

Work Plan

FUND FOR BILATERAL RELATIONS

(In accordance with Article 2.4 of the Bilateral Fund Agreement and Article 4.2 of the Regulations on the implementation of the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2014-2021)

Version 2.5



MINISTRY
OF INVESTMENTS, REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
AND INFORMATIZATION
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

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1 BACKGROUND

This document has been prepared to reflect the period of the year 2023.

1.1 Major fields of bilateral cooperation between Slovakia (“SK”) and Donor States (“DS”)

The bilateral relations between Slovakia and the Donor States (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein), from a long-term perspective, can be generally characterized as **very good, friendly and effective, with a strong potential for further cooperation and development**. The level of bilateral relations between Slovakia and the Donor States (especially with Norway) is also clearly reflected in the relatively high number of common events, meetings and other interesting bilateral activities.

Cooperation between SK and the DS takes place e.g. at political level, in business and investment, education, science and research, culture, energy, innovation, social issues, as well as in the context of cooperation within international organizations.

1.2 Short evaluation of existing bilateral relations and their development (based on 5 crucial areas of interest)

| Partners | Fields of cooperation (classification compares the actual status of cooperation/future potential for cooperation) | | | | |
|----------|--|---------------------------------|---------------------|---|--|
| | Political and institutional cooperation | Economic (investment and trade) | Cultural | Historical ties, general knowledge, public awareness... | People-to-people (incl. students, tourism, employees...) |
| SK – NO | Strong / Strong | Moderate / Stronger | Moderate / Stronger | Moderate / Growing | Moderate / Growing |
| SK – IC | Moderate / Stronger | Low / Moderate | Moderate / Growing | Low / Growing | Moderate / Growing |
| SK - LI | Low / Moderate | Strong / Strong | Low / Moderate | Low / Growing | Low / Moderate |

As regards **political and institutional¹ cooperation**, there is a strong cooperation at diplomatic level between **Norway** and Slovakia², documented through the number of official visits, including a visit of the Vice Prime Minister in Oslo in November 2022. Important contacts and forms of cooperation have been established that can be further developed. Cooperation with **Iceland** is moderate, the highlight of this cooperation being the state visit of the Icelandic President in October 2022. Slovakia and **Liechtenstein** established diplomatic relations in 2009 and since then cooperation has been steadily increasing at bilateral, EEA and UN level (within international organisations). This has been illustrated, i.a., by regular visits at Ministerial level and bilateral exchanges in the margins of international conferences.

In the **economic area** investments and trade from **Norway** to Slovakia are moderate, with some larger investments made over the past years, and with a potential for further development. Economic relations between Slovakia and Liechtenstein are increasingly close. Investments from **Iceland³** can be considered

¹ For the purpose of this document, “institutional” cooperation is considered to be cooperation between public authorities, ministries, self-government authorities, professional unions, academic institutions as well as institutions with specific public mission.

² Diplomatic representation of the Kingdom of Norway to Slovakia is covered by the Embassy of the Kingdom of Norway in Bratislava until July 2023; afterwards the representation will be covered by the Embassy of the Kingdom of Norway in Vienna.

³ The most important investment from Iceland is company Marel Food Nitra for production of technological equipment in food industry.

as low, with potential for further development. Investments from Slovakia to all the three Donor countries are negligible.

In the **cultural area**, close cooperation has been developed between different Slovak and **Norwegian** institutions and artists. **Iceland** is a very interesting destination for artists from all around the world, including Slovakia, and cultural relations between the two countries have the potential to develop. Some cultural cooperation has taken place with **Liechtenstein**, but there is also some potential for development. This field of cooperation was the most attractive area under the Bilateral Fund in the previous programming period.

As indicated before, **historical ties between** Slovakia and the Donor States are, for objective reasons, considered low. **Norway** is an exception to this, with the legacy of Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson being still vivid in Slovakia. The same applies to the **general knowledge and public awareness** of Slovak citizens about Norway, where **Norway** is perceived as a role model country of how things may work in the society.

People-to-people contacts (such as students, visitors, employees) are most frequent between Slovakia and **Norway**. There is also a big community of **Norwegian** students in Slovakia (at the end 2022 almost 500) studying medicine and veterinary medicine, and the number of **Icelandic** students has been increasing. There is also a growing community of Slovaks working in **Norway**, especially in the healthcare and transport sectors.

1.3 Experiences / lessons learned and successes from FMs 09-14

In the programming period 09-14, funds of the Bilateral Fund were distributed through open calls, predefined activities, as well as activities implemented directly by the NFP/PO. The experience from the past period shows that:

- Support to larger-scale activities with a clear focus on a particular field of cooperation brought more sustainable and higher quality results.
- Larger-scale activities brought more opportunities the promotion of partnerships, media coverage, better communication measures as well as wider presentation of the respective activity and bilateral dimension generally.

There are several examples of bilateral activities which can be considered as **success stories**:

- **strategic contribution of EEA and Norway Grants** under the EU Slovak Presidency 2016, e.g. in the areas as green economy and energy (in particular flagship conferences on transition to green economy and energy security);
- **bilateral activities implemented by academic institutions** – e.g. a series of cultural bilateral activities implemented by the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava in cooperation with the University of Bergen (International Grieg Society) or the predefined activity implemented by the University of Veterinary Medicine and Pharmacy in Košice in close cooperation with Nord University in Bodø and close cooperation of the Jessenius Faculty of Medicine in Martin of the Comenius University in Bratislava and Bjorknes College.

The setup and the implementation of the Bilateral Funds in Slovakia under the FMs 09-14 have been very successful and the Bilateral Fund at National Level could be regarded as a model for programming period 14-21 also for other Beneficiary states.

A more **targeted approach** within selected fields of cooperation can bring more visible results. **Visibility of results** in close connection with **high level of quality** of results should be the overall ambitions of the implementation of the Bilateral Fund in this period.

The fund shall support well-balanced partnerships (bilateral or multilateral) where all parties benefit from the cooperation.

1.4 Upcoming activities / initiatives

In the upcoming period, there will be several **opportunities**, in the framework of which strategic initiatives can be funded by the Bilateral Fund mainly through predefined initiatives included in this Work Plan that are to be implemented in 2023-2024

1.5 Possible ways for promotion and partnership facilitation under Programmes

In the Memoranda of Understanding, €600,000 (26.5% of the Bilateral Fund allocation) has already been set aside to the Programmes. Partnerships between SK and DS entities shall be promoted and facilitated through already well-established measures such as matchmaking events or study visits that were also supported by the Bilateral Fund at the Programme level in the 09-14 period, for which the baselines and suggestions for how to achieve them already exist.

In addition to this, the following initiative was proposed by the Programme Operator:

- 1) Bilateral workshops focused on the role of cultural players in arts and culture under the Culture Programme.

2 MAIN OBJECTIVE

The main objective has been defined as: “Enhanced cooperation and improved mutual knowledge and understanding between Donor and Beneficiary States”.

2.1 The main ambitions

The **main ambitions** of the Bilateral Fund are closely linked to Chapter 1 of this document.

It is proposed that in **2023, the Bilateral Fund will continue supporting political and institutional cooperation** between Slovakia and Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein as well as **cultural cooperation** – cultural exchange, promotion of culture and cultural development in Slovakia and Iceland / Liechtenstein / Norway.

2.2 Implementation system – general principles / modalities

The first meeting of the Joint Committee for Bilateral Funds (JCBF) took place on 27 October 2017 in Bratislava, Slovakia. The JCBF is chaired by the National Focal Point and composed of five members, including the NFP, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, represented by the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Bratislava, the Icelandic Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Principality of Liechtenstein.

In the first meeting, the JCBF adopted the Statutes and Rules of Procedures and gathered inputs to the Work Plan for the bilateral funds.

On 15 December 2022, the twelfth meeting of the JCBF took place and it was agreed, that the potential of the selected priority areas was not fully utilised. The implementation of the Fund in 2020-2022 was heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The members have therefore agreed that the political and institutional, as well as cultural cooperation will be prioritized also in 2023.

Mechanisms to ensure flexible funding and the principle of proportionality will be applied at all levels.

In the second half of 2023, the JCBF will evaluate the use of the funds and functioning of the implementation system and may agree on revisions. If it turns out that it is necessary to make changes within the implementation system, the National Focal Point will take into account the comments of the JCBF.

2.3 Allocation

The total allocation of the Bilateral Fund is **€2,262,000⁴**. Based on MoUs the amount of €600,000 has been set aside to Programmes. This allocation is not subject to any further approval by the JCBF or NFP. The allocation of the Bilateral Fund, therefore is in the amount of €1,662,000, this amount is subject to decisions issued by the JCBF.

An amount of €235,600 shall remain reserved for future possible Activities / Initiatives implemented under Programmes based on “Expression of Interest” at a later stage.

Within this version of the Work Plan, the NFP focuses on the distribution of funds in the year 2023, **division of allocations is specified in Part 6 – Budget.**

The potential savings as well as currently unallocated funds will be transferred to the 2024 - 2025 period.

2.4 Principles of selection and assessment

Selection of Grant Applications follows these basic rules:

1. All members of the JCBF shall have an opportunity to vote on every Grant Application.
2. For a Grant Application to be supported under an open call, a quorum must be reached (3 out of 5 of the members must vote). In case of travel grants, silent procedure shall be applied.
3. If any of the members vote against a Grant Application, such application shall not be supported. This should, however, be preceded by a discussion in an effort to reach the consensus of all the members.
4. Any member may propose modifications to the Grant Application. In case that substantial modification is proposed, the application needs to be re-evaluated.
5. Any member may enter scrutiny reservation. It is possible to use this procedure also to request more information from the applicant. Scrutiny reservation is not applied under travel grants.

Under specific circumstances, the National Focal Point may directly approach Ministries and other “umbrella” organizations to submit their proposals for bilateral initiatives.

More detailed rules are included in Annex I to this Work Plan - Rules for awarding grants.

3 IMPLEMENTATION SYSTEM

3.1 Applicants and financing

Eligible applicants / partners are legal persons registered in the Slovak Republic or in the DS.

⁴ EEA Grants €1,098,000 and Norway Grants €1,164,000

The minimum grant amount for an activity / initiative supported through the call will be stated in the particular call.

Generally, payments are provided as reimbursement of already incurred costs. If the grant amount exceeds €25,000; an advance payment of up to 80 % may be provided by the NFP following the signature of the contract.

3.2 Modalities for allocating of the funds

Strategic focus on ministries or other “umbrella” organizations

In order to strengthen the systematic and strategic focus of the Fund for Bilateral Relations at the national level, the NFP approached line ministries and other “umbrella” organizations to submit their proposal for bilateral initiatives.

Regarding the financial limits, the minimum contribution for one predefined bilateral initiative was set to €20,000; the maximum contribution for one predefined bilateral initiative was set to €75,000; with a maximum duration of 12 months.

The proposed initiatives must be implemented in close cooperation with the relevant institution in the donors’ states. In case, this plan is not effective and relevant proposals for initiatives from the “umbrella” organizations will not be identified within 6 months, the NFP will proceed to Open Call.

The priorities of pre-defined activities / initiatives for 2023 - 2024 will be focused on *political cooperation and cultural cooperation*. Other predefined activities proposals can be discussed within JCBF in accordance with Statutes and Rules of Procedure of the JCBF. In case a member of the JCBF shall implement a pre-defined activity upon the approval of the JCBF, the respective member shall abstain from voting.

Any uncommitted funds from the open call may be allocated for the call for smaller scale activities and vice versa, subject the approval of the JCBF.

In case, the plan of directly approaching line ministries and “umbrella” organizations will not be evaluated by the National Focal Point as effective after 6 months, an Open Call may be published based on the decision of the JCBF. However, after 6 months the NFP is of the opinion that this approach has proved to be effective as there were 19 applications received.

The open call for bilateral activities may be published in the second half 2023 based on the decision of the JCBF and shall be focused on “cultural cooperation” and “political and institutional cooperation”. The NFP will consult the call text, including eligibility and selection criteria with the JCBF whose recommendation shall be duly taken into consideration.

The open call for smaller scale activities – travel grants – may be published in the second half 2023 based on decision of the JCBF, in order to support participation at strategic bilateral events/conferences/seminars etc., travel grants of up to €5,000 may be provided. The NFP will consult the allocation and call text, including eligibility and selection criteria with the JCBF whose recommendation shall be duly taken into consideration.

4 BILATERAL PRIORITY PROGRAMMES

| Programme title | DPP(s) | Funds allocated in MoU | JCBF - Allocations | Total allocation | Comments |
|---|--|------------------------|--------------------|------------------|--|
| Bilateral funds for the programme Business Development, Innovation and SME | Innovation Norway, Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU) and National Agency of International Education Affairs (AIBA) | €150,000 | 0€ (TBD) | €150,000 | <i>JCBF allocation will be stated based on submitted and approved documents "Expression of Interest"</i> |
| Bilateral funds for the programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation | Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate (NVE), Directorate for Civil Protection and Emergency Planning (DSB) and the Norwegian | €100,000 | 60,000€ | €160,000 | |
| Bilateral funds for the programme Cultural Entrepreneurship, Cultural Heritage and Cultural Cooperation | Directorate for Cultural Heritage (RA) and Arts Council of Norway (ACN) | €125,000 | €146,400 | €271,400 | |
| Bilateral funds for the programme Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency / Cross-border Cooperation | Norwegian Barents Secretariat | €75,000 | €70,000 | €145,000 | |
| Bilateral funds for the programme Domestic and Gender-based Violence | Norwegian Directorate of Health | €75,000 | €150,000 | €225,000 | |
| Bilateral Funds for the programme Local Development, Poverty Reduction and Roma Inclusion | Council of Europe | €75,000 | 0€ (TBD) | €75,000 | |

5 PREDEFINED ACTIVITIES FOR 2023 – 2024

5.1 Predefined initiative 1

The strategic cooperation of national theatres

Implementing entity: Slovak National Theatre

Partner(s): National Theatre in Oslo / National Theatre in Bergen

Allocation: €40,000

Short description:

This bilateral initiative includes strategic bilateral cooperation of national theatres in Slovakia and Norway.

All implemented activities will have national or international importance and impact. Media presentation of this professional cooperation at national level will be an integral part of the activity. All media outputs will be directly focused on the presentation of the bilateral dimension of the Activity, as well as the role of EEA and Norway Grants as the Donors.

The activity brings significant strategic importance to the cooperation between Slovakia and Norway in the cultural area.

Expected period of the implementation is 2023-2024.

The Grant Application including a detail proposal for the bilateral activity and related description and indicators will be subject to discussion in the JCBF. The listed indicators below can be considered as core indicators. Further indicators will be set within the Grant Application. Following the conclusion of the discussion about the Grant Application in the JCBF, the information listed in the Work Plan will be updated.

Planned results:

| OUTPUT | INDICATOR | TARGET |
|--|---|--------|
| Slovak – Norwegian Theatrical Cooperation established / enhanced | Number of cooperation agreements signed | 1 |
| | Number of cooperating cultural institutions from Slovakia and Norway | 4 |
| | Number of reportages issued by Slovak Media | 2 |
| | Number of articles issued by Slovak Media | 2 |
| | Number of media outputs (reportages, articles etc.) issued by Norwegian Media | 2 |
| TBD | TBD | TBD |

5.2 Predefined initiative 2

TBD

Implementing entity: Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR

Partner(s): Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iceland

Allocation: €15,000

Short description:

TBD

The Grant Application, including a detailed proposal for the bilateral activity and related description and indicators will be subject to discussion in the JCBF. Following the conclusion of the discussion about the Grant Application in the JCBF, the information listed in the Work Plan will be updated accordingly.

Planned results:

| OUTPUT | INDICATOR | TARGET |
|--------|-----------|--------|
| TBD | TBD | TBD |

5.3 Predefined initiative 3 – completed

**SK Presidency in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) – 2019;
SK Presidency in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – 2019**

Implementing entity: Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR

Partner(s): TBD

Allocation: €30,000

Disbursed amount: €5,353

Short description:

The initiative enhanced cooperation within the context of the SK Presidency in the OECD via organization of a workshop, which was the final event of the joint project of the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic and the OECD on Smart Cities as a Tool for Sustainable Development of the Slovak Cities.

Achieved results:

| OUTPUT | INDICATOR | TARGET | ACHIEVED |
|---|--|---------------|-----------------|
| Political cooperation between Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Slovakia under OSCE enhanced | Number of SK/DS experts contributions at events / conferences during SK Presidency in OSCE | 8 | 0 |
| | TBD | 3 | 0 |
| Political cooperation between Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Slovakia under OECD enhanced | Number of bilateral conferences during SK Presidency in OECD | 1 | 1 |
| | Number of participants in bilateral events / activities from Donor States | 1 | 1 |
| | Report from bilateral event | 1 | 1 |
| | Media outputs | 4 | 6 |

5.4 Predefined initiative 4

Accompanying activities / events on the occasion of Celebration of 300 years of Principality of Liechtenstein (optional)

Implementing entity: Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Justice and Culture of the Principality of Liechtenstein (TBC)

Partner(s): TBD

Allocation: €20,000

Short description:

The activities will promote the tercentenary of the establishment of the Principality of Liechtenstein. Possible activities are: cultural events, study visits, seminars etc.

The Grant Application, including a detailed proposal for the bilateral activity and related description and indicators will be subject to discussion in the JCBF. Following the conclusion of the discussion about the Grant Application in the JCBF, the information listed in the Work Plan will be updated accordingly.

Expected period of the implementation is 2023-2024.

Planned results:

| OUTPUT | INDICATOR | TARGET |
|---------------|------------------|---------------|
| TBD | TBD | TBD |

5.5 Predefined initiative 5

Reducing the Gender Pay Gap

Implementing entity: Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of SR

Partner(s): The Directorate of Equality

Allocation: €15,000

Short description:

The gender pay gap in Slovakia has long been above the average for the EU level even though it continues to show a favourable falling trend. Gender segregation in the labour market in Slovakia is closely linked to the overall lower income of women. Despite women's excellent level of education women do not achieve comparable earnings to men because education in "typically female areas" is less valued. The current control mechanisms under Labour Inspection need a new impulse to reinforce the existing legislation better.

Iceland could be used as a good example since its policies belong to the most progressive in the world. The law on Equal Pay Certification entered into force in January of 2018, by additions to provisions of the Icelandic Gender Equality Act. The immediate effect was a requirement that all ministries and workplaces with 250 or more staff members on an annual basis are supposed to obtain Equal Pay Certification by the end of the year 2018. With minor adjustments to original aims, this has meant that practical application and knowledge about implementing the gender pay standards has been acquired in numerous organisations.

Building on this experience, the Directorate of Equality in Iceland will provide a workshop for delegates from Slovakia followed by a study trip. In the workshop, the history of gender equality and equal pay legislation will provide a backdrop for the analysis and presentation of the most recent developments in gender pay legislation. The workshop, to be held in Iceland, will include presentations from specialist advisors and lawyers mandated the administration and implementation of the Icelandic Gender Equality Act. Accredited auditors from licensed auditing bodies will provide insight into the certification of the equal pay management system. In addition, corporate human resource experts will give examples of the benefits of working within the framework of the equal pay system.

Expected period of the implementation is 2023-2024.

Planned results:

| OUTPUT | INDICATOR | TARGET |
|---|--|--------|
| Political cooperation between Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Slovakia in the Gender Equality field enhanced | Number of workshops between Slovak and Icelandic institutions active in the field of Gender Equality | 1 |
| | Number of study trips from Slovakia to Iceland related to Gender Equality | 1 |

| | | |
|--|--|------------|
| | Number of Slovak participants in the meetings | 5 |
| | Number of Icelandic participants in the meetings | 8 |
| Know-how between Slovak and Icelandic institutions in the field of Gender Equality transferred | Icelandic Equal Pay Certification methodology explained to Slovak participants | Yes |
| | Slovak legislation in the field of Gender Equality explained to Icelandic participants | Yes |
| | Study trip report providing overview of the Icelandic Equal Pay Certification methodology elaborated | Yes |

5.6 Predefined initiative 6

More Human Approach into Human Rights Education in Slovakia

Implementing entity: Open Society Foundation / NOS-OSF

Partner(s): University of Southeast Norway, Drammen, USN

Allocation: €45,000

Short description:

Insufficient level and quality of Human Rights Education (HRE) in Slovakia creates a number of challenges. Education in this area is often reduced to simply memorizing facts and definitions, teaching history without references to other topics. That is why the focus of the initiative will be on the preparation of future pedagogues in Slovakia. The initiative will use the inspiration from University of Southeast Norway in Drammen where the Human rights Education is the *red line through the whole curricula* of the future pedagogues and incorporate them into preparation of the curricula of Slovak teachers and more specifically on their human rights related competences.

The Initiative would like to develop the design of a course on Human Rights education for Topics as: Rights of a Child, Participation, Climate Change, Migration, Feminism, Holocaust and others. In addition, the initiative will focus on influencing the attitudes of target groups towards minorities.

The initiative would start in the August 2022 and will finish in August 2023. It would prepare and realize a pilot course on Human Rights Education at the faculty of Education in Bratislava for students, with the inspiration, help and presence from the partners from University in Drammen. The proposed activities will focus on mapping and comparison of the existing methods in both Universities, joint preparation of the course, study visits, realisation of the workshops during the course, evaluation of the outcomes from the workshops and communication activities.

The Grant Application, including a detailed proposal for the bilateral activity and related description and indicators will be subject to discussion in the JCBF. Following the conclusion of the discussion about the Grant Application in the JCBF, the information listed in the Work Plan will be updated accordingly.

Planned results:

| OUTPUT | INDICATOR | TARGET |
|--|---|--------|
| Cooperation between NO_SK Universities strengthened in the theme of Human Rights Education | Study visit realised (to NO) | 1 |
| | Expert Round table organised NO – SK | 1 |
| | Curricula (Sylabys) of the HRE course developed | 1 |
| | Course on HRE piloted | 1 |
| | Workshops on HRE topics realized | 5 |
| | Articles published | 3 |

| | | |
|--|--|----------|
| | Group of future students passed the first pilot course | 1 |
| Cooperation between NO_SK Universities strengthened in the theme of Human Rights Education | Number of involved pedagogues from Slovakia (University teachers) | 3 |
| | Number of involved experts involved from NGO | 2 |
| | Number of Involved experts from Norway | 3 |
| | | |

5.7. Predefined initiative 7 – cancelled⁵

Bilateral cooperation in the area of asylum and migration

Implementing entity: Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic

Partner(s): The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration – TBC

- Possible partners from Iceland and Liechtenstein - TBC

Allocation: € 500,000 - TBC

Short description:

The main ambition of the Initiative is to respond to the current situation in Ukraine and the exchange of information between Slovakia and Norway in the area of asylum and migration. The Initiative has two main components:

1. Enhancement of conditions of asylum seekers in the asylum camps, including the help to asylum seekers to exercise basic rights.
2. Enhancement of services provided to migrants through transfer of know-how from Norway.

By implementing this initiative, Slovakia responds to the war in Ukraine, Slovakia's eastern neighbour. Slovakia has not faced such an influx of asylum seekers in the past, and the experience from Norway might help to established procedures safeguarding the basic rights of asylum seekers. Special attention shall be paid to women with children, mostly in the asylum camp in Opatovská Nová Ves. This camp has the capacity of 140 people and predominantly serves for vulnerable groups such as mothers with children etc. Smaller-scale restoration works are envisaged that will turn the gym into a multifunctional space, able to serve as emergency accommodation and thus increasing and improving the capacity of the facility. Purchase of IT equipment enabling using the internet services is also planned, including other equipment and materials, as necessary. This activity should not exceed EUR 150,000. Special attention shall be paid to the needs of children, incl. their educational process.

Through this Initiative, Slovakia also recognises that lawful and desirable migration is essential for the economic development of Slovakia. The Slovak Migration Policy until 2025, recently adopted by the Slovak Government, consider the establishment of an environment attractive for foreigners essential in the global competition for qualified workforce. A user-friendly migration and asylum system is a necessary precondition for the potential of Slovakia to attract foreign talents. Experience from Norway may help Slovakia in achieving this objective. Secondments, study trips and trainings are expected to take place under this activity. At the Slovak side, the imminent interest is to visit the Norwegian integration centres. The relevant Slovak stakeholders, including the staff from the Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Bureau of Border and Foreign Police of the Ministry of Interior, and Slovak Humanitarian Council shall be invited to participate in this activity. Certified training courses led by Norwegian experts are also welcomed.

It is proposed that the Project be implemented in cooperation with **the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI)**, the counterpart of the Slovak Migration Office. The UDI is the central agency in the Norwegian immigration administration. The UDI implements and helps to develop the government's immigration and refugee policy. In this initiative, UDI will help the Slovak Migration Office with facilitating

⁵ Based on mutual agreement with the Migration Office of the SR, the predefined initiative no. 7 "Bilateral cooperation in the area of asylum and migration" was cancelled. Decision was made due to the lack of staff capacity that has persisted on the Migration Office's side for a longer time. The Migration Office's capacities are strongly affected by the refugee situation caused by the war in Ukraine.

lawful and desirable immigration and ensuring that those who meet the requirements are given an opportunity to come to Slovakia. At the same time, UDI will share its experience with measure preventing abuse of the system.

Expected period of the implementation is 2023-2024.

Planned results:

| OUTPUT | INDICATOR | TARGET |
|---|---|---------------|
| Enhancement of conditions of asylum seekers in the asylum camps | Number of asylum camps supported | 1 |
| Slovak asylum and migration system enhanced | Number of staff from Slovakia in exchanges | 15 |
| Slovak asylum and migration system enhanced | Number of training courses co-organised by Slovakia and Norway | 4 |
| Slovak asylum and migration system enhanced | Number of professional staff trained | 30 |
| Slovak asylum and migration system enhanced | Number of national policies and laws influenced | 3 |
| Slovak asylum and migration system enhanced | Level of satisfaction with the Slovak asylum and migration system | TBD |

5.8 Predefined initiative 8

JOINT SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE ON GLOBAL CHANGE

Implementing entity: University of Veterinary Medicine and Pharmacy in Košice (UVMP), Košice, Slovakia

Partner(s): Nord University, Faculty of Biosciences and Aquaculture (Nord, FBA), Bodø, Norway

Allocation: €40,000

Short description:

Tackling global and climate change requires a holistic approach that integrates various scientific disciplines and involves different stakeholders and target groups. The proposed third joint scientific conference "The impact of global change on the environment, human and animal health" is a highly multidisciplinary platform intended for researchers, PhD students, students and professionals to share the latest knowledge in this field likely to result in advancements that could benefit the societies in Slovakia, Norway and globally. Speakers from Slovakia, Norway and other countries will give lectures under 3 main sections: 1) Impact of global and climate changes on the environment, 2) Impact of global change on public and animal health, and 3) Effects of global and climate change on water resources and air. Representatives of Slovak and Norwegian policy-making and/or regulatory bodies will be invited as committee members and/or conference attendees.

The University of Veterinary Medicine and Pharmacy in Košice (UVMP) and Nord's Faculty of Biosciences and Aquaculture (Nord, FBA) have successfully cooperated in education and research for over a decade. Expanding on this existing bond, UVMP and Nord, FBA organised the first joint international conference on global change in Košice in 2017. The success of the conference convinced the organisers to make it a biennial event. Another joint conference (NordGlobal 2019) was held in Bodø, Norway, in May 2019. The third conference was originally planned for May 2021 in Košice, however, due to the global pandemic, it was postponed until the pandemic recedes. Preparatory activities for the third conference will start in December 2022. The conference is planned to take place in May 2023 in Košice.

The Grant Application, including a detailed proposal for the bilateral activity and related description and indicators will be subject to discussion in the JCBF. Following the conclusion of the discussion about the Grant Application in the JCBF, the information listed in the Work Plan will be updated accordingly.

Planned results:

| OUTPUT | INDICATOR | TARGET |
|---|--|--------|
| Cooperation between Slovak and Norwegian academic institutions strengthened | Number of joint events organised | 1 |
| | Number of actively involved participants from Slovakia in bilateral events | 6 |
| | Number of actively involved participants from Norway in bilateral events | 4 |
| | Total number of participants in bilateral events from Slovakia | 50 |
| | Total number of participants in bilateral events from Norway | 7 |
| | Total number of participants (from any country) | 100 |
| | Number of created joint results (book of abstracts) | 1 |
| | Number of press releases | 2 |

5.9 Predefined initiative 9

Study visit: Geothermal and renewable energy know-how transfer (SGRE)

Implementing entity: Slovak Investment and Trade Development Agency (SARIO)

Partner(s): Green by Iceland

Allocation: €58,687 (This is the amount stated in the application. The final allocation will be adjusted on the basis of the JCBF's recommendations once the initiative has been contracted.)

Short description:

The SGRE study visit represent a continuous acceleration of bilateral relations between Iceland and Slovakia while following up on the visit of Icelandic President to Slovakia in October 2022. Green by Iceland invited SARIO to organise an expert study visit to Iceland as part of the deepening dialogue in terms of geothermal and renewable energy sources together with focus on their sustainable exploitation. As part of the study visit, H.E. President Gudni Th. Jóhannesson will be visited (tbc. - alternatively sector relevant minister or State Secretary) to debate further the possibilities for future bilateral cooperation on geothermal and renewable energy with the Slovak delegation members. The study visit will include field trips to respective power plants producing heating and electricity from geothermal and water sources. As a part of the agenda a workshop/business forum will be organised intended to create direct contacts among Slovak and Icelandic entrepreneurs, relevant research entities and institutions and non-governmental bodies such as municipalities, and universities, clusters and NGOs active in field of renewable energy production and sustainable transition. The workshop will provide space for presenting Slovak intentions and potential in renewable energy development and projects in which Icelandic knowledge can be effectively implemented. Apart from the field trips and workshop, a few cleantech venue-visits will be organised to demonstrate other available possibilities for sustainable resources exploitation such as waste recycling, CO2 capture and storage, health, agriculture etc.

Expected period of the implementation is in 2023.

Planned results:

| OUTPUT | INDICATOR | TARGET |
|--------|-----------|--------|
| TBD | TBD | TBD |

5.10 Predefined initiative 10

Triangle of Support for AI in Healthcare

Implementing entity: Technical University in Košice (TUKE)

Partner(s): Reykjavik University, NTNU/Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Allocation: €72,864 (This is the amount stated in the application. The final allocation will be adjusted on the basis of the JCBF's recommendations once the initiative has been contracted.)

Short description:

The initiative is aimed at the professional development of researchers and the promotion of scientific cooperation between three universities, the Technical University of Košice (TUKE), the University of Reykjavik and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). The research area of this initiative is Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the application area is healthcare. Knowledge exchange will take place in the form of lectures, seminars or workshops organised during the visit between the partners.

Expected period of the implementation is in 2023-2024.

Planned results:

| OUTPUT | INDICATOR | TARGET |
|---------------|------------------|---------------|
| TBD | TBD | TBD |

5.11 Predefined Initiative 11

Bilateral relations and common knowledge between Slovakia and Iceland research at Universities on topic Genomic instability and cancer “GenICa”

Implementing entity: University of Pavol Jozef Šafárik in Košice (UPJS)

Partner(s): University of Iceland

Allocation: €72,299.20 (This is the amount stated in the application. The final allocation will be adjusted on the basis of the JCBF's recommendations once the initiative has been contracted.)

Short description:

The initiative aims to build bilateral cooperation based on joint activities (seminars and conferences), meetings and discussions that will lead to the strengthening of common knowledge between researchers in Slovakia and Iceland. The activities are aimed at:

- Strengthening collaboration in the field of genomic instability and cancer in the context of prevalence in the Slovak and Icelandic populations and with respect to ecological conditions, pollution and lifestyle.
- Ensuring the exchange of experience and knowledge in the scientific field.
- Exchange of research practices.

Expected period of the implementation is in 2023-2024.

Planned results:

| OUTPUT | INDICATOR | TARGET |
|--------|-----------|--------|
| TBD | TBD | TBD |

5.12 Predefined initiative 12

Novel Techniques and Approaches in Language Teaching (NoTALaT)

Implementing entity: Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra

Partner(s): Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies

Allocation: €72,702 (This is the amount stated in the application. The final allocation will be adjusted on the basis of the JCBF's recommendations once the initiative has been contracted.)

Short description:

The project focuses on strategic bilateral cooperation and exchange of experience in two areas:

1. Teaching the native language of the country (Icelandic in Iceland and Slovak in Slovakia) for foreigners.
2. Support for the acquisition of foreign languages through new techniques, procedures and approaches (for example, the use of an intervention program for the development of reading comprehension (SK) and new technologies in teaching language and culture face-to face and online (IS).

The main aim of the project is support of second and foreign language and culture acquisition using novel techniques and approaches to both on-campus and online teaching. The project focuses on exchange of experiences between course coordinators and academic staff involved in organising and teaching of language courses to exchange university students and immigrant groups.

Expected period of the implementation is in 2023-2024.

Planned results:

| OUTPUT | INDICATOR | TARGET |
|---------------|------------------|---------------|
| TBD | TBD | TBD |

5.13 Predefined initiative 13

Early Fake Profile Detection- FakeDetect

Implementing entity: Technical University in Košice (TUKE)

Partner(s): Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet - NTNU

Allocation: €72,641 (This is the amount stated in the application. The final allocation will be adjusted on the basis of the JCBF's recommendations once the initiative has been contracted.)

Short description:

The activities of the initiative are mainly aimed at sharing experiences, examples of good practice, or the transfer of know-how between Slovakia and Norway in the detection of fake profiles, e.g. adults posing as children to find potential grooming victims.

At the same time, the goal is to strengthen the bilateral cooperation between NTNU and TUKE in combination with the public education sector for children under 20 (primary/secondary schools, public libraries) and to raise the awareness of the general population about this type of harmful activity in the online world.

Expected period of the implementation is in 2023-2024.

Planned results:

| OUTPUT | INDICATOR | TARGET |
|--------|-----------|--------|
| TBD | TBD | TBD |

5.14 Predefined initiative 14

The cooperation in the fields of business intelligence and artificial intelligence

Implementing entity: University of Economics in Bratislava

Partner(s): Bifröst University

Allocation: €29,178 (This is the amount stated in the application. The final allocation will be adjusted on the basis of the JCBF's recommendations once the initiative has been contracted.)

Short description:

The main purpose of the initiative is mutual improvements in the emerging fields of business intelligence and explainable artificial intelligence. This will be realized by the short research visits, seminars, preparing basis for supervising and consulting master theses on the Bifrost university by teachers from the University of Economics in Bratislava and vice versa. The achieved results will be published at the conference in Slovakia and in Iceland focused on these topics. By the end of the project, an article will be submitted to the top-tired scientific journal like Applied Intelligence.

Expected period of the implementation is in 2023-2024.

Planned results:

| OUTPUT | INDICATOR | TARGET |
|---------------|------------------|---------------|
| TBD | TBD | TBD |

5.15 Predefined initiative 15

Modern Approaches and Tools for Teaching Classes at the University Level in Theoretical Computer Science Courses of Logic, Types, and Semantics

Implementing entity: Technical University in Košice (TUKE)

Partner(s): University of Oslo

Allocation: €35,954 (This is the amount stated in the application. The final allocation will be adjusted on the basis of the JCBF's recommendations once the initiative has been contracted.)

Short description:

The initiative is focused on the development of software (teaching tools) through which students can study the basic principles of reasoning by manipulating evidence as programs. Technical University in Košice and University of Oslo will share their experiences with teaching logic, types and semantics.

Cooperation on the development of new teaching materials for both parties is planned (a new course at University of Oslo and an existing logic course at Technical University in Košice).

The result will be the development of an interactive learning tool and the implementation of the results in the teaching process.

Expected period of the implementation is in 2023-2024.

Planned results:

| OUTPUT | INDICATOR | TARGET |
|--------|-----------|--------|
| TBD | TBD | TBD |

5.16 Predefined initiative 16

Increasing the productivity of the construction industry through Lean Construction concept

Implementing entity: Technical University in Košice (TUKE)

Partner(s): Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Allocation: €55,525 (This is the amount stated in the application. The final allocation will be adjusted on the basis of the JCBF's recommendations once the initiative has been contracted.)

Short description:

The initiative is focused on increasing productivity in the construction industry and sharing theoretical and practical knowledge and experience. Promoting research and development in the implementation of principles and methods in the construction industry that will reduce waste, improve quality, and increase the productivity, predictability and efficiency of construction projects.

The initiative will contribute to the intensification of bilateral educational and research relations between organisations specifically concerned with the above-mentioned issues. The objectives of the initiative should be achieved through face-to-face meetings, namely 3 study tours (2 in Norway and 1 in Slovakia).

The achievements of the initiative will be published for students and university staff on the university website as well as in the university journal HALO TU (Technical University in Košice).

Expected period of the implementation is in 2023-2024.

Planned results:

| OUTPUT | INDICATOR | TARGET |
|---------------|------------------|---------------|
| TBD | TBD | TBD |

5.17 Predefined initiative 17

EE-YOUTH: Transfer of knowledge and practical experience in the education of YOUTH in the field of environmental education and transfer of knowledge and vocational training in forestry

Implementing entity: National Forest Centre

Partner(s): Forestry Extension Institute (SkogKurs)

Allocation: €74,960 (This is the amount stated in the application. The final allocation will be adjusted on the basis of the JCBF's recommendations once the initiative has been contracted.)

Short description:

The aim of the project is to create a partnership between the National Forest Centre (SR) and the Forestry Extension Institute (SkogKurs) (NO) in the field of environmental education.

The main objective of the project is aimed at the transfer of knowledge and practical experience in the field of environmental education and awareness, targeting youth (young people aged 15-19 years) combined with teacher training. Another activity will be the elaboration of an Analysis of the current state of environmental education of youth in Slovakia and Norway.

Expected period of the implementation is in 2023-2024.

Planned results:

| OUTPUT | INDICATOR | TARGET |
|--------|-----------|--------|
| TBD | TBD | TBD |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

5.18 Predefined initiative 18

LibraryEdu

Implementing entity: Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic

Partner(s): "University Library in Bratislava, Slovak National Library, State Scientific Library in Banská Bystrica, State Scientific Library in Prešov, State Research Library in Košice (SK), Hartvig Nissens skole, Raelingen bibliotek, Ingrid Svennevig Hagen (NO)

Allocation: €72,710 (This is the amount stated in the application. The final allocation will be adjusted on the basis of the JCBF's recommendations once the initiative has been contracted.)

Short description:

The aim of the initiative is to establish institutional cooperation between Slovak libraries and selected libraries in Norway. The aim is to exchange experiences in the field of cooperation between libraries and secondary schools, as well as to exchange experiences in the field of further training of librarians. The initiative plans to develop bilateral relations and aims to produce three outputs:

1. An analysis containing the results of the survey and an action plan for further partnership cooperation after the end of the project.
2. A model of an e-learning tool that will enable the setting up of an e-learning learning tool that will aim to enhance the development of the skills of staff working in libraries.
3. Dissemination of the outputs will be presented to the general professional public through an international meeting for librarians in Slovakia. This meeting will be attended by experts and a "Roundtable Discussion" on digitisation and lifelong learning will be organised.

Planned results:

| OUTPUT | INDICATOR | TARGET |
|---------------|------------------|---------------|
| TBD | TBD | TBD |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

6 BUDGET

Please note that this budget follows the structure of the IFR template.

| Title | | Budget | Comments |
|--|--|-------------------|--|
| Call for proposals 2019 / 2020 - closed | Subject to Decision of JCBF (implementation of bilateral activities under call, smaller scale activities (travel grants) and predefined activities specified within Part 5 | €56,244.75 | Political and Institutional cooperation Cultural cooperation |
| Call for smaller scale initiatives – closed | | €9,240 | Travel grants |
| Pre-defined activities 2019 – 2020 | | €5,353 | Disbursed amount of implemented pre-defined activities (Section 5) |
| Call for proposals 2021/2022 | | €142,650 | Political and Institutional cooperation Cultural cooperation for online bilateral activities |
| Pre-defined activities 2023 – 2024 | | €792,520.20 | Allocated amount of pre-defined activities (Section 5) |
| Bilateral funds for the programme Business Development, Innovation and SMEs | Funds allocated to Programmes based on MoUs and Expressions of Interest | €150,000 | EEA/NFM MoUs |
| Bilateral funds for the programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation | | €160,000 | EEA/NFM MoUs; EI-SK-ACC-001 |
| Bilateral funds for the programme Cultural Entrepreneurship, Cultural Heritage and Cultural Cooperation | | €271,400 | EEA MoU, EI-SK-CLT-001 |
| Bilateral funds for the programme Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency / Cross-border Cooperation | | €145,000 | EEA MoU, EI-SK-GGC-001 |
| Bilateral funds for the programme Local Development, Poverty Reduction and Roma Inclusion | | €75,000 | NFM MoU |
| Bilateral funds for the programme Domestic and Gender-based Violence | | €225,000 | NFM MoU, EI-SK-DGV-001, EI-SK-DGV-002 |
| Funds reserved for programmes based on “Expression of Interest” | Funds reserved for Programmes for activities implemented based on “Expression of Interest” – subject of Decision of the JCBF | €235,600 | Funds reserved for Programmes for potential “Expression of Interest” |
| Funds still to be allocated | Subject to Decision of the JCBF | €TBC | Will be allocated for 2023-2025 or earlier upon the decision of the JCBF |
| TOTAL | | €2,262,000 | |
| The budget breakdown was updated on 12 July 2023. | | | |

ANNEX I – RULES FOR AWARDING GRANTS

1) Introduction

- a) The involvement of the members of the JCBF in the selection process is an additional, extra task, unrelated to the standard functions of the JCBF as defined in the Regulations, Bilateral Guideline and the Statutes and Rules of Procedure.
- b) Unless otherwise stated in this document, the Statutes and Rules of Procedure, including, but not limited to chapter IV point 2 (decision-making) shall not apply.

2) Basic procedural rules

- a) The members express their opinion on the Grant Applications through electronic voting, organised by the NFP. In case of Open Call, voting shall be supported by a scoring chart, filled in in line with the selection criteria. Alternatively, a statement confirming that the member agrees with the opinion and scoring chart of the National Focal Point shall suffice.
- b) While the members agree that it is not possible to reach consensus on each and every Grant Application submitted, the members endeavour to closely cooperate in order to make sure that the votes and objections of any of the other members are carefully considered. Mutual trust and confidence should be applied whenever an objection is raised.
- c) If a member votes against a Grant Application or if an objection is raised, proper justification is required. The justification shall be detailed enough to enable the applicant to understand the reasons for the rejection of the application and shall follow the selection criteria.
- d) Representatives of Liechtenstein and Iceland are relieved from assessing the Grant Applications submitted in the Calls where only Slovak and Norwegian organisations are eligible to apply.

3) Rules of nomination

- a) The right of nomination of the person carrying out the voting (hereinafter referred to as “the assessor”) on the Grant Application belongs to the representative of the member in the JCBF (hereinafter referred to as “the representative”).
- b) The assessor might be the representative him/herself, his or her deputy in the JCBF or any other person.
- c) The representative shall notify the NFP about the contact details of the assessor (e.g. in an e-mail).
- d) The representative may also nominate several assessors. In that case, the Grant Applications shall be circulated to all of them; however, every member has only one vote.
- e) The nomination can be revoked by the representative.
- f) The nomination is not contingent of the particular representative, e.g. in case a new representative becomes member in the JCBF.

4) Criteria, voting and FIFO principle

- a) Formal and eligibility criteria shall be elaborated by the NFP and submitted to the JCBF for comments along with the text of the Call.
- b) Grant Applications not meeting formal or eligibility criteria, evaluated by the NFP, shall be rejected by the NFP. This does not prevent the re-submission of the Grant Application.
- c) Applicants whose applications were rejected due to non-compliance with formal or eligibility criteria have the right to appeal to the NFP, or re-submit the application. In case the appeal is successful, the original day of the submission of the application is considered when applying the FIFO principle.
- d) Selection criteria shall be elaborated by the NFP, approved by the JCBF and published along with the Call.

- e) In case of open calls, the assessors shall vote “FOR” or “AGAINST” the Grant Application or formally “ABSTAIN” from voting.
- f) In case of travel grants, the assessors may vote “FOR” or raise „OBJECTION” against the initial opinion of the NFP.
- g) FIFO (First In First Out) principle means that the applications are evaluated in the exact same order as they were received by the NFP. The NFP automatically reserves funds for the financing of the application after it is delivered.
- h) The call is closed if the amount of funds reserved tops the call allocation, however, a certain number of Grant Applications delivered in the meantime can be put on a reserve list (pipeline) and funded in case of savings in, withdrawal from or rejection of other Grant Applications or in other similar cases.

5) Procedure for awarding grants under an open call

- a) Every Grant Application meeting the formal and eligibility criteria is circulated to all JCBF members, along with the NFP’s initial opinion. The opinion represents the vote of the NFP as the member of the JCBF.
- b) Deadline for selection and voting is generally 5 working days. Within this period, any member may enter scrutiny reservation. Entering the scrutiny reservation suspends the time limits for a maximum of 5 working days. Members that remain silent are considered to have supported the NFP’s opinion (vote).
- c) The Grant Application is supported if it is voted “FOR” by **all, but at least three** members (hereinafter referred to as “the quorum”).
- d) If quorum is not reached, the deadline is prolonged by another 5 working days. The assessors shall be notified and requested to vote by the NFP. If, at the end of this period, the quorum is still not reached, the application shall be rejected and the reservation of funds cancelled.
- e) If the quorum is not unanimous, a discussion shall be held in order to reach consensus. Following the discussion, the NFP shall organise a new round of voting that shall be completed within 5 working days. If consensus still cannot be reached, the Grant Application shall be rejected and the reservation of funds cancelled.
- f) The members may make comments in order to improve the quality of the Grant Application. Comments shall be entitled as “substantive” or “minor”.
- g) In case substantive comments are received, the Grant Application needs to be modified within a period set by the NFP and circulated to all members again. The reservation of funds shall not be cancelled until the new assessment by the JCBF members is completed.
- h) Procedure under points b) – g) shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to any substantive modification of an already supported Grant Application.

6) Procedure for awarding travel grants

- a) Every Grant Application meeting the formal and eligibility criteria is circulated to all JCBF members, along with the NFP’s initial opinion. The opinion represents the vote of the NFP as the member of the JCBF.
- b) The NFP shall reserve funds for the financing of the Grant Application, irrespective of its opinion.
- c) In case the opinion of the NFP is positive and no objection is received within three working days following the circulation of the application, the Grant Application is *supported*; otherwise, the application is *rejected* and the reservation of funds cancelled.
- d) In case the opinion of the NFP is negative and **all, but at least two voting** assessors raised objection against the opinion, the Grant Application is *supported*; otherwise, the application is *rejected* and the reservation of funds cancelled.

7) Procedure for pre-defined initiatives

- a) The NFP shall approach the applicant for a pre-defined initiative well before the estimated start of the implementation of the initiative and request the submission of the Grant Application.

- b) The NFP shall, in close cooperation with the applicant, make all efforts to ensure that the Grant Application properly reflects the concept of the activity listed in the Work Plan.
- c) Once the Grant Application is fully developed, it shall be circulated to all JCBF members for comments within a deadline of 10 working days.
- d) In case substantive comments are received, the Grant Application needs to be modified and circulated to all members again.
- e) If no substantive comments are received within the deadline, the Grant Application is considered approved.
- f) Procedure under points b) – e) shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to any substantive modification of an already supported Grant Application.

8) Final decision

- a) Final decision shall be issued by the NFP (statutory representative or designated person).
- b) No appeal procedure shall apply on the final decision.

9) Final provisions

- a) Deadlines shall be calculated as of the day following the day the action was taken.
- b) Working days are those days considered working in both the Beneficiary State and the EFTA States.