

ANNUAL MEETING 2013 MINUTES

Date: **Wednesday, May 8th 2013**

Venue: **Ministry of Finance**

Address: **Suur-Ameerika 1, Tallinn**

Time: **15:00 – 16:00**

High level meeting on the EEA and Norway Grants 2009-2014

The high level session of the Annual Meeting was opened by Mr Ivar Sikk with an introductory round of participants and adoption of the agenda.

Mr Anders Erdal opened the meeting from the donors' side by expressing that 2009-2014 period of the grants is a follow-up of cooperation established already in the previous period. There is a small concern regarding the capacity of the Focal Point – it is important to ensure that the two people working in the Focal Point receive sufficient support, otherwise the implementation system would be vulnerable.

Assessment of Grants' impact at national level and cohesion

Mr Karl-Erik Tender commented that in Strategic Reports there is an overview regarding the grants' impact at national level. It is important that the programmes are in correct places looking at strategic documents in 10 years perspective. Mr Ivar Sikk added that it has been important to have a linkage between the grants and the national strategies so that the grants have an added value.

Mr Anders Erdal consented to what was said, adding that Estonia has been right on track, focusing on important issues. It is good that there is a systematic split in the reports in contextual trends and added value of the grants. Such analysis is valuable to the donors and is encouraged to be continued.

Bilateral relations

Mr Anders Erdal commented that in general everything is developing in the right direction and the cooperation between the Donor Programme Partners and the Programme Operators seems to be good. The fact that there is an oversubscription in calls is proof of strong interest and bilateral aspects have been taken well care of in the implementation of programmes.

Mr Ivar Sikk proposed to discuss an idea of an event that could be organised under the bilateral fund at national level. The idea initially concerned sharing Norwegian high level politicians' experience about public participation in decision making processes. The idea was discussed at the Monitoring Committee meeting and during the discussion great interest arose to learn also from Norwegian experience of involving local communities in decision making processes in municipalities and at regional

level, including informal municipalities' groups. The idea is quite fresh and it has not been consulted with potential beneficiaries yet. Also the form of the event is not yet clear: one of the ideas is to have a series of seminars or working groups.

Mr Anders Erdal commented that the idea is good and the Focal Point and the embassy should discuss the idea in more detail. It would be good to involve all levels and also trade unions and employers' associations – a tripartite model, which is well developed in Norway. Mr Ivar Sikk agreed that the Norwegian model would be a good example.

Mrs Lise Kleven Grevstad proposed in addition to finance a follow-up ski seminar from the bilateral fund at national level. The Focal Point welcomed the idea.

It was decided that the Focal Point and Norwegian Embassy will continue their cooperation in order to make the best use of the remaining funds for bilateral relations.

Reporting on horizontal concerns

Mr Anders Erdal said that in the Memoranda of Understanding a reference is made to addressing horizontal concerns and all the beneficiary states and Programme Operators should take these into account. Also, potential should be sought in cooperating with the Council of Europe and the UN Human Rights Council. Good governance and fighting against corruption is a crucial aspect of the implementation of the grants and there are several specific concerns in different programmes such as the Children and Youth at Risk programme and the NGO Fund. These issues should in the future be reported in the Annual Programme Reports and the Strategic Reports in more detail than so far. Mr Anders Erdal noted that this message concerning the reporting on horizontal concerns will be communicated to all beneficiary states.

Mr Ivar Sikk commented that the message is clear and in programmes the eligible activities are taking the horizontal and specific concerns into account. The question is how to report on these issues.

Mr Anders Erdal said that it is a common challenge to find a good method how to report on these issues.

Risk assessment/risk mitigation

Ms Helen Sulg gave an overview of the risk assessment done in the second quarter of 2013. The risk assessment followed the practice of the Structural Funds – mapping the risks, evaluating the risks and agreeing on mitigation measures of risks as three steps of the process. Risks were assessed in 11 fields: planning, legal framework, division of tasks, supervision, Project Promoter's guidance, monitoring, supportive activities (financial management, audit, personnel and training) and "other". Ms Helen Sulg also introduced the recommendations on how to mitigate the risks.

Mr Kurt Haugen said that the work done is reassuring and in line with the donors' risk management strategy. This is an important topic for the donors and goes hand in hand with Results Based Management. In the near future the Financial Mechanism Office and the donors will introduce a guide for the Programme Operators on risk management. It is important that key personnel working with risks attend the annual risk seminars organized by the Financial Mechanism Office. Risks in Estonia as a beneficiary state are considered rather low, still cooperation is needed to detect and mitigate risks.

Mr Anders Erdal added that the risk assessment system is concrete and the outline should be followed, also contact with the Financial Mechanism Office should be kept.

Status of the Strategic Reports

Mr Anders Erdal said that the donors are generally pleased with the strategic reports as these are comprehensive and analytical. The strategic and forward-looking approach used in the strategic reports of Estonia are regarded as a best practice in capturing the essence of what is expected and a model for other beneficiary states. In the future, horizontal concerns as well as risk assessment and mitigation should be reported on in more detail. The donors approve the reports in general, but ask to include a summary of risk assessment done in the first quarter of 2013 into the reports.

**Annex 1
Agenda of the annual meeting**

**Annual Meeting for the EEA and Norway Grants 2009-2014
Agenda**

8 May 2013

Tallinn, Estonia

15:00-16:00 High level meeting

Opening remarks; adoption of agenda

Assessment of Grants' impact at national level and cohesion

Bilateral relations

Reporting on horizontal concerns

Risk assessment/risk mitigation

Status of the Strategic Reports

Any other business

Conclusions

Annex 2

List of participants

	Name	Organisation	Position
1	Mr Anders Erdal	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Deputy Director General; Chairperson of the Financial Mechanism Committee
2	Ms Berit Helene Pettersen	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Senior Adviser
3	Mrs Lise Kleven Grevstad	Royal Norwegian Embassy	Ambassador
4	Mr Eirik Nestås Mathisen	Royal Norwegian Embassy	First Secretary
5	Mrs Piret Marvet	Royal Norwegian Embassy	Adviser on EEA/Norway Grants
6	Mr Kurt Haugen	Financial Mechanism Office	Deputy Director
7	Mr Falk Lange	Financial Mechanism Office	Senior Country Officer Estonia
8	Mr Ivar Sikk	Ministry of Finance	Deputy Secretary General of Fiscal Policy
9	Mr Karl-Erik Tender	Ministry of Finance, State Budget Dprtm	Deputy Head of Department
10	Ms Kaide Tammel	Ministry of Finance, European Union Payments Dprtm	Adviser
11	Mr Veiko Kiivet	Ministry of Finance, Financial Control Dprtm	Leading Auditor
12	Ms Kerstin Liiva	Ministry of Finance, Structural and Foreign Assistance Dprtm	Head of Department
13	Ms Helen Sulg	Ministry of Finance, Structural and Foreign Assistance Dprtm	Adviser
14	Ms Ülle Lobjakas	Ministry of Finance, Structural and Foreign Assistance Dprtm	Adviser
15	Ms Jana Silaškova	Ministry of Finance, Structural and Foreign Assistance Dprtm	Chief Specialist
16	Mr Ahti Raidal	Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Desk Officer