

**Minutes from the Annual Meeting  
on Norwegian Financial Mechanism and EEA Financial Mechanism 2009-2014  
Wrocław, 21<sup>st</sup> of May 2015**

**Participants:**

**Donor states representatives:**

Anders Erdal, Chairman of the Financial Mechanism Committee, Deputy Director General, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Hilde Berit Eide, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Ingrid Norstein, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Stein Inge Nesvåg, Counsellor, Royal Norwegian Embassy  
Unnur Orradóttir Ramette, Counsellor, Icelandic Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Stefán L. Stefánsson, Ambassador, Icelandic Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Stine Andresen, Director, Financial Mechanism Office,  
Ragna Fidjestøl, Head of Country, Financial Mechanism Office  
Rune Vistad, Head of Sector, Financial Mechanism Office  
Andrea Pietras, Country Officer, Financial Mechanism Office

**Representatives of Poland:**

Przemysław Derwich, Acting Director, National Focal Point  
Małgorzata Zalewska, Deputy Director, National Focal Point  
Urszula Demidziuk, National Focal Point  
Maciej Gałaj, National Focal Point  
Krzysztof Gasparski, National Focal Point  
Zuzanna Kucińska, National Focal Point  
Jacek Przydróżny, National Focal Point  
Piotr Baczyk, National Focal Point  
Justyna Beška, National Focal Point  
Justyna Lasota, National Focal Point  
Wojciech Nawrocki, National Focal Point  
Danuta Jakóbczyk, The Certifying Authority  
Agnieszka Mrozik, 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 actual status of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism and EEA Financial Mechanism in Poland.

Mr Erdal greeted the participants as well and pointed out good and very professional implementation performance in Poland.

The agenda of the meeting was approved.

**2. Status of the Strategic Report for 2014**

Mr Derwich stated that Strategic Report for the EEA Financial Mechanism and Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014 (EEA FM and NFM 2014) was prepared by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development and gained positive opinion by the Monitoring Committee. The Strategic Report was also submitted on time to the Donors

via DoRIS.

Mr Erdal commended the NFP for the very good, detailed and analytical Strategic Report, which was of good quality and is a useful tool for reporting and data collection. He thanked the NFP for taking comments from 2014 into account, for example regarding reporting on horizontal issues.

The Donors asked to summarise in future reports areas where strongest bilateral progress has been made; to note in the section on partnership programmes and projects any bilateral successes in programmes, and to reflect on the intensity of cooperation resulting from open calls in specific programmes or programme areas. Moreover, an evaluation plan is to be included in the next report.

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

### **3. Bilateral relations and Bilateral Fund at National Level**

Mr Derwich informed that in total 17 events were implemented in 2014. It constitutes approx. 17% of the total allocation. From the beginning of the implementation of the Fund ca. 30% of total allocation was spent by the end of 2014. Thematic areas of the Fund concerned issues such as: paternity, counteracting hate speech, urban policy, gender equality, justice, counteracting domestic violence, penitentiary system and environment protection. Moreover, he mentioned the biggest event financed from the Bilateral Fund in the previous year which was a DiverCITY conference in Wrocław.

Next Ms Demidziuk presented briefly bilateral activities foreseen for 2016. The NFP informed that according to the information received from the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they are not able to implement bilateral projects in 2016.

Mr Erdal underlined the Grants' contribution to strengthening bilateral relations and noted a willingness on both sides for expanding bilateral cooperation between Poland and Donors for example in the area of research, innovation, energy and climate change. Mr Erdal mentioned the NFP's and PO's strong efforts in implementing bilateral initiatives and recalled successful bilateral projects in 2014 such as the DiverCITY conference and the conference on the Polish community in Norway organized in Oslo. The Chairman underlined that the Donors will come up with reserve activities, like a proposal for cooperation between NUPI and PISM, cooperation on Ukraine as recently mentioned at the round table discussion and others. Mr Przemysław Derwich informed the Norwegian side that a potential cooperation with Ukraine requires consultations with the Polish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The Donors approved the work plan for 2016 under the fund for bilateral relations at national level.

### **4. Status of programme implementation**

Ms Zalewska stressed that the year 2014 was crucial as there were open calls carried out and projects were selected. It was underlined that more than 10 000 applications were submitted and more than 1 000 were granted. This difference showed high interest among potential beneficiaries and how much resources could have been absorbed by Poland if the available allocation for Poland was higher.

Ms Zalewska thanked for the donors' approval of last year's reallocation of funds within programmes and recent shift of funds from the budget heading on the reserve for exchange rate losses towards budget categories aimed at financing projects.

As far as the disbursement was concerned, it was mentioned that the amount requested from the donor side exceeded 50% of the total allocation for Poland, more than EUR 250 million. It was explained that in the Strategic Report this amount was smaller due to the fact that part of the resources (about EUR 60 million) have been received by the Polish side in the beginning of 2015.

Additionally, main features of each programme and the progress obtained, as well as risks were presented. In general the donors' representatives shared the NFP's positive assessment of the implementation of each programme including in general good progress in the implementation of bilateral funds and raised only minor comments to the majority of the programmes. Moreover, the Donors commended the PO on the excellent awareness campaign under PL02, underlined the good cooperation between KS and the Association of Polish Cities under PL06 and emphasised the very good expected results under the PL12 programme. Both sides noted a planned modification of the bilateral fund under the PL07 and PL13 programmes. A proposal for a new pre-defined project under PL08 is to be assessed by the Donors.

The Donors reported on good progress of directly contracted programmes (PL05, PL18) and encouraging results of the PA22 programme in Poland. For PL05 the Donors also praised the independence and positive experience for civil society of directly contracting the Fund Operator.

The following programmes were discussed more in detail:

#### PL04

Ms Zalewska informed about the present situation in the programme due to the withdrawal of two projects from industrial call. As a result of the changed investment plans, which the FP cannot influence, two substantial beneficiaries decided to withdraw. Consequently, the total amount of saving in the industrial call is approximately 10 mln EUR. Possible scenarios and initial solutions were discussed during the videoconference in which the representatives of FMO, FP and PO took part. Mr Rune Vistad underlined that the PL04 programme is the most important EEA/NO Grant programme in Poland. He recalled the donors' strong emphasis on achieving good results of CO2 emission reduction within this programme also given that the funds are reallocated from the withdrawn Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) programme. Mr Vistad emphasised that maximum CO2 reduction is to be the primary criteria for the choice of projects financed from the savings. It was said that the decision belongs to the Polish side whether the savings will be used within a new call for proposal or whether they will be used for already approved projects. Ms Zalewska informed that taking into consideration the feasibility of suggested proposals in the limited time of programme implementation, it would be justified to take parallel actions in order to finance already approved projects, also providing information on their CO2 reduction, and to organise the call for proposals. Mr Anders Erdal mentioned that the CO2 reduction is important from the political point of view. It was agreed to conclude this discussion during further bilateral talks.

#### PL06

Mr Derwich, mentioned that the city of Łódź, a new programme partner, searches for the city-partner from Norway, however, there is a problem to establish a formal cooperation. The PO cooperates with KS, the Association of Norwegian local and regional authorities, in order to find a partner for Łódź – the third most dense populated city in Poland.

### **5. Risk management**

Mr Erdal, informed that the Financial Mechanism Committee decided to open up for the possibility to request extensions in line with article 7.14.4 of the Regulation until 30 April 2017. It was mentioned that only projects which fulfil certain criteria can be considered for extensions: the project contract is signed; an updated Project Level Information is in DoRIS database by 15 September 2015; a request is received from the NFP by 30 September with a firm commitment to successfully conclude projects within the extended period. The donors may ask for full reimbursement of the costs, if the projects are not reported as complete in the final programme report. It was also said that the NFP will be provided with an official letter about this matter and further explanations on the procedure for requesting extensions.

### **6. Publicity and communication**

Ms Demidziuk presented the activities undertaken by the NFP in 2014 regarding promotion of the EEA and Norway Grants in Poland. She mentioned 2 clip campaigns – in the public transport and on the Internet, a city game organized for young people and story-telling training for the Operators and a nationwide photography contest called "Photo Grants Challenge" organized by the NFP in 6 Polish cities.

Ms Demidziuk presented also the NFP's plans for 2015. One of the projects planned is a series of summer, promotional events. The concept is based on a mobile pavilion divided into 3 zones: health, science, taste. Each zone corresponds to one of the Grants' area. Another is promotional action focused on the culture area through partnership with The National Opera in Warsaw. The EEA Norway Grants will be an official partner of the inauguration of the artistic season 2015/16. The NFP is also planning to implement a launching of the nationwide magazine dedicated to the Grants, distributed for free throughout Poland every 3 months. And in the end of the year the initiation of a CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) campaign is planned. The implementation of the above activities depend on the results of the tender procedure.

Mr Erdal commended the NFP for the innovative communication activities carried out in Poland. He encouraged to more actively use social media and story-telling to show results of the projects. He encouraged the NFP to continue pursuing innovative ideas and plans for communication of the Grants while at the same time ensuring that the promotion of activities entails clear messages related to the grants and the activities funded by the grants, including the bilateral components. The Donors would like to see more information about project results in English in the future. Moreover, the Donors suggested a map of all projects implemented in Poland.

## **7. Horizontal concerns**

Ms Małgorzata Zalewska, Deputy Director of the NFP, informed that the horizontal issues are important for the Polish side. It was reflected in the Strategic Report. Mr Anders Erdal, Chairman of the Financial Mechanism Committee, thanked for this and stressed the role of horizontal issues within the Financial Mechanisms.

## **8. Closing remarks**

Mr Derwich closed the meeting with expressing the hope for the continuation of the effort that already has been put. He underlined that all should expect good results to discuss in the future. He thanked all the participants for the effort in implementing the Grants with such a success.

Mr Erdal thanked all the participants for the year of good work as well as for organizing the Annual Meeting. He underlined the progress in development of bilateral relations and praised the advanced state of implementation in Poland.