



## ANNUAL MEETING 2015 MINUTES

Date: **April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2015**

Venue: **Meriton Old Town Garden Hotel**

Address: **Pikk 29/Lai 24, Tallinn**

### **Opening remarks and adoption of the agenda**

The Annual Meeting was opened by the head of the Foreign Assistance Department of the Ministry of Finance of Estonia Ms Kerstin Liiva with welcoming the participants and apologising on behalf of the Deputy Secretary-General Ms Kaie Koskaru-Nelk for not being able to attend the meeting.

Ms Pia Gjesme Holm opened the meeting from the Donors' side by thanking the National Focal Point for organising the meeting and the pre-meeting presentations related to the implementation of the Structural Funds 2014-2020 and the research policy in Estonia. The Donors reiterated their concerns about the limited resources and personnel at the NFP, in spite of the excellent performance of the NFP, and asked the Estonian side to consider ways to strengthen the NFP, also in light of potential preparations for a new mechanism.

### **Strategic reports**

Ms Pia Gjesme Holm thanked the National Focal Point for comprehensive and analytical strategic reports. She brought particularly out the good quality of analysis on development of bilateral relations between Estonia and donor countries. The reports are considered as a good starting point of presenting the outcomes of the Grants. However, in further reports, closer to the end of implementation period, donors would like to see more visible results of the programmes presented in the reports. Both, the Norway Grants Strategic Report 2014 and the EEA Grants Strategic Report 2014 were approved.

### **Status of programmes' implementation**

Ms Ülle Lobjakas gave an overview of the status of the implementation of the programmes with a comparison of commitment and disbursement rates between the cut-off date of the reports, 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014 and 13<sup>th</sup> April 2015. 2014 was a very active year organising the calls of proposals for most of the programmes and by the end of year most of grant decisions were made. Still, last project contracts are to be signed in 2015. The only call for project proposals to be launched in 2015 is a small grant scheme call under the gender equality programme and the amount of the call constitutes less than 5% of the whole programme budget. Given that the great majority of granted projects are in the implementation process there are not many outputs to present yet. Nonetheless, based on the granted project proposals



it can be assumed that most of the expected outcomes will be achieved by the end of the implementation period.

Ms Pia Gjesme Holm informed about the progress of the two programmes which' implementation is not under the responsibility of Estonian Focal Point - the NGO Fund and the Fund for Decent Work and Tripartite Dialogue. From the latter fund 3 Estonian projects were financed, all of them are completed by now. However, more detailed reporting on outcomes achieved is expected in near future. Concerning the NGO fund an audit ordered by the FMO was carried out during the second half of 2014. Although the implementation of the fund showed a good progress, the auditing company brought out several serious findings in administrating the fund. It was agreed that a technical meeting between the NFP and FMO to discuss the findings will be organised soon.

### **Bilateral relations**

During 2014 all the POs were active in using the programme level bilateral relations' funds for fostering bilateral cooperation in their respective fields. As a result of this approximately one-third of all the financed projects are donor partnership projects.

Under the Fund for Bilateral Relations at National Level the cooperation activities between Estonian and Norwegian Swimming Organisations started in 2014 and no bigger events took place in this year. Nevertheless, at the meeting Ms Ülle Lobjakas had a great opportunity to present the results of work started in 2014 as the Estonian version of the Norwegian book "Let's learn to swim" ("Slik lærer du å svømme") was launched at the end of March. The launch was followed by a three-day course for swimming instructors led by one of the authors of book, Mr Per Irgens. The adoption of Norwegian methodology in Estonia is considered to have a valuable effect on the quality of first level swimming teaching, i.e. on becoming a friend with water, and is highly welcomed by different players concerned for water safety. Most certainly several follow-up activities related to swimming associations' cooperation will take place also in 2015.

Since there are considerable savings under the TA Fund, possible reallocation of savings to the Fund for Bilateral Relations was discussed. The NFP informed that in correlation with current use of the TA savings may reach approximately 230,000 euros by the end of implementation period. In light of this the NFP and the Norwegian Embassy in Tallinn have started to look how to broaden the scope of bilateral cooperation and a kick-off seminar about Estonian Norwegian possible cooperation in digital development field (in third countries) was held just two days before the annual meeting. The seminar was considered being successful though it is still too early to present actual plans for further activities.

It was agreed that the bilateral relations fund work plan will be reviewed and in case of necessity updated according to new plans. When the proposal for digital development cooperation is clearer in its details (activities and budget) the NFP will send a TA agreement modification request to the FMO.



### **Horizontal concerns**

Ms Pia Gjesme Holm recognized the improvement of reporting on the horizontal concerns in the reports. She stressed the importance for all the programmes to analyse their input into these issues. In onward reports it is expected that more concrete examples of the influence on end-beneficiaries are presented. Ms Ülle Lobjakas agreed that it will be discussed further with the POs how to improve analyzing and presenting results concerning the horizontal concerns.

### **Risk management**

From the NFP's view, presently, with most of grant decisions made and projects in implementation, there are no evident major risks which could affect the achievement of the objectives of the Grants. Ms Pia Gjesme Holm expressed donors' satisfaction with NFP's approach to the risk management and its reflection in the reports.

In conclusion, both parties agreed that the year ahead has a decisive importance for the successful implementation of the Grants. Both parties are looking forward for continuous good cooperation and for visible results in a year.



## **Annex 1**

### **Agenda**

**22<sup>nd</sup> April 2015, Pikk 29/Lai 24, Tallinn**

**11:00-12:30 Overview of Structural Funds 2014-2020 (Ms Kadri Tali)**

**Overview of Research Policy in Estonia (Mr Taivo Raud)**

**12:30-14:00 Lunch**

**14:00-15:30 Annual meeting**

- Opening remarks, adoption of the agenda
- Discussion of the strategic reports
- Status of programme implementation
- Bilateral relations
- Horizontal concerns
- Risk management
- Closing remarks



## Annex 2

### List of participants of the annual meeting:

	Name	Organisation	Position
1	Ms Pia Gjesme Holm	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway (NMFA)	Deputy Director, Section for Central Europe
2	Ms Signe Engli	NMFA	Senior Adviser, Section for Central Europe
3	Mr Dag Briseid	NMFA	Senior Adviser, Nordic-Baltic Section
4	Mr Dagfinn Sørli	Royal Norwegian Embassy	Ambassador
5	Mr Eirik Mathisen	Royal Norwegian Embassy	Deputy Head of Mission
6	Ms Piret Marvet	Royal Norwegian Embassy	Adviser on EEA/Norway Grants
7	Ms Unnur Orradóttir Ramette	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iceland	Counsellor
8	Ms Ragna Fidjestøl	Financial Mechanism Office (FMO)	Head of Country
9	Mr Falk Lange	FMO	Senior Country Officer for Estonia
10	Ms Kerstin Liiva	Ministry of Finance of Estonia (MoF)	Head of Foreign Assistance Department
11	Ms Ülle Lobjakas	MoF, Foreign Assistance Dprtm	Adviser
12	Ms Marit Maurus	MoF, Foreign Assistance Dprtm	Chief Specialist
13	Ms Miryam Vahtra	MoF, State Budget Dprtm	Chief Specialist
14	Ms Tiina Maiberg	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia	Counsellor

Incl. pre-lunch session and lunch:

15	Ms Kadri Tali	MoF	Deputy Head of the State Budget Department
16	Mr Taivo Raud	Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia	Head of Research Policy Department
17	Mr Ando Leppiman	Ministry of Economy and Communications of Estonia	Deputy Secretary General for Energy and Construction