and the tasks of the Unit – mainly elaboration of financial reports – have been moved to the Department. The implementation is not affected by these changes; separation of functions to ensure more effective implementation management is preserved. In order to reflect the abovementioned changes, the DDMCS at national level was updated to version 1.4 on 18th December 2019.

6.2 Complaints

No complaints have been received in the reporting period.

6.3 Irregularities²⁰

No irregularities have been reported in the programming period 2014 – 2021 yet.

6.4 Audit²¹

The audits of designation

In the period lasting from October 2018 to March 2019, the Audit Authority carried out the re-audit of designation No. A868 (at the level of the National Focal Point) and the re-audit of designation No. A935 (at the level of the Certifying Authority and the Irregularities Authority). The re-audits of designation No. A868 and No. A935 identified no findings.

In May 2019, the Audit Authority started the performance of the audit of designation No. A936, in cooperation with the Government Audit Office. The audit of designation No. A936 is focused on the verification of the compliance of setting-up of management and control system at the level of the Programme Operator – Government Office of the Slovak Republic. The audit of designation No. A936 have not been completed by the date of 20th January 2020 (by the date of the submission the information relating to the Audit Authority to the Strategic Report 2019).

In December 2019, the Audit Authority started the performance of the audit of designation No. A1012 and the audit of designation No. A1013, in cooperation with the Government Audit Office. The audit of designation No. A1012 is focused on the verification of the compliance of setting-up of management and control system at the level of the Programme Operator – Research Agency. The audit of designation No. A1013 is focused on the verification of the compliance of setting-up of management and control system at the level of the Programme Operator – Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic. The audits of designation No. A1012 and No. A1013 have not been completed by the date of 20th January 2020 (by the date of the submission the information relating to the Audit Authority to the Strategic Report 2019).

The audits on projects

In the period lasting from June 2019 to August 2019, the Audit Authority carried out the audit on projects No. A1007. The audit on projects No. A1007 focused on the verification of the eligibility of

²⁰ Source: Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic acting as IA

²¹ Source: Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic acting as AA

expenditure for the Technical Assistance (SK – TA) at the level of the Certifying Authority. The audit on projects No. A1007 identified no findings.

In the period lasting from August 2019 to October 2019, the Audit Authority ensured the performance of the audit on projects No. A1008. The audit on projects No. A1008 focused on the verification of the eligibility of expenditure for the Technical Assistance (SK – TA) at the level of the Audit Authority. Since the selected sample consisted of expenditure declared by the Audit Authority, the Audit Authority requested the Department of Internal Audit of the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic, as an independent body, to perform audit on projects No. A1008 and to verify this expenditure. The audit on projects No. A1008 identified no findings.

In the period lasting from September 2019 to November 2019, the Audit Authority ensured the performance of the audit on projects No. A1009, in cooperation with the Government Audit Office. The audit on projects No. A1009 focused on the verification of the eligibility of expenditure for the Technical Assistance (SK – TA) at the level of the National Focal Point. The audit on projects No. A1009 identified no findings.

7 COMMUNICATION

The achievement of communication indicators stated in the Communication Strategy for the EEA and Norway Grants 2014 – 2021 in the Slovak Republic during the 2019 is evaluated in the updated Communication Strategy included in the Annex E to this Strategic Report.

Generally, the communication in 2019 fully reflected the current status of implementation. The general introduction of EEA and Norway Grants 2014 – 2021 in 2018 has been followed by the detail introduction of Programmes as well as communication activities focused on launching of first Calls under Programmes; in total 13 events took place. The NFP shares every publicity activity of the POs at the national webpage www.eeagrants.sk/www.norwaygrants.sk and Facebook page with the aim to achieve the best communication results. Within the Government Office of the SR, who acts as the NFP as well as PO for four Programmes, is in some cases a bit difficult to exactly distinguish between the publicity activities of the NFP and of the PO, especially when new publicity tools are tested, as it was in 2019.

In April 2019 the NFP participated in communication activities focused on general presentation of EEA and Norway Grants 2014 – 2021 towards general public and representatives of municipalities – Info Days for municipalities in Bratislava and Banská Bystrica. The cooperation with other departments of the Government Office of the SR operating in the area of foreign financial instruments as well as cooperation with Association of Towns and Communities brought significant multiple communication effects within creating of general image and awareness about EEA and Norway Grants in the Slovak Republic.

Very successful communication activities carried out in 2019 were focused on creation of specific audio-visual materials - videos with the aim to provide the applicant with comprehensive information about Calls launched. The Government Office of the SR (as NFP and PO) has created three videos, one of them focused on Calls published under Fund for Bilateral Relations. The videos recorded significant interest of the users – more than 10,000 views during first three days. This communication activity may be evaluated as very successful communication measure and the NFP/PO will continue with this activity.

The NFP has been actively involved to the preparation of Europe-wide online communication campaign #EEAchdropcounts. The project “Blue School in Štiavnické Bane” implemented under ACC Programme in previous programming period was chosen by the FMO for wider presentation. The result of this communication activity is an excellent video which was shot in September 2019 directly in Štiavnické

Bane. At the same time, the NFP provided for the video an interview about contribution of EEA and Norway Grants in environmental topics, especially within area of adaptation to climate change. The representatives of Primary school with kindergarten in Štiavnické Bane also actively participated under EU RegionsWeek in October 2019 in Brussels and during the opening of the EEA and Norway Grants exhibition at the European External Action Service (EEAS) in Brussels on 25 November 2019.

In September 2019 the Government Office of the SR introduced new visual and thought identity of the Office consisting of new logos and formulation of the vision and values of the Office. This new visual and thought identity is accompanied by media campaign at national level. EEA and Norway Grants were presented as well, via the Programme Operator Unit.

It is necessary to emphasise that dealing with media representatives at national and regional level was significantly improved. At the same time, communication through Facebook was greatly enhanced. Increasing of likes on Facebook during 2019 was significant – more than 39% in comparison with data from 2018. That number of “followers” by the end 2019 was 1,008 and no less important statistical indicator is also category “reach” of particular posts – during the 2019 several posts gained more than 4,000 (e.g. the abovementioned videos about Calls).

8 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

8.1 Monitoring

The National Focal Point carries out monitoring continuously, through each and every phase of the EEA and Norway Grants implementation. In 2019 many new activities of the Programme Operators took place as the implementation of all Programmes started. The National Focal Point performed mostly compliance-based monitoring:

1. Concept Note assessment
2. Calls for Proposals assessment
3. Selection process

Performance of these tasks brought positive impact on the processes. When approving the Calls for Proposals, the main tasks of the National Focal Point lies with assessing the compliance of the Call with the Programme Agreement and the Regulation, however, it was also evaluated whether the Call respects the outcomes and outputs of the Programme Agreement. In December 2019 the first verification of the Selection process started and it immediately helped to identify errors in the ranked list of project applications. The errors were corrected by the Programme Operator and the Selection Committee will take place in January 2020. Monitoring of the Selection process will be completed only after the Selection Committee, prior decision of the Programme Operator to award the grants.

In addition, the National Focal Point collected experts’ opinions on the development in the Programme Areas targeted by the MoUs, which has shown extremely valuable for the National Focal Point.

8.2 Evaluation

Based on the discussion during the 2nd Annual Meeting that took place in April 2019, the Donors recommended to carrying out the mid-term evaluation in 2022 and final evaluation in 2024. Therefore, the evaluation plan has been revised accordingly and is included in the Annex B to this Strategic Report.

9 ISSUES FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING

Proposals for discussion at the Annual Meeting by the NFP:

- Mid-term review – preliminary agreement on the reallocation of reserve
- Discussion on the proportionality of control (optional)
- Discussion on the requirements on the Fund for Bilateral Relations (optional)

Proposals for discussion at the Annual Meeting by the CO:

- Rounding issues in GrACE by the FMO and its impact on national financial monitoring (e. g. amounts allocated to the programmes in programme agreements without decimals but in GrACE in decimals – the same applies for each IFR);
- Possibility to access information about irregularities and already submitted Forecast of likely payment applications in GrACE (as it was in DoRIS in 2009-2014 programming period)

10 ANNEXES TO THE STRATEGIC REPORT

Annex A	Risk assessment and management plan
Annex B	Evaluation plan
Annex C	Cooperation with Donor Programme Partners and International Partner Organisations
Annex D	Technical assistance report
Annex E	Communication Strategy, version 1.3

Programme name	Overall level of risk of the Programme (on a scale 1-4, where one is very low and 4 is very high)	Risks (key risks to the programme from the point of view of the NFP)	Responses to the risks (undertaken by the NFP in the last 12 months)	Responses to the risks (planned by the NFP in the next 12 months)
Business Development, Innovation and SMEs	3	Wide – range results framework set in the Concept Note causing complications in application of respective State Aid rules within the Programme.	The Programme Agreement was concluded with General condition No. 2 ensuring the revision of the results framework after the selection process is concluded. The NFP consulted the PO during preparation of the State aid scheme as well as preparation of the Calls for proposal.	The NFP will continue with close monitoring of the Programme and will provide further support to the PO with preparation of the State aid scheme as well as preparation of the Calls for proposal.
Local Development, Poverty Reduction and Roma Inclusion¹	2	Difficulties related to public procurement resulting in delays and ineligible expenditures	NFP prepared and issued the Guide for Project Promoters and partners explaining the rules applicable to public procurement.	NFP will monitor the developments under the Programme
Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation	2	Difficulties related to public procurement resulting in delays and ineligible expenditures	NFP prepared and issued the Guide for Project Promoters and partners explaining the rules applicable to public procurement	NFP will monitor the developments under the Programme
Cultural Entrepreneurship, Cultural Heritage and Cultural Cooperation	1	Difficulties related to public procurement resulting in delays and ineligible expenditures	NFP prepared and issued the Guide for Project Promoters and partners explaining the rules applicable to public procurement	NFP will monitor the developments under the Programme
Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency / Cross-border Cooperation	3	Difficulties related to meet the EU standard implementation rules on the side of Ukrainian project partners.	NFP prepared and issued the Guide for Project Promoters and partners explaining the implementation rules.	NFP will monitor the developments under the Programme

¹ The risk assessment is not provided, as the Concept Note is not fully developed yet.

Programme name	Overall level of risk of the Programme (on a scale 1-4, where one is very low and 4 is very high)	Risks (key risks to the programme from the point of view of the NFP)	Responses to the risks (undertaken by the NFP in the last 12 months)	Responses to the risks (planned by the NFP in the next 12 months)
Domestic and Gender-based Violence	2	Low interest from potential applicants in open calls due to other available funding mechanisms and low capacity of the organisations active in the area.	The NFP promoted the Programme.	NFP will continue targeted promotion of the Programme among potential applicants.

Programme Information				Evaluation Information							
Programme # and title	Sector	Duration (Start/End)	Budget (EUR)	Type of Evaluation Formative/ Summative Impact/ Implementation	Evaluation Objectives Reason and learning goals	Timing Mid-term or Final Evaluation (ex post) Year	Data needs and collection methods Reports; interviews; surveys; other	Evaluation Start/End Date	Evaluation Budget (EUR)	Past Evaluations (if any): Type and Completion Date	Learning and Knowledge Sharing Who will benefit from the evaluation? How will findings be shared?
Business Development, Innovation and SMEs	Innovation, Research, Education and Competitiveness	TBD	23,529,413	Formative / Implementation	Relevance / Coherence, Efficiency	Mid-term Evaluation	Reports, interviews, analysis / surveys (TBD)	2022	17,000	N/A	<p>Evaluation Report and its summary for general public will be published at the NFP webpage and distributed to all relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>Result of the evaluation will be shared across sectors and other partners from BS and DS.</p> <p>Depending on the findings, the NFP will request response from relevant subjects how will be the findings taken into account for future decision making process.</p>
Local Development, Poverty Reduction and Roma Inclusion	Social Inclusion, Youth Employment and Poverty Reduction	TBD	17,647,059	Summative / Impact	Impact / Sustainability	Final Evaluation	Reports, interviews, surveys (TBD)	2024	17,000	N/A	
Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation	Environment, Energy, Climate Change and Low Carbon Economy	TBD	18,823,530	Summative / Impact	Impact / Sustainability	Final Evaluation	Reports, interviews, surveys (TBD)	2024	17,000	N/A	
Cultural Entrepreneurship, Cultural Heritage and Cultural Cooperation	Culture, Civil Society, Good Governance, and Fundamental Rights and Freedoms	TBD	20,588,236	Summative / Impact	Impact / Sustainability	Final Evaluation	Reports, interviews, surveys (TBD)	2024	17,000	N/A	
Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency / Cross-border Cooperation	Culture, Civil Society, Good Governance, and Fundamental Rights and Freedoms	TBD	10,000,000	Summative / Impact	Impact / Sustainability	Final Evaluation	Reports, interviews, surveys (TBD)	2024	17,000	N/A	

Programme Information				Evaluation Information							
Programme # and title	Sector	Duration (Start/End)	Budget (EUR)	Type of Evaluation Formative/ Summative Impact/ Implementation	Evaluation Objectives Reason and learning goals	Timing Mid-term or Final Evaluation (ex post) Year	Data needs and collection methods Reports; interviews; surveys; other	Evaluation Start/End Date	Evaluation Budget (EUR)	Past Evaluations (if any): Type and Completion Date	Learning and Knowledge Sharing Who will benefit from the evaluation? How will findings be shared?
Domestic and Gender-based Violence	Justice and Home Affairs	TBD	10,588,236	Formative / Implementation	Relevance / Coherence Effectiveness	Mid-term Evaluation	Reports, interviews, analysis / surveys (TBD)	2022	17,000	N/A	

COOPERATION WITH DONOR PROGRAMME PARTNERS AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

At the end of 2019, all Programmes in Slovakia were in the implementation phase. The National Focal Point has the opportunity to follow the cooperation of the Programme Operators with their Donor Programme Partners and International Partner Organisations as observers of the Cooperation Committee, but the day-to-day challenges are often not discussed during these meetings. Therefore the National Focal Point approached separately all involved parties and provided opportunity to express their opinion on the cooperation so far. Below is a summary of provided answers as well as opinion of the National Focal Point.

Business Development, Innovation and SMEs

Programme Operator and Partners

Programme Operator:	Research Agency
Donor Programme Partners:	Innovation Norway (IN) Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education (DIKU) National Agency of International Education Affairs (AIBA)

In general, the PO stated that all DPPs has provided valuable advice on the use of the Fund for bilateral relations through the Programme's Bilateral Activity Plan and providing comments on calls for proposals within this Fund. On the other hand, all DPPs feel that the preparation phase of the Programme was very long, as it took nearly three years.

Within the Business part of the Programme is mutual understanding and satisfaction of involvement of both parties. The DPP Innovation Norway stated that the trust is there between the PO and the DPPs, and their assessment is that they have a good platform for the cooperation during the implementation of the programme. PO organized a business match-making seminar aimed at facilitating business project partnerships between entities from Slovakia and Donor States. The seminar was held in Bratislava during the Launching Conference on the 17th December 2019. The event was attended by 3 companies from Norway (International Development Norway, Infiniwell AS and TOMRA Sorting), whose participation was ensured by the Innovation Norway.

The participation of DIKU and AIBA is crucial especially to the Educational part of the Programme. The DPPs feel lack of interest in advices given from them in the early stages and had several discussions with the PO where they urged the PO to speed the process up. NFP assume this is due to primary focus of the PO on the Business part of the Programme, as the Business calls are planned to be announced earlier than the Education calls. This delayed the Education part of the programme for one more year, as timing of calls in education sector is a crucial factor for success. DPPs would say that there is room for improvement as it is now very important for the DPPs that we also have in Slovakia a well working programme and good results.

Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

Programme Operator and Partners

Programme Operator:	The Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic
Donor Programme Partners:	The Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate (NVE) The Directorate for Civil Protection and Emergency Planning (DSB) The Norwegian Environment Agency (NEA)

The PO appreciated effective and successful Cooperation Committee meetings that took place in 2019 (in May and in October). Main goal of the bilateral cooperation from the PO perspective was the joint organization of the Matchmaking events. First was organised by NVE for municipalities on 29th October 2019 in Oslo, where in total 16 municipalities from Slovakia and 10 municipalities from Norway were present. All participants were informed about the possibilities for cooperation and implementation of joint projects within the calls for proposals supporting projects on action plans “ClimaUrban”. Second matchmaking event for primary and secondary schools was held on 20th November 2019 in Štiavnické Bane in the middle of Slovakia. The organizers welcomed great interest and well prepared contributions from the participating schools altogether more than 50 schools from Slovakia and 4 schools from Norway attended the matchmaking event. The organisers believe that the event contributed to laying the foundations for their future bilateral cooperation.

The DPPs stated that the process with the Concept note and Program agreement has taken longer than expected - something all actors have a shared responsibility for, and it is also difficult to point out directly how things could have gone faster. However, in their view there is sufficient time for launching of the calls and selection of projects and project implementation. DPPs think the collaboration with the Programme Operator on all levels is very good. The Cooperation Committee meetings are well organized and parties have always good discussions with mutual respect for their respective roles. Both matchmaking events in 2019 were successful, organizationally and professionally. The pre-defined project (Dropie) has started up, and with two Norwegian partners. DPPs hope that the project gives good results, and that the cooperation with the two Norwegian partners gives significant added value. From 2020 onwards during the implementation period, the DPPs will put emphasize to implement good bilateral activities between Slovakia and Norway of high professional value, in the areas of climate mitigation and adaptation.

Cultural Entrepreneurship, Cultural Heritage and Cultural Cooperation

Programme Operator and Partners

Programme Operator:	Government Office of the Slovak Republic
Donor Programme Partners:	The Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage (RA) Arts Council Norway (ACN)

Both the Directorate for Cultural Heritage (Riksantikvaren) and Arts Council Norway are DPPs in the Culture Programme in Slovakia for the first time in the FM 2014-2021. The relationship with the Programme Operator is developing well and they enjoy excellent working relations and experience that the PO is taking them on board in the Programme development, and that there is a mutual understanding and mutual exchange of knowledge/experience. Both are all in all very satisfied with the POs work and look forward to further meetings and continuous close cooperation in 2020.

The ambition and challenge of the Programme in term of bilateral cooperation is the fact that it is foreseen to have at least 30% of the projects under the Outcome 1 “Cultural heritage conditions enhanced” implemented in partnership with entities from the Donor States. The donor project partnership within projects under the Outcome 2 “Access to contemporary arts improved” is obligatory.

The Programme Operator in very close cooperation with DPPs continued with the facilitation of future bilateral cooperation by organizing the Matchmaking events for call CLT01 and CLT02 on 12th and 13th June 2019 in Košice. DPPs actively provided the invitation and initial communication with the potential Norwegian participants. Altogether 23 participants from various Norwegian institutions could come to Košice.

In year 2019, face-to-face meeting of Cooperation Committee members took place in March in Bratislava and it was followed by 3 per-rollam meetings which brought the issues raised from the actual needs and topics in terms of Bilateral Fund under Culture programme implementation.

Moreover, the PO, Monuments Board of the Slovak Republic and Slovak Arts Council representatives participated on the Programme Operators meeting in Romania in Danube Delta region which was organised by the DPPs in close cooperation with Romanian Programme Operator in September 2019.

Domestic and Gender-based Violence

Programme Operator and Partners

Programme Operator:	Government Office of the Slovak Republic
Donor Programme Partner:	Norwegian Directorate of Health
International Partner Organisation:	Council of Europe (CoE)
Other Programme Partner:	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic

The cooperation between the PO and Norwegian Directorate of Health started in previous programming period 2009 – 2014 and both sides appreciate continued excellent cooperation. The DPP particularly appreciate the transparency and involvement from the part of PO and the good atmosphere at the CC- and SC-meetings. Due to the fact that there has been an opportunity to build trust during a long period of collaboration and commitment to the Programme, the DPP finds it easy to contact PO whenever the need arises.

Cooperation with the Council of Europe (CoE) also started in previous period and the PO very much appreciates the continued cooperation and the benefits from this partnership. The IPO has not provided any additional information.

The DPP and IPO are voting members of the Selection Committee and also members of the Cooperation Committee. This fact PO appreciates very much due to high competence and expertise of these partner organisations.

Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency / Cross-border Cooperation

Programme Operator and Partners

Programme Operator:	Government Office of the Slovak Republic
Donor Programme Partner:	The Norwegian Barents Secretariat
IPO:	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

The Programme Operator and the OECD have set up a good cooperation carried out mostly through Cooperation Committee Meetings. In 2019 the Programme Operator did not face any particular challenges or successes with the OECD. The OECD is also a project partner to two of the pre-defined projects GGCPP001 and GGCPP003 and it is important to point out that there has been a slight delay in the process of preparation of the partnership agreement between OECD and Project Promoters, which has taken over one year. As of now the final version of the partnership agreement is being approved within the internal procedures of the organisations, and shall be signed soon.

The overall cooperation, day-to-day communication as well as communication through the Cooperation Committee with the DPP – the Norwegian Barents Secretariat – is very good. The PO did not face any particular successes or challenges in 2019 regarding the DPP.

The Programme Operator started the implementation of the Programme with the launching conference that took place on 26th February 2019 in Bratislava with participation of both programme partners – Norwegian Barents Secretariat and OECD. Approximately 56 organisations participated.

The DPP nor IPO has not provided any additional cooperation.

Local Development, Poverty Reduction and Roma Inclusion

Programme Operator and Partners

Programme Operator:	Government Office of the Slovak Republic
IPO:	Council of Europe

As the Programme started only in fall 2019, there is not much cooperation to assess between the PO and IPO. The first Cooperation Committee meeting was held on 12th November 2019 in Bratislava. The representatives of Council of Europe as IPO and representatives from Royal Norwegian Embassy and FMO participated in this event. The rules of procedures and the selection procedures were discussed during the meeting and the final version adopted. It was agreed that next CC meeting will focus on activities to be implemented within the bilateral fund on a programme level.

The IPO has not provided any additional information.

The Communication Strategy for the EEA and Norway Grants 2014 – 2021 in the Slovak Republic

Revised version 1.3, February 2020

Elaborated by the National Focal Point



Introduction:

The National Focal Point (NFP) originally elaborated the Communication Strategy (CS) in May 2017, at the time when the respective Programme Operators were preparing the Concept Notes.

Generally, the CS will be updated based on need but at least once a year in the Strategic Report. Before the updated version will be prepared, an evaluation and monitoring of all realised publicity activities will be done.

This update of the CS reflects mainly current timeframe of implementation (2020). The next update of the CS will be carried out in 2021 when majority of the Calls for proposals is expected to be closed.

The National Focal Point – EEA and Norway Grants Strategic Actions Unit is responsible for the elaboration, updating, monitoring and evaluation of this CS. The CS and its implementation will be done in close cooperation with the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Bratislava (Norwegian Embassy).

1. Objective

The **overall aim** of the communication measures is to increase public awareness on existence of the EEA and Norway Grants 2014 – 2021 in Slovakia and provide information to the public on its objectives, possibilities, implementation and impact, as well as make the cooperation with the Donor States – Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway more visible.

The partial aims shall be:

- a) Increase public awareness and inform the general public about the possibilities provided by the EEA and Norway Grants 2014 – 2021.
- b) Increase public awareness about the Donor states and their roles, and about the mutual cooperation between the Slovak Republic and the Donor states.
- c) Inform potential project promoters and their partners about the availability of the EEA and Norway Grants.
- d) Communicate and present the achieved results and impact of the EEA and Norway Grants.

2. Target groups

1. **Primary target group** of the NFP's communication measures is the general public,
2. **Secondary target group** consists of Programme Operators and potential project promoters, FMO/FMC, Donor Programme Partners, and International Partner Organisations and partner entities from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway,
3. **Tertiary target group** is the professional public and media.

For all three target groups, but mainly for group 1, the overall message “*Working Together for a Green, Competitive and Inclusive Europe*” will be massively promoted.

The national slogan of the EEA and Norway Grants “*Together for good ideas*” will be promoted under implementation of communication measures at the NFP/PO level. The national slogan was selected based on result of competition for public “The best national slogan of the Grants” that was part of information campaign “Grants in a nutshell” launched on Facebook from October to November 2018.

Communication network with the POs : There will be a non-formal working group consisting of the NFP and all POs (in case that the NFP is also the PO a member of the working group will be a project manager; in case of the Research Agency and the Ministry of Environment a member of the working committee will be a person responsible for communication) and the Norwegian Embassy. The NFP will send an enquiry to sum up important information about the expected events/ progress/ action in each programme on a monthly basis. The NFP will summarize the received information and will either publish them or, if it is needed, communicate further with the POs. The communication will be mostly electronical to keep it flexible and the Norwegian Embassy will be copied.

At least once a year (preferably before the Annual Meeting), the working group will meet and will discuss the most important milestones of the upcoming year.

3. Strategies

The NFP established shorter working titles and abbreviations of the Programmes to be used within standard daily communication focused mainly on general public (with exception of legal documents).

Official title of the Programme	Shorter title	Abbreviation
Business Development, Innovation and SMEs	Business and Innovation	BIN
Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation	Climate change	ACC
Cultural Entrepreneurship, Cultural Heritage and Cultural Cooperation	Culture	CLT
Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency / Cross-border Cooperation	Good Governance and Cross-border Cooperation	GGC
Local Development, Poverty Reduction and Roma Inclusion	Local Development and Inclusion	LDI
Domestic and Gender-based Violence	Domestic and Gender-based Violence	DGV

The provided information will be tailored to the target groups and different types of communication channels will be used:

TARGET GROUP	Type of provided information	Type of communication channels
1. General public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “basic” information about the new period of the EEA and Norway Grants - information about the actual status of the implementation of the EEA and Norway Grants and achieved results and outcomes - information about cooperation (what could be achieved together or what has been already achieved) among the Slovak Republic and the Donors states 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - media (print media, on line media, TV and radio); - websites: www.eeagrants.sk or www.norwaygrants.sk - Social media – Facebook - major information activities organized by the NFP - brochures and leaflets

<p>2. POs and potential project promoters, FMO/FMC, DPPs, and IPOs and partner entities from the donor states</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information about the actual status of the implementation, specially about the calls - Information about the approved, contracted and implemented projects and bilateral activities - Information about the possibilities of bilateral cooperation, especially about the call under the BF - Information about the new guidelines - Information about the achieved results and outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - media (print media, online media, radio, TV); - websites: www.eeagrants.sk or www.norwaygrants.sk - Social media – Facebook - major information activities organized by the NFP - workshops and seminars focused on rules and requirements of the EEA and Norway Grants -matchmaking seminars focused on possibilities given by the BF - study trips - events organized mainly for youth to bring together young people from Slovakia and from the Donor states to introduce them different projects supported by the EEA and Norway Grants, to give them the opportunity to make new contacts and to get to know Slovakia and the Donor states (events such as Herkules on bicycle organized in the summer of 2016) - brochures and leaflets
<p>3. Professional public and media</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information about the actual status of the implementation, - Information about the approved, contracted and implemented projects and bilateral activities - Information about the possibilities of the bilateral cooperation, - Information about the achieved results and outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - media (print media, online media, radio, TV); - websites: www.eeagrants.sk or www.norwaygrants.sk - Social media – Facebook - major information activities organized by the NFP / for media press conferences - study trips - direct emails - brochures and leaflets

4. Major activities

The NFP will, during the whole implementation period, organize several publicity activities. The NFP will coordinate its publicity activities with the POs` publicity activities and with the Royal Norwegian Embassy`s publicity activities to avoid possible duplicity. As the minimum, the following publicity activities are planned to be organized by the NFP:

Activity	Preliminary term	Target Group	The aim	Communication channels
1. Launching conference(s)	IV. Q 2018	All target groups	partial aims a), b) and c)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - websites: www.eeagrants.sk or www.norwaygrants.sk - Social media – Facebook - for media press conferences - direct emails - leaflets
2. Closing conference(s)	2024	All target groups	partial aims b) and d)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - websites: www.eeagrants.sk or www.norwaygrants.sk - Social media – Facebook - media press conferences - study trips to visit selected projects - direct emails - brochure
3. Other activities will be organized based on progress in the implementation, needs and opportunities. The NFP is fully aware of the minimal requirement to organize at least three major activities.	2019 - 2023	All target groups	All partial aims	

5. Web strategy (dedicated website, use of social media)

The web strategy, as one of the partial communication strategies, will contribute to reach the overall aim of the communication measures. Through the websites information to all target groups will be provided.

There will be a single web page for both FMs managed by the NFP. It is possible to hyperlink this web page via both addresses www.eeagrants.sk and www.norwaygrants.sk. Under this webpage there will be subpages for all programmes (one subpage per one programme). For those programmes which are managed by the NFP, all information will be available on this relevant subpage. For Environment and Business programs the most important information will be published along with a link to their official webpages. The NFP will cooperate with all POs to ensure that actual and appropriate information are published in both languages (Slovak and English language).

The total traffic at the above mentioned webpages in 2016: A total of 121,142 page views and 34,321 visits were recorded, with returning visitors accounting for 45.20% and new visitors of the website accounting for 54.80%.

The NFP administers a profile on Facebook under the title “EEA and Norway Grants Slovakia”. At the end of May 2017, the Facebook profile had 540 likes. In addition, it is allowed to publish a link to news published by any other entity on NFP’s Facebook account.

For the time being, the NFP does not administrate any account on LinkedIn, Twitter or Instagram. The NFP as part of the Government Office has to follow the internal rules concerning PR, including social media.

6. Department responsible for implementation of measures including contact person

The Strategic Actions Unit is responsible for the implementation of the CS.

The main contact person:

Head of the Strategic Actions Unit

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The deputy contact person:

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7. Plan for evaluation

The NFP will have to evaluate the communication activities which were done mainly in terms of visibility and awareness of the EEA and Norway Grants. The evaluation is necessary to ensure that the overall aim and partial aims will be reached. The plan for evaluation will regularly be updated based on the update of the plan of communication activities.

Indicators of the overall aim	Units	Target value	Source of information	Deadline for next evaluation
Number of processed questionnaires	number	4500	Annual Projects Reports and Final Projects Reports	2021, 2024
Percentage of respondents who knew of the EEA and Norway Grants prior to completing the questionnaire.	%	70 %	Annual Projects Reports and Final Projects Reports	2021, 2024
The number of respondents who correctly answered at least three questions from the questionnaire.	number	65 %	Annual Projects Reports and Final Projects Reports	2021, 2024
Number of respondents who were able to answer the question “which countries contribute to the EEA Grants”	number	55 %	Annual Projects Reports and Final Projects Reports	2021, 2024
Indicators of the partial aims	Units	Target value	Source of information	Deadline for evaluation
Major activities including press conferences	number	3	Invitation, program, attendance sheet	2019 2021

				2024
Total number of web page view per year	number	150,000	Google Analytics	1Q 2021
Increased total number of likes on Facebook	number	1,200	Facebook Statistics	1Q 2021
Brochure about the achieved results and outcomes	number	400	List of participants of events where the brochure will be distributed, distribution list	2024

The leaflet about the possibilities offered by the EEA and Norway Grants 2014 – 2021 was not prepared, as at the time of the Launching Conference no Programme Agreements were signed. Therefore, the leaflets would have contained only general information about Programmes and the NFP considered this tool as unnecessary. This kind of information was promoted by the NFP via other communication channels.

The indicator “Increased total number of web page view” was substituted by the indicator “Total number of web page view per year”. The reason of this change is the fact that monitoring of increasing number of web page views is seen to be unfounded. The total number of web page view in particular year will bring a real overview about achieved success within web communication.

8. Evaluation of achieved values of indicators

first evaluation Indicators of the overall aim will be in 2021, when it is expected that majority of projects to be supported within the programming period will be already contracted and in the phase of implementation.

Indicators of the partial aims	Baseline	Target	Achieved	Comment
Major activities including press conferences	0	3	1	Launching Conference of the EEA and Norway Grants 2014 – 2021, November 2018
Increased total number of web page view	121,142	139,313*	194,775	Google Analytics for period 01/2019 – 12/2019
Increased total number of likes on Facebook	540	1,000*	969	Facebook Statistics at the end of December 2019; number of “followers” was 1,008.
Brochure about the achieved results and outcomes	0	400	0	

* target value was set for period until 2020. New target value for reporting period until 2021 was set in the chapter 7.

Annex 1: SWOT analysis

<p>STRENGTHS</p>	<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dominantly positive connotations linked to the EEA and Norway Grants; - Simpler administration procedures of the projects financed by the EEA and Norway Grants in comparison with the Structural Funds; - Experienced team at the NFP with implementation of EEA and Norway Grants (the NFP's team has been working with these grants since programming period 2004-2009); - Close and good cooperation with the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Bratislava and the FMO; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To increase the overall awareness of general public about opportunities, results and impact brought by the EEA and Norway grants ; - To support development of partnership between Slovak and Donor State Entities through effective communication; - To promote the simpler administration procedures of the projects financed by the EEA and Norway grants in comparison with Structural Funds; - Promote the high degree of transparency through effective communication;
<p>WEAKNESSES</p>	<p>THREATS</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low interest of media in "project success stories"; - Limited budget for publicity - Regulated internal processes at the NFP concerning PR, linked e.g. to social media (LinkedIn, Twitter or Instagram) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Negative experiences of potential applicants with the Structural Funds applicants / other types of foreign financial aid from the past (particularly demanding financial management, etc.); - Complicated process of public procurement which might potentially be a threat when the NFP has to procure some publicity services

Annex 2: Baseline and target values

Within the 299 projects implemented in the 2009 – 2014 programming period of the EEA and Norway Grants, the general awareness concerning basic information about the EEA and Norway Grants and about the Donor states was evaluated through a questionnaire (the same questionnaire was used in all projects). Based on the figures which are available today, the following results have been achieved:

Indicator	EEA and Norway Grants period 2009 – 2014 (baseline)	EEA and Norway Grants period 2014 – 2021 (target for the year 2021)
Number of processed questionnaires	3,725	4,500
Percentage of respondents who knew of the EEA and Norway Grants prior to completing the questionnaire.	53 %	70 %
The number of respondents who correctly answered at least three questions from the questionnaire.	59 %	65 %
Number of respondents who were able to answer the question “which countries contribute to the EEA Grants”	47 % (The result from the period 2009 – 2014 is not satisfactory for the NFP. Based on the collected information and own experience, the respondents did not know that Island and Lichtenstein are donor states. In contrast, almost all respondents recognised Norway correctly as a donor state. That is why the NFP will try to promote all three donor states and will recommend to the POs whose programmes are financed from the EEA FM to realize communication activities to improve this result.)	55 %

The NFP, based on the figures from the programming period 2009 – 2014 available as of the end of May 2017, has set the above mentioned figures as target figures which should indicate the successful achievement of the overall aim.