

ANNUAL MEETING 2014 MINUTES

Date: **Wednesday, May 14th 2014**
Venue: **The Three Sisters Hotel**
Address: **Pikk 71/Tolli 2, Tallinn**
Time: **14:30 – 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 welcoming the participants and an adoption of the agenda.

Mr Steinar Hagen opened the meeting from the Donors' side by thanking the National Focal Point for timely presented documents and acknowledging that in Estonia the implementation is running very well and that progress towards reaching the two overall objectives of the Grants is visible. Mr Hagen also commended the National Focal Point for a good cooperation with the FMO and the Norwegian Embassy in Tallinn. Ms Unnur Orradóttir Ramette added that it is good to see that in Estonia the implementation is running smoothly and that funds are being well spent.

Contribution and impact of EEA and Norway Grants to Estonian development needs

Ms Kadri Tali gave an overview of the impact of the Grants at national level, bringing out the strategic link between the programmes and Estonian development needs.

Mr Steinar Hagen said that such an overview of how the Grants fit in the development needs is appreciated and that it is rewarding to see the overall context to the Grants.

Status of implementation

Ms Ülle Lobjakas gave an overview of the status of the implementation of the programmes with a comparison between the situation at the cut-off date of Strategic Reports (the end of 2013) and the situation at beginning of May.

Mr Steinar Hagen thanked for the overview and said that all programmes seem to be progressing well and that the Programme Operators are considered competent. It is important to document results, encourage project level partnerships, use the bilateral funds at programme level and track information on project level in DoRIS. Mr Rune Vistad added that there is a formal requirement of inserting the projects into DoRIS 14 days after the project contract is signed, so there might be a considerable delay in information reaching the FMO. Hence the FMO has set a template for summaries of the results of the Selection Committee for the Programme Operators to send after the meetings, so that the FMO and the Donors can already see the content of the selected projects.

The Donors appreciated the presentation on risk management by the National Focal Point and urged the National Focal Point to include risk management in future Strategic Reports.

Bilateral relations

Ms Ülle Lobjakas gave an overview of the most important developments under bilateral relations in 2013 and of the plans for 2014.

Mr Steinar Hagen commented that in general the donors are satisfied with the development in programmes and that the Donor Programme Partners are pleased with the exchange of experience. Also the ideas for the bilateral fund at national level are good. Ms Unnur Orradóttir Ramette brought out Icelandic main interests for developing bilateral relations: gender programmes, children and youth at risk programmes, teaching swimming.

The Donors asked the National Focal Point to collaborate closely with the Embassy in elaborating proposals for the use of the bilateral fund at national level in the coming months.

Horizontal concerns

Mr Steinar Hagen said that in the Memoranda of Understanding a reference is made to addressing horizontal concerns, the Regulations also mention cross-cutting issues. Reporting on these issues might be a challenge, but it is still important to do that. Mr Rune Vistad added that in Strategic Reports it should be assessed how the programmes are dealing with horizontal concerns, which are in fact about fundamental rights and values. In Estonia, it should be reported how the Russian minority is involved, also how trafficking is being dealt with. The Programme Operators should take horizontal concerns into account when carrying out the calls for proposals and selecting projects.

Ms Ülle Lobjakas acknowledged that the issues are of importance and are being dealt with, but a balance in reporting on these should be found between Annual Programme Reports and Strategic Reports.

Risk management and TI report

The Donors encouraged the National Focal Point to take the recommendations made in the draft Transparency International's report into account in the risk management and monitoring activities implemented by the National Focal Point and the Programme Operators and to further strengthen in their coming Strategic Reports the assessment on the corruption and mismanagement risk as well as propose mitigation measures. The Donors informed also that the results of the Transparency International's reports will be published in the autumn.

The National Focal Point offered their comments to the draft Transparency International's report, in particular:

- National Focal Point does not agree with high risk of the Norway and EEA Grants' programmes due to their size in country context.
- Regarding the high number of pre-defined projects, the National Focal Point is of the opinion that pre-defining rather helps programmes (especially in social fields) to have an impact in the field.
- Regarding the Programme Operators' association with previous corruption cases the National Focal Point does not recognise a need for additional and specific mitigation measures for EEA and Norway Grants. The National Focal Point assumes that management and control systems set up for all the programmes are adequate to prevent new cases.
- In addition to the new anticorruption strategy 2013-2020 already mentioned in the report, last year a new version of the Civil Service Act came into force.
- The National Focal Point informed about a change to the control system of Structural Funds. The Managing Authority (Ministry of Finance) will take over some of the tasks of the Implementing Agency (Ministry of Social Affairs) in coming months. As a result of this reorganisation, verification of payment claims of the Norway Grants programmes EE08, EE09 and EE11 will be moved to the Ministry of Finance as well.
- The National Focal Point has observed most of the selection committees' meetings (so have Donor Programme Partners). The internal management information system is expanded to include the subsystem for the management of the EEA and Norway Grants, which increases transparency.

Approval of the Strategic Reports

The Strategic Reports were approved.

**Annex 1
Agenda of the annual meeting**

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

14 May 2013

Tallinn, Estonia

09:30-10:45 Project visit 1 – NGO projects (Telliskivi 60a)

eGovernance Academy “Open Government Partnership in Estonian Local Governments”,

Linnalabor “Creating a future vision of neighborhood associations in Tallinn in the context of local elections” + “Activating the residents of panel house district Lasnamäe”,

Network of Non-governmental Organizations “Third sector foresight”

11:15-12:15 Project visit 2 – GII + Scholarship (Ehitajate tee 5)

Tallinn University of Technology “Clean mining”

ICD Industries Estonia “Development of an Oil Spill Detection System based on information and laser remote sensing technology”

12:30-13:30 PO presentations (The Three Sisters Hotel, Pikk 71/Tolli 2)

13:30-14:30 Lunch (The Three Sisters Hotel, Pikk 71/Tolli 2)

14:30-16:30 High level meeting (The Three Sisters Hotel, Pikk 71/Tolli 2)

Annex 2

List of participants

	Name	Organisation	Position
1	Mr Steinar Hagen	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Director, Section for Central Europe and the EEA Financial Mechanisms
2	Ms Torill Johansen	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Senior Adviser
3	Mr Christian Grotnes Halvorsen	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Senior Adviser, Information and Press
4	Mrs Lise Kleven Grevstad	Royal Norwegian Embassy	Ambassador
5	Mrs Piret Marvet	Royal Norwegian Embassy	Adviser on EEA/Norway Grants
6	Ms. Unnur Orradóttir Ramette	Icelandic Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Counsellor
7	Mr Rune Vistad	Financial Mechanism Office	Head of Sector
8	Mr Falk Lange	Financial Mechanism Office	Senior Country Officer Estonia
9	Mr Ivar Sikk	Ministry of Finance	Deputy Secretary General of Fiscal Policy
10	Ms Kadri Tali	Ministry of Finance, State Budget Dprtm	Adviser
11	Ms Kerstin Liiva	Ministry of Finance, Structural and Foreign Assistance Dprtm	Head of Department
12	Ms Ülle Lobjakas	Ministry of Finance, Structural and Foreign Assistance Dprtm	Adviser
13	Ms Jana Silaškova	Ministry of Finance, Structural and Foreign Assistance Dprtm	Chief Specialist
14	Ms Tiina Maiberg	Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Counsellor