

EXTRAORDINARY ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

Date: Thursday, February 13th 2014
Venue: Restaurant Neikid
Address: Wismari 3, Tallinn
Time: 11:30 – 13:00

The Extraordinary Annual Meeting was opened by Mr Ivar Sikk with introducing the two issues on the agenda.

The first issue is the amendment of Annexes A to the Memoranda of Understanding. The amendment contains several changes to the implementation system of the EEA and Norway Grants in Estonia in order to avoid the overlap of functions between the Certifying Authority and the National Focal Point and to manage the funds at an improved level. In order to meet these needs, it is planned that the National Focal Point takes over the functions of the Certifying Authority as well as the functions of the national public entity responsible for the preparation and submission of irregularities report. These changes have already been introduced for the implementation of the Structural Funds, the Audit Authority has given its positive opinion on it and an approval from the European Commission is expected soon. In order to have the same structure and distribution of tasks for both EEA and Norway Grants and Structural Funds in the Ministry of Finance, the same changes have been requested from the Donors.

The second issue is the delegation of the signature of some reports to a lower level in the Memoranda of Understanding. The overall responsibility will still lie on the Head of the National Focal Point.

Mrs Lise Kleven Grevstad replied on the first issue that such a request of the 16th of December has been received and reviewed by the Donors and that the Donors can approve the proposed amendment of Annexes A to the Memoranda of Understanding so that the National Focal Point takes on the tasks of the Certifying Authority and the National Focal Point is designated as the entity responsible for the preparation and submission of irregularity reports. The National Focal Point shall report to the Deputy Secretary General of Fiscal Policy within the Ministry of Finance, who shall continue to act as Head of the National Focal Point. Mrs Grevstad noted that an adequate functional separation of tasks related to payments from the other tasks within the National Focal Point should be ensured and the approval is given on the understanding that the changes shall only come into effect if and when the European Commission approves the proposed corresponding merger for the Structural Funds programming period 2007-2013. It was also recalled that a revised Management and Control system description accompanied by a report and an opinion of the Audit Authority confirming that the implementation system complies with the Regulation and the generally accepted accounting principles, should be submitted as soon as possible, in order to minimize the risk of any interruption to the payment schedule.

Mr Ivar Sikk thanked for the approval and confirmed that the approval of the European Commission of the changes will be forwarded to the Financial Mechanism Office when received. Regarding the requested audit opinion, Mr Sikk proposed that this could be given by the Audit Authority without conducting an additional audit for the EEA and Norway Grants since the changes have already been audited for the Structural Funds and a positive opinion has been given.

Mr Kaur Siruli confirmed that the Audit Authority has conducted an audit of the proposed changes and has found the merging of the Certifying Authority/Paying Authority and the Managing Authority of the Structural Funds reasonable since the overall objective of the two authorities is the same – to control the system. The Audit Authority sees no functional risk in merging the two authorities for the Structural Funds and since the system is the same for the EEA and Norway Grants, the Audit Authority is prepared to give an audit report and opinion according to the article 4.8.3 of the Regulation on merging the Certifying Authority and the National Focal Point based on the audit work already carried out for the proposed changes for the Structural Funds.

Ms Evangelia Bikaki mentioned from the Financial Mechanism Office's side that the submission of the revised description of the management and control systems accompanied by an audit report and opinion along the above lines, including the elements mentioned in article 4.8.3 of the Regulation, could be sufficient to comply with the conditions of the Regulation.

Regarding the second issue on the agenda, Ms Evangelia Bikaki explained that the delegation of the signature of reports is the decision of each Beneficiary State and in the Memoranda of Understanding such detail is not foreseen. Ms Bikaki proposed that if this is necessary for the internal procedures of the Ministry of Finance, the Head of the National Focal Point can send a letter regarding the delegation of the signature of some reports to the Financial Mechanism Office who will take note of such division of tasks.

In conclusion, it was agreed that the approval of the European Commission of the changes will be sent to the Financial Mechanism Office when received together with the letter regarding the delegation of the signature of some reports.

Annex 1

List of participants

	Name	Organisation	Position
1	Ms Lise Kleven Grevstad	Norwegian Embassy	Ambassador
2	Ms Piret Marvet	Norwegian Embassy	Programme Officer
3	Mr Falk Lange	Financial Mechanism Office	Senior Country Officer
4	Ms Evangelia Bikaki	Financial Mechanism Office	Legal Officer
5	Mr Ivar Sikk	Ministry of Finance (MoF)	Deputy Secretary General of Fiscal Policy
6	Ms Karin Viikmaa	MoF, European Union Payments Department	Head of Department
7	Mr Kaur Siruli	MoF, Financial Control Department	Head of Department
8	Ms Kerstin Liiva	MoF, Structural and Foreign Assistance Department	Head of Department
9	Ms Ülle Lobjakas	MoF, Structural and Foreign Assistance Department	Adviser
10	Ms Jana Silaškova	MoF, Structural and Foreign Assistance Department	Chief Specialist