

**Minutes from the Annual Meeting
Norwegian Financial Mechanism and EEA Financial Mechanism 2009-2014
Białowieża, 1st of June 2016**

Participants:

Donor states' representatives:

Anders Erdal, Chairman of the Financial Mechanism Committee, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Sjur Larsen, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Marit Randsborg, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Karsten Klepsvik, Royal Norwegian Embassy in Poland
Ingrid Norstein, Royal Norwegian Embassy in Poland
Karina Gradowska-Karpińska, Royal Norwegian Embassy in Poland
Andri Júlíusson, Icelandic Embassy in Belgium
Ragna Fidjestøl, Financial Mechanism Office
Rune Vistad, Financial Mechanism Office
Stein Mona, Financial Mechanism Office
Kristine Lunde-Tellefsen, Financial Mechanism Office

Representatives of Poland:

Przemysław Derwich, Director, National Focal Point
Małgorzata Zalewska, Deputy Director, National Focal Point
Anna Cieśla, National Focal Point
I. Agata Szyszko, National Focal Point
Maciej Gałaj, National Focal Point
Aleksandra Guzowska, National Focal Point
Urszula Demidziuk, National Focal Point
Krzysztof Gasparski, National Focal Point
Zuzanna Kucińska, National Focal Point
Jacek Przydróżny, National Focal Point
Natalia Kempa-Paplińska, National Focal Point
Konrad Łaciński, National Focal Point
Justyna Beśka, National Focal Point
Agnieszka Kwiatkowska, National Focal Point
Monika Zawistowska-Wąsik, National Focal Point
Danuta Jakóbczyk, The Certifying Authority
Agnieszka Mroziak, The Audit Authority

1. Opening by the focal point and the donors

The Annual Meeting was opened by Mr Derwich, who greeted the participants and briefly presented the current status of implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism and EEA Financial Mechanism in Poland, as well as a positive assessment of the continuing bilateral cooperation.

Mr Erdal greeted the participants as well and pointed out a good performance of the Financial Mechanisms in Poland. He underlined the importance of extending some of the projects, which was discussed during the previous Annual Meeting in Poland and resulted in positive impact on the whole implementation process. He

also assessed positively the bilateral cooperation, noticing at the same time an increase in ambitions concerning bilateral cooperation for the next financial mechanism.

Mr Ambassador Klepšvik emphasized a significant influence of the EEA and Norway Grants' projects on various areas of life in Poland (including culture in particular) that he observed during his missions around Poland. He also expressed his appreciation of the high level of bilateral relations between Norway and Poland, which was confirmed during the official visits of the Prime Minister Szydło and the President Duda to Norway.

2. Strategic Report

Mr Derwich stated that Strategic Report for the EEA Financial Mechanism and Norwegian Financial Mechanism for 2015 was prepared by the Ministry of Economic Development (NFP) and was positively assessed by the Monitoring Committee. The Strategic Report was submitted on time to the donors via DoRIS. As pronounced by Mr Derwich, this year's report included more detailed information on the Fund for bilateral relations both at the national and at the programme level (according to the recommendation formulated during the previous Annual Meeting).

Mr Erdal expressed his appreciation of the good quality of the Strategic Report, which was a valuable basis for the discussions. He thanked the NFP for adopting the suggestions given during the previous Annual Meeting. It was underlined by the donors' representative, however, that in the future reports the impact-oriented approach as well as a focus on specific flagship projects should be more visible.

Mr Derwich replied that NFP – in the course of time - was more and more experienced in presenting the results through an impact-oriented approach. The Chairman commended the NFP for the way they had solved the request of an impact-focused presentation in the annual meeting and emphasized the expectations of a similar approach to present effects and impacts of the grants in the future.

The donors formally accepted the *Strategic Report on the implementation of the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 and Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 in Poland in 2015*.

3. Status of programme implementation

Ms Zalewska briefly summarized the status of the implementation of the particular programmes, which was widely described in the Strategic Report. As it was underlined by the NFP's representative, the most important tasks in 2015 were (1) to achieve the first results and (2) to optimize the absorption of the funds. The NFP signalled that they will request multiple transfers of programme savings to the bilateral fund at programme level.

The results achieved in different programmes were presented by Ms Kempa-Paplińska.

The donors confirmed that the implementation process is advanced and that the level of risk is considered to be low. Moreover the process is conducted efficiently, which is promising for the future.

The status of the implementation of the programmes directly managed by the donors was also presented.

4. Bilateral relations and Bilateral Fund at National Level

By way of introduction, Mr Derwich emphasized the crucial role of the bilateral initiatives in strengthening the Polish relations with the donors.

In 2015, new ways of implementing projects and further increasing the impact of bilateral projects were observed. Traditional bilateral activities such as study visits and conferences were complemented by workshops, internships and social awareness raising campaigns proposed by the beneficiaries.

The Polish side presented the result-oriented selection of the bilateral projects implemented in 2015 both at the programme (Ms Kempa-Paplińska) and at the national level (Ms Cieśla). The state of implementation of projects scheduled for 2016 within the Bilateral Fund at National Level, as well as the draft work plan for

bilateral relations in 2017, were presented.

Mr Erdal commented subsequently the bilateral initiatives and underlined the importance of the role of and cooperation with the DPPs. He indicated, however, that the number of projects implemented with DPPs was still below the average. Complicated procedures were mentioned as the reason of such situation.

An initial Work Plan for 2017 was adopted. Amendments to the Work Plan will happen through written procedure.

5. Publicity and communication

The main promotional projects of the NFP were presented by Mr Gałaj. It was underlined that the main objective of the NFP was to strengthen the visibility of the brand of the EEA and Norway Grants among the Polish citizens and to attract the attention of a wider range of addressees. This was in turn possible due to the dissemination of information about the funds in an unconventional way (e.g. via the magazine presenting the Grants in a broader context).

Mr Erdal pointed out that the promotional activities had improved a lot, which was impressive. As a recommendation for the future, he suggested publicizing the magazine dedicated to the Grants ('Human') on the NFP's website (also in English).

6. Horizontal concerns

Ms Zalewska underlined the importance of the principles such as good governance, zero tolerance for corruption etc. She also emphasized that the projects implemented under the EEA and Norway Grants were the platform for cooperation and multinational dialogue. The variety of examples of how projects and other initiatives contribute to social inclusion, cooperation and sustainable development can be found in the Strategic Report – as the NFP's representative mentioned.

Mr Erdal affirmed that the same values were equally important for the donors. 'We all have to keep up the values and continue working' – as he said.

7. Closing remarks

Mr Derwich thanked for all the opinions and suggestions formulated during the meeting. He pointed out that the EEA and Norway Grants were implemented with very satisfactory results and were a tool that brought very significant impact to the Polish economy, environment, NGOs etc.

He also expressed a hope for making all the administrative procedures more flexible in the future in order to enable further optimisation of the implementation process.

Mr Erdal said that a solid and stable administration in Poland was a key to success. He underlined that thanks to it i.a. the money were spent on the projects in a proper way and with good results. Bilateral cooperation, as he concluded was also remarkable in case of Poland.