



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA  
GOVERNMENT OFFICE FOR DEVELOPMENT  
AND EUROPEAN COHESION POLICY



# FINAL PROGRAMME REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EEA FINANCIAL MECHANISM PROGRAMME 2009–2014 IN SLOVENIA

**Programme name and  
number:**

**EEA FINANCIAL MECHANISM PROGRAMME  
SI02**

**Prepared by:**

**Programme Operator  
Government Office for Development and  
European Cohesion Policy**

## 1. Executive summary

Why was the programme needed?

Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy (GODC) acts as the Programme Operator for the EEA Financial Mechanism Programme.

The EEA Financial Mechanism Programme covers three programme areas:

- Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, with the objective Halt the loss of biodiversity,
- Conservation and Revitalisation of Cultural and Natural Heritage, with the objective Cultural and natural heritage for future generations safeguarded, conserved and made publicly accessible,
- Environmental Monitoring and Integrated Planning and Control with the objective Improved compliance with environmental legislation.

To halt the loss of biodiversity the Government of Republic of Slovenia in 2007 adopted the Natura 2000 Site Management Programme (2007–2013) defining conservation objectives and measures for each species and/or habitat type at each Natura 2000 site. This Natura 2000 programme defined measures for nature conservation, forestry, agriculture, fisheries and hunting, water management, regional development, and monitoring and research. The implementation of the Natura 2000 programme was, however, subject to available funds, and better funding brings better implementation. The challenges of the programme area Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services were therefore to improve the conservation status of habitat types and species, especially in agricultural (grassland) and wetland areas, and some forest habitat types, and to enlarge monitoring and surveys of species and habitat types. To achieve better results the programme area was focused on a maximum of three groups of habitats (extensive grasslands, wetlands, endangered forest types), building on existing data and previous conservation efforts, and implementing all four groups of activities (initial monitoring and inclusion in data portals, on-site conservation activities, monitoring for verification of success, and information and education activities). Target groups were researchers and technical nature conservation experts, public institutions involved in nature conservation and sustainable use of natural resources (forestry, agriculture, and water management), NGOs and local decision makers.

Challenges and needs of the area cultural heritage that were tackled by the program: i) processing tourist attractions with cultural traditions, which will combine both tourist and cultural offer, ii) upgrade the quality and enhance the population of identification with the cultural heritage at the local level as a foundation of cultural diversity, and iii) identity, and preserve knowledge and skills necessary for the maintenance of cultural heritage and the development of its new creativity. Additional challenge for sustainable tourism development connected to natural heritage sites was to provide the infrastructure for visitors which also protect natural heritage from being damaged. A valuable natural feature should be viewed and visited in a manner that does not threaten the existence of a valuable natural feature nor its protection.

What did the programme achieve?

Nine projects selected under the call for proposals and one pre-defined project were implemented within the Programme. The selected projects promoted collaboration and pursued the principle of sustainability. They made significant contribution to advancement in the areas of biodiversity and ecosystem services, conservation and revitalisation of cultural and natural heritage and the environment. The results and outcomes of the projects that were implemented contributed to the development of different regions across Slovenia.

All projects were completed by January 2017. All funded activities were in line with the general objectives of the Programme. More specifically, all planned activities were “successfully finished, goals met, some of them even surpassed”.

Four selected projects (three of them in regions with development constraints) in the area Biodiversity and ecosystem services aimed to contribute to the implementation of effective on-site measures targeted to improve the conservation status of 25 species and habitat types that were in an unfavourable conservation status. Improved conservation status (as defined in the Article 1 (e) and 1 (i) of the EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EC) means improved long-term natural distribution or structure and functions or the long-term survival of typical species for a habitat type and for the species improved distribution and abundance of its populations. Information and education activities were part of each project to ensure cooperation of key stakeholders and local communities.

Both outputs were achieved in the area Natural heritage; 3 natural heritage sites (one belonging to the coastal region and two to the alpine region) which are important from the tourism and visitor perspectives were addressed in two selected projects. New public infrastructure was established in a way that connects environmental protection and interpretation of the natural values attached to the sites, and at the same time improves public access in an environmentally friendly way and takes visitor experience to the next level.

Funding under the Programme in the area Cultural heritage helped restore and revitalize three cultural monuments of national importance whose visibility increased and number of visitors increased for more than 90 % thanks to the developed programmes on the importance and presentation of cultural heritage.

How were bilateral relations strengthened?

Cooperation with Donor State institutions at the programme and project level contributed to the exchange of knowledge, experience and good practices and facilitated strengthening of bilateral relations between Slovenia and the Donor States. At the project level project promoters and their project partners contributed to strengthening bilateral relations between Slovenia and the Donor States, in particular in light of the fact that 50% of all programme-related projects were implemented in cooperation with donor project partners. Furthermore, additional funds were available from the fund for bilateral relation. With this regard two calls for proposals under bilateral cooperation were launched and 5 activities were implemented. For example, bilateral conference was organized at one of the Natura 2000 sites. The partnerships forged and friendships made will undoubtedly lead to further cooperation in numerous areas in the future.

What will be the impact of the programme?

Positive effects of the EEA Financial Mechanism Programme 2009-2014 will persist after the funding period at the bilateral, national, programme and project level. As much as 30 per cent of all projects reported that they planned to continue cooperating with project partners from donor countries. Cooperation will continue in different fields and in planned future projects. The projects also plan to sustain project results after their completion. In the area Biodiversity and ecosystem services, three projects resulted in development of further project activities for proactive conservation of endangered Natura species and habitat types at Natura 2000 sites (Goričko, Ljubljansko barje and Pohorje) with a more or less the same partnership structure as established for the EEA project implementation.

Once the sustainability of outcomes and outputs at the project level is ensured, the impacts at the programme and national level become sustainable as well.

## 2. Programme area developments

The SI02 programme covers three areas (i.e. Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, Conservation and Revitalisation of Cultural and Natural Heritage, Environmental Monitoring and Integrated Planning and Control) that are essential for stimulating and promoting green, sustainable and creative potential of our country. In order to achieve positive changes in these areas it is necessary to provide long-term support for activities that aim at raising awareness of the importance and presentation of the natural and cultural heritage, preservation of biodiversity and for necessary investments in infrastructure. Since the programme and project implementation period was relatively short, it cannot be expected that significant and long-lasting results are achieved in such a short time period.

The changed development context of Slovenia and a new global situation required preparation of a new, long-term strategy for the country. The Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted Slovenian Development Strategy 2030 in December 2017 which outlines the new long-term national development framework with the overarching goal "Quality of Life for All". The strategy sets a new foundation for future development of Slovenia. The main goal, i.e. quality of life for all will be pursued through a balanced economic, social and environmental development that generates the conditions and opportunities for present and future generations.

The SI02 programme was designed in line with national priorities in the areas which was supported under the programme. It was very successful as regards the achievement of programme outputs and outcomes. Specific programme area developments are described below in more detail.

### **Environmental Monitoring and Integrated Planning and Control**

The programme area saw the implementation of the pre-defined project 'Modernization of Spatial Data Infrastructure to Reduce Risks and Impacts of Floods'. The project was successfully implemented by the project team from the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning (MESP), and Surveying and Mapping Authority of the Republic of Slovenia (SMA) in cooperation with project partners of the Norwegian Mapping Authority (Statens kartverk) and the National Land Survey of Iceland (Landmælingar Íslands). The project especially supported balanced regional development, improvement of spatial management, and mitigation of risks of natural disasters.

The main objective of the project was to provide grounds for better policy-making and contribute to better policy decisions in matters which have a direct impact on spatial development and environment, while respecting international standards and provisions of EC Directive INSPIRE. The overall goals and challenges of the pre-defined project were to facilitate water management and reduce flood risks and impacts through the establishment of vertical component of the state coordinate system, improvement of Slovenian geoid and spatial information on topography and hydrography, and increased compliance of data and network services with the INSPIRE standards.

Slovenia as a mountainous subalpine country experiences frequent floods. In the past 25 years, floods have caused annual damage of about €75 million; the indirect economic damage is estimated to more than €100 million annually. The floods in 2007 affected 50 municipalities, in 2010 60% of Slovenian municipalities. Frequency and intensity of heavy rains and floods is increasing, so is also direct flood damage. Only in 2014 the direct flood damage in Slovenia was €250 million.

Threats and damage triggered by floods have exposed the Slovenian government which was obliged to react not only in immediate actions of crisis response and disaster relief, but also in systematic

flood prevention actions. A step towards disaster risk reduction was also the project "Modernization of spatial data infrastructure to reduce risks and impacts of floods". The project represents a shift from reactive crisis management and disaster relief to risk prevention. Its long-term goal is facilitating water management and reducing flood risks and impacts with establishment and supply of relevant and standardized data.

Main developments in the area of environmental monitoring are part of a longer process, encompassing activities that have started within the project. Slovenian infrastructure for spatial information has been upgraded by making existing national data (topographic, hydrographical metadata, data sets and network services) compliant with the EC INSPIRE Directive requirements. The pre-defined project promoted and speeded up the establishment of the national spatial data infrastructure (NSDI) in Slovenia, and on multiple occasions raised awareness of how necessary cooperation with all stakeholders participating in NSDI in Slovenia actually is.

The project outcomes support or directly implement strategies and requirements of legislation (both EU and Slovenian), support administrative (local spatial planning, development planning) and other measures (construction) in reducing flood risks and damage from repetitive flooding which may cause damage to infrastructure, buildings, health, environment; additionally, the project helped speed up and support on-going and planned efforts and investments of the Surveying and Mapping Authority of the Republic of Slovenia (SMA), while taking into account budget cuts at the state and SMA level, which would result in prolonging the implementation of activities implemented within the project and increasing the risk of significant damage caused by potential floods in the near future (delay in realizing immediate flood prevention measures, existence of inappropriate spatial development plans of local communities).

The grant and the partnerships with Norwegian and Icelandic professionals significantly contributed to project management, intermediate professional decisions, and final results, and helped raise awareness of the SDI in which cooperation between stakeholders in the area of implementation of the Inspire Directive as a standardization framework and as a system of authoritative data is a prerequisite. The grant, the partnership and the achieved inter-organizational cooperation form a basis without which Slovenia certainly could not and would not have made the progress it actually made in this relatively short period of project duration.

### **Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services**

Slovenia is one of the EU countries with the highest biodiversity in Europe (UNEP – WCMC Biodiversity index 2001). This high biodiversity is reflected in the high proportion of the Natura 2000 network, a legal instrument of the EU for conservation of biodiversity features in the Union's interest – i.e. species and habitat types of European importance. Slovenia has designated 355 Natura 2000 sites covering 7,684 km<sup>2</sup> or 38% of the country, which is the highest rate in the EU (terrestrial). Forests cover 71% of Slovenia's Natura 2000 network, around 20 per cent are in-use agricultural areas, the most important among them being extensive meadows, while continental waters represent just over 1% of the total area of the network, but their importance for the condition of the network is nevertheless vital. The rest of the Natura network is represented by human settlements, rocky and high alpine areas. In many sites the conservation status of these species and habitat types is good or exceptional compared to other EU member states, but some are in an unfavourable conservation status. Most of the habitat types and species in an unfavourable conservation status are found on agricultural land and wetlands, some of them also in the lowland floodplain forests and specialised forest habitats. The conservation status of about a third of Natura species was unknown due to insufficient data, therefore monitoring and surveys of those species were also made eligible project activities.

The programme focused on the areas included in the Natura 2000 network (also pre-defined among the Programme's indicators), a legal instrument of the EU for the conservation of biodiversity features of Union's interest. The outcomes were best achieved by focusing on the wider habitats within the Natura 2000 network with the highest need for improvement of the conservation status of Natura habitat types and species - grasslands, wetlands, and some forest habitat types. Monitoring and surveys of species and habitat types are necessary to effectively implement measures and track the effects afterwards. The strategy was to extend the scope of the existing monitoring and surveys.

Programme outputs focused on the improvement of the conservation status of habitat types and species in an unfavourable conservation status, especially in agricultural (grassland) and wetland areas, and some forest habitat types, and on expanding of monitoring and surveys of species and habitat types. Output indicators were therefore designed so as to reflect the improvement of the conservation status. All output indicators have been achieved; a more detailed description is available in chapter 3.

The implementation of this sub-programme started in 2014, with project implementation starting in 2015. The project implementation was an important milestone in terms of putting in place a proactive approach to nature conservation in Slovenia. At the policy level already the sub-programme implementation supported the development of proactive habitat conservation, and led to ring-fencing the resources for habitat conservation in the scope of EU funding. A particularly big step was the inclusion of proactive habitat conservation in the Operational Programme for the Implementation of the EU Cohesion Policy 2014 – 2020 which is supported by the European Regional Development Fund.

These developments in nature conservation have had positive influence on other developments in the country. Well-preserved biodiversity represents a great potential for Slovenia, especially for the development of high-quality eco-tourism and sustainable high-quality food production. With a large increase of tourists in Slovenia in 2017 this potential is becoming more explored, and efforts for further development of visitor infrastructure (dealt with in the sub-programme Conservation and revitalisation of natural heritage) try to promote this as a sustainable form of use of biodiversity.

### **Conservation and revitalisation of cultural and natural heritage**

In Slovenia, natural heritage accounts for a substantial part of the nature conservation sector. However, as resources have become more limited recently, nature conservation has been focused more on achieving the goals of the Natura 2000 network. The nature conservation sector tried to provide other financial sources for natural heritage, especially from the EU Interreg, National Climate Change Funding Programme<sup>1</sup> and the tourism sector. Natural heritage which is publicly accessible also contributes to the Slovenian tourism sector which has been strongly promoting Slovenia as the Green Destination<sup>2</sup> since 2016. Tourism sector principally recognises well-preserved nature as an important part of the tourism offer; on the other hand, the new Sustainable Development Strategy for Slovenian Tourism 2017-2021 focuses on classical issues such as increase in currency inflow, tourist stays, overnights, new accommodation facilities and employment<sup>3</sup>. This means that the pressure on nature from the tourism is expected to increase also in the future.

The EEA Programme with the two selected projects of visitor infrastructure and sustainable mobility indirectly supported efforts to gain funding for sustainable mobility in protected areas from the Climate Change Funding Programme. Additionally, the EEA Programme indirectly contributed to the

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<sup>1</sup> Ordinance on the Climate Change Funding Programme for 2017 and 2018, <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ODLO1878>

<sup>2</sup> Slovenian Tourist Board 2016, <https://www.slovenia.info/en/press-centre/press-releases/7076-slovenia-has-become-the-first-green-destination-in-the-world>

<sup>3</sup> Government of the Republic of Slovenia 2017, [http://www.vlada.si/en/media\\_room/newsletter/slovenia\\_weekly/news/article/sustainable\\_development\\_strategy\\_for\\_slovenian\\_tourism\\_2017\\_2021\\_60442/](http://www.vlada.si/en/media_room/newsletter/slovenia_weekly/news/article/sustainable_development_strategy_for_slovenian_tourism_2017_2021_60442/)

inclusion of natural heritage into the new tourism strategy, explicitly by making it an important tourism-related issue, and implicitly through the planned investment of tourist taxes in the visitor infrastructure<sup>4</sup>.

The Programme proposal put preservation of cultural heritage, with associated national interest and numerous social, environmental and economic benefits, at the centre of action in numerous legislative and development documents. The fundamental strategic document of Slovenian cultural policy is the National Programme for Culture which defines the principles, objectives, priorities and measures which are expected to stimulate development of individual and group creativity in the Republic of Slovenia in the area of culture, provide free, independent and dynamic cultural creation, protection of Slovenian cultural heritage and tradition, develop cultural diversity and enhance cultural exchange between Slovenia and the world. The basic national act establishing an integrated system of cultural heritage conservation is the Cultural Heritage Protection Act.

The EEA Financial Mechanism Programme proposal stated that, based on the draft National Programme for Culture 2012–2015, one of the goals of this programme was the restoration of the most endangered cultural monuments in Slovenia; the stated objective was largely realized through the support from the EEA Financial Mechanism Programme.

Resolution on the 2014-2017 National Programme for Culture was adopted in November 2013, during the implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism Programme; part of its measures were aimed at preserving and protecting cultural heritage. The Republic of Slovenia takes pride in rich and diverse cultural heritage, and ever since the beginning of May 2013 more than 29,300 heritage units have been registered in the Register of immovable cultural heritage, of which 300 are cultural monument of national importance and 7,975 of local importance. The tasks of cultural heritage protection are carried out by the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia.

The funding intended for the protection of cultural heritage was made available by other sources as well during the preparation and implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism Programme, especially the European funding. The Ministry of Culture was actively involved in the implementation of the European Cohesion Policy in the framework of the Operational Programme for Strengthening Regional Development Potential 2007-2013. Despite the fact that in the programming period 2014–2020 part of the European Cohesion Policy funds is intended for the implementation of projects under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture, funds are not directly earmarked for the renovation of cultural monuments. Part of the funds under the cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation is dedicated for the preservation and protection of natural and cultural heritage.

Funding under the programme in the area Cultural heritage helped restore and revitalize three cultural monuments of national importance whose visibility increased and number of visitors significantly grew thanks to the developed programmes on the importance and presentation of cultural heritage. These activities significantly contributed to the achievement of the objective of the programme area “Cultural and natural heritage for future generations safeguarded and conserved and made publicly accessible”, and were at the same time in line with the goals defined in the National Programme for Culture 2014–2017.

### **3. Reporting on Programme outputs**

The Programme covered three programme areas: Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, Conservation and Revitalisation of Cultural and Natural Heritage and Environmental Monitoring and Integrated

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<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Economic Development and Technology 2017, [http://www.mgrt.gov.si/fileadmin/mgrt.gov.si/pageuploads/12-12-2017-KONCNO\\_STRATEGIJA\\_TURIZEM\\_popravek\\_za\\_splet\\_9.10.2017.pdf](http://www.mgrt.gov.si/fileadmin/mgrt.gov.si/pageuploads/12-12-2017-KONCNO_STRATEGIJA_TURIZEM_popravek_za_splet_9.10.2017.pdf)

Planning and Control. Ten projects were implemented under the Programme, of which nine were selected under a call for proposals and one was pre-defined.

### **Environmental Monitoring and Integrated Planning and Control**

One pre-defined project (SI02-0002) was implemented in the programme area Environmental Monitoring and Integrated Planning and Control. The output indicators set for monitoring the progress of the project have been fulfilled; some indicator values have been surpassed. All planned activities have been successfully finished and all goals met.

The reason behind successful implementation was a well-developed project plan which was coordinated and modified during more than 40 project team meetings held during project implementation. The partnership has proven to be beneficial and necessary to get directions in cases of uncertainty and to raise confidence of the Slovenian project team.

The immediate goals achieved were establishment of quality geodetic reference frame and of standardized topographic data and network services for provision of data and information. The objective of the project goals has been achieved with improvement of the quality of geodetic reference framework and ensuring its compliance with the requirements of the EC INSPIRE directive. Project also resulted in new quasi-geoid of territory of Slovenia with sub-decimeter accuracy. Newly developed topographic data model has been established compliant to EU INSPIRE specifications and all existing information of the topography (buildings, infrastructure, and river network) was migrated to the new topographic database. Only 10% of new topographic data were newly collected from aerial photography within project, but for the rest already a project has been formed and data for the whole territory of Slovenia to be collected. In a parallel with the project LIDAR scanning project of 5 points per m<sup>2</sup> was finished resulting in high-quality DTM data. Within the project LIDAR data distribution services were implemented. For the provision of data to municipalities and expert users INSPIRE compliant and publicly available network services for discovery and transfer of the spatial data were established. This creates a high quality and reliable data and data provision services for flood risk assessment procedures and implementation of flood protection measures and enables both state and local level planning of spatial development in a manner they can avoid creation of new risks. All spatial data and services product specifications comply with European standards (EUREF, INSPIRE) therefore interoperability and cross border exchangeability is assured.

The output indicator Measured normal level of high-order networks – No of benchmarks, which refers to the establishment of a modern, European-compliant national geodetic reference system, has been surpassed. A total of about 1,800 km of levelling has been done, levelling network of high order of accuracy has been adjusted, and 2,030 benchmarks have determined normal heights in the new Slovenian height system.

As new network was initially planned, it should consist of 13 to 15 levelling loops in the total length of about 1800 km and of 1500 benchmarks. Within the project an expertise was prepared which has shown that on mountainous areas it is reasonable to install several more benchmarks per km of line. Therefore, the density of the benchmarks is slightly higher as planned. Additionally the final result includes also benchmarks on the polygons that form connections with neighbouring countries. They were re-calculated and adjusted in a system of normal heights so can be added to indicators. All of this affects the exceeded value of the indicator.

The new topographic database structure (Inspire-compliant) and new database management system have been prepared. The existing 1,950 sheets of topographic data from existing database structure have been migrated to the new, INSPIRE compliant, database structure. Data capture rules were renewed and newly collected data have been included to the new database structure. Into the new database were included also the data which were collected in the period between beginning of the

programme and actual beginning of the project and this increase the achieved indicators. The coverage of the territory of Slovenia now stands at 2,430 map sheets at scale 1:5,000.

The indicator Coverage of Slovenia with fully Inspire-compliant hydrographic data has been met. The hydrographic data for 320 map sheets have been included in the newly established topographic database. Additionally, data capture of hydrographic data for the rest of Slovenia has been completed, with the data included in the new topographic database; this means that entire Slovenian territory is covered with fully Inspire-compliant data.

Inspire network services for topographic data are being promoted, and are prepared in accordance with the European Location Framework recommendations.

Network services developed within the project was fully in line with INSPIRE principles and also in accordance with all recommendations defined within European Location Framework (ELF) project, where SMA was also participating as member of EuroGeographics. European Location Framework (ELF) project. Launched in March 2013, the project runs until October 2016 to deliver a pan-European cloud platform and web services to build on the existing work of the INSPIRE Directive and enable access to harmonised data in cross border applications. More detailed description of recommendations for technical interoperability of topographical data could be find at ELF project web page <http://elfproject.eu/>.

Description of overachieved indicator for INSPIRE network services for topographic data: During the realisation of the project it was decided to fulfil 11 network services instead of planned 10. Reason for overachieved was related with decision to develop INSPIRE network services for all themes where topographic data are involved. So instead of 10 planned there were developed 11. INSPIRE compliant network services. Results are available at WMS servers for web services <http://prostor4.gov.si/ows2-m-pub/wms?> and at WFS servers for web services <http://prostor4.gov.si/ows2-pub/wfs>

Output	Output indicator	Indicator value		
		Baseline	Target	Total achieved
Establishment of a modern National Geodetic Reference System compliant with ETRS	Measured normal level of high-order networks – No of benchmarks	0	1500	2,030 benchmarks
Establishment of a topographic database with respect to INSPIRE Implementing Rules	Extended coverage of Slovenia with topographic data	1,950 sheets	2,280 sheets	+ 480 sheets = 2,430 sheets
Inspire-compliant hydrography dataset	Coverage of Slovenia with fully Inspire-compliant hydrographic data	0	320 sheets	+ 320 sheets = 320 sheets

Components of NSDI in accordance with INSPIRE requirements	INSPIRE network services for topographic data	0	10	+ 11 = 11
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### Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

Programme outputs focused on improvement of conservation status of habitat types and species in an unfavourable conservation status in Natura 2000 sites, especially in agricultural (grassland) and wetland areas, and some forest habitat types. One programme output was to expand monitoring and surveys of species and habitat types. Output indicators were set in a way that they reflect the improvement of this conservation status. They are listed in the table below. For all indicators their expected increase has been achieved.

Four selected projects (three of them in regions with development constraints) aimed to contribute to the implementation of effective on-site measures targeted to improve the conservation status of 25 species and habitat types that were in an unfavourable conservation status. Within these projects adequate management (measures requested by the Natura 2000 management programme) was secured on low input (extensive) meadows, wetlands and flooded forests within Natura 2000 sites hosting important populations of Natura 2000 species and habitat types in unfavourable conservation status. Areas, where adequate management was secured, were selected, as a matter of principle, where the area is important for a habitat type and habitat of several species, and thus overlap. Nett 618 ha of meadows were secured, where this is important especially for 4 grassland habitat types, 4 meadow butterflies and one meadow bird. 37 ha of wetlands (nett) were secured, where this is important especially for 3 wetland habitat types and one wetland plant species. In forests adequate management has been secured through implementation of measures and/or inclusion of measures in forest management plans, in total on 8,210 ha nett. Improvement was targeted for 3 forest habitat types, 2 bird species and 7 other animal species. Information and education activities were part of each project to ensure cooperation of key stakeholders and local communities. Three projects resulted in development of further project activities for proactive conservation of endangered Natura species and habitat types at these Natura 2000 sites (Goričko, Ljubljansko barje and Pohorje) with a more or less the same partnership structure as established for the EEA project implementation.

Another output was increasing parameters for determining conservation status of grassland and/or forest and/or wetland species (distribution area, population size) and/or habitat types. Projects were expected to increase the number of Natura 2000 species / habitat types monitored and share of these species / habitat type covered by monitoring. The number of newly monitored Natura 2000 species (no habitat types were included in approved projects) slightly surpassed the expected indicator value (13 instead of expected 6). This can be explained by a high number of research / monitoring institutions being project partners. Their basic interest is monitoring activity; as a result, monitoring was included in every project and was successfully implemented.

Output	Output indicator	Indicator value		Total achieved*
		Baseline	Target	
Adequate management (measures requested by the Natura 2000 management programme) is secured	Surface (area) of measures targeting grassland and /or forest species /	19,600 ha meadows	20,180 ha meadows	20,218 ha meadows
		252,540 ha forests	(+580 ha)	= +618 ha

on low input (extensive) meadows and / or protective or flooded forests within Natura 2000 sites hosting important populations of Natura 2000 species / habitat types	habitat types		260,040 ha forests (+7,500 ha)	260,750 ha forests = +8,210 ha
Adequate management (measures requested by the Natura 2000 management programme) is secured on wetlands within Natura 2000 sites hosting important populations of Natura 2000 species / habitat types	Surface (area) of measures targeting wetland species / habitat types	670 ha	700 ha / +30 ha	707 ha / +37 ha
Parameters for determining conservation status of grassland and/or forest and/or wetland species (distribution area, population size) and/or habitat types (are being monitored	Number of Natura 2000 species / habitat types monitored and share of these species / habitat type covered by monitoring	110 species/ habitat types	116 species/ habitat types (+6 species /HTs)	123 species / habitat types +13 species / 0 habitat types
Acceptance of the implementation of Natura 2000 site management programme and conservation measures implemented in project activities	Number of key stakeholders accepting (agreeing) on the implementation of the Natura 2000 site management programme and conservation measures planned in project activities	4,500 people	4,750 people (+250 people)	5,041 people / + 541 people

\* Source: Data taken from final project reports and official records of government agencies

## Conservation and revitalisation of cultural and natural heritage

Two projects were implemented in the area of conservation of natural heritage, i.e.: “Cars-Out”( SI02-0001) and “Park and Experience Nature” (SI02-0005).

The project Cars-Out in the Sečovlje Salina Nature Park contributed to both outputs and to all four output indicators.

Three new infrastructure structures were provided:

1. Establishment of a new footpath to Lera;
2. Development and consolidation of the existing path to Lera;
3. Consolidation of the existing path to Fontanigge.

The number of visitors who experienced the natural heritage site in an environmentally non-degrading and non-damaging way increased by 20 % (from 40,000 in 2015 to 48,174 in 2016).

As the project title suggests (“Cars-Out”), the number of visitors using motor vehicles inside the natural heritage site got reduced, i.e. from 8,200 to zero. The Sečovlje Salina Nature Park became the first so-called larger protected area in Slovenia which the visitors are no longer able to visit by motorised travel. The project contributed to the development of a new park infrastructure in the Sečovlje Salina Nature Park that safeguards natural aspects, and offers environmental education and high-quality nature experience to users.

The project “Park and Experience Nature” (SI02-0005) contributed to both outputs and to all four output indicators as well.

Two new infrastructure structures were provided:

1. Upgraded parking lots with new equipment for visitors to the Bohinj Lake region.
2. New parking arrangements for visitors to the natural heritage site Krn-moraine.

The number of visitors who experienced the natural heritage site in an environmentally non-damaging way stood at 161,932 in 2017. According to data provided in the final project report there were 209,150 visitors in 2015. The number of visitors using motor vehicles to access the natural heritage site fell from 105,450 in 2015 to 80,666 in 2017, which is a 24-per cent decrease.

Furthermore, the project contributed to three objects of new park infrastructure in the Triglav National Park that safeguard natural aspects, and offer environmental education and high-quality nature experience to users. The three structures include two information points for visitors and a rent-a-bike service.

Output	Output indicator	Indicator value		
		Baseline	Target	Achieved
Establishment of new public infrastructure for visitors of the most important natural heritage sites in the national protected areas	1-3 new infrastructure objects	0	1	5

Visitor infrastructure that successfully connects safeguarding of natural heritage site and better public access to natural heritage site	Number of visitors annually that experience the natural heritage site in a non-damaging way	5,000	5,000 <sup>5</sup>	210,106 compared to 249,150 (index 84)
	Number of visitors using motor vehicle	Minimum 5,000 (index 100)	3,750 – 25 % decrease of baseline (index 75)	80,666 compared to 113,650 (index 71)
	Increased amount of park infrastructure that safeguards natural aspects, and offers environmental education and experiencing nature to users	0	1	4

Both outputs were achieved in the area Natural heritage; three natural heritage sites (one belonging to the coastal region and two to the alpine region) which are important from the tourism and visitor perspectives were addressed in two selected projects. New public infrastructure was established in a way that connects environmental protection and interpretation of the natural values attached to the sites, and at the same time improves public access in an environmentally friendly way and takes visitor experience to the next level. In general, the indicator values were surpassed since two projects were co-financed instead of one as a minimum target value foreseen in the Programme. The indicator value was surpassed for motorized visit as the selected sites have received more visitors than anticipated in the Programme (minimum value 5000), this was also the precondition for project eligibility. The sum of visitors using motor vehicle at the end of both projects was 80,666 (80,666+0), at the beginning of both projects the sum was 113,650 (105,450+8,200). The planned target was decrease for 25 % or index 75. The achieved target was decrease for 29% or index 71.

The sum of visitors at the end of both projects was 210,106 (161,932+48,174). At the beginning of both projects the sum of visitors was 249,150 (209,150+40,000), this presents decrease in visitors for 16 %. The reason behind a lower annual number of visitors experiencing the sites after improvements in the Triglav National Park (by 23 %) is the short time for the project implementation and visitor counting period. It is assumed that the visitor numbers will reach previous levels in the following years. It also has to be emphasized that in the case of the natural heritage sites the aim of the Programme was not the increase in visitor numbers (the baseline and the target of the indicator value for annual visitor numbers were the same: 5,000) but rather the increase in protection level and quality of experiencing nature ( i) new infrastructure objects, ii) new park infrastructure that safeguards natural aspects, and offers environmental education and experiencing nature to users, iii) decreased traffic).

Three projects were implemented in the area of *cultural heritage*, i.e. “Ljubljana” (SI02-0009), “AS” (SI02-0008) and “Idrija – Smelting Plant Area” (SI02-0003). The expected results were the restoration and preservation of cultural monuments and improvement of their accessibility to general or targeted publics.

<sup>5</sup> The aim of the Programme was not the increase in visitor but rather the increase in protection level and quality of experiencing nature. That is the reason why the baseline minimum number is the same as the target number. Focus was on most important sites that received over 5.000 visitors annually (minimum for project was to have at least 5000 visitors per year). Two selected projects had much more visitors per year, than the minimum requirement was.

All three selected projects contributed to both outputs and their indicators.

Output	Output indicator	Indicator value		
		Baseline	Target	Achieved
Ensure restoration, renovation and protection of cultural monuments	Number of restored, renovated and protected cultural monuments	0	3	3
Ensure accessibility of cultural heritage	Increased number of visitors (in per cent) to the restored, renovated and protected cultural monuments	0	5%	91 %

The project results set under all of the projects have been achieved, in some cases even significantly surpassed. The indicator value which refers to the increase in the number of visitors has been considerably surpassed, owing mainly to the fact that some renovated cultural monuments were made publicly accessible after the reconstruction. The increase in the number of visitors was also influenced by the contents of the projects, which aimed at raising awareness of the importance and presentation of the cultural heritage.

#### 4. Reporting on Programme outcome(s)

##### 4.1 Outputs' contribution to outcomes

##### Environmental Monitoring and Integrated Planning and Control

Achievement of the outcome "Increased exchange of information on environmental impact, status and trends between Beneficiary States and other EU Member States" indicators was monitored on the basis of the implementation of the pre-defined project Modernisation of Spatial Data Infrastructure to Reduce Risks and Impacts of Floods. All outcome indicators have been fulfilled; some indicator values have been surpassed.

Slovenia and other EU members have to transpose the Inspire Directive in the national legislation and report on its implementation. The key outcome of the project, which also reflects the Inspire Directive implementation, was the establishment of conditions that facilitate the exchange of information on environmental impacts of diverse natural or man-made causes. The prerequisite is standardisation of geolocation base as prescribed in the Inspire Implementing Rules, such as the European spatial reference system and standardisation of topographic data themes, which were important parts of the project. Both will enable transnational exchange and comparability of spatial and environmental geo-referenced data. The Slovenian reference system has been successfully established within the project (coordinate reference system (emphasis on vertical component), topographic data standards and harmonisation of hydrographic data). Also, the metadata system within Slovenian geoportal has been improved, together with awareness-raising about its importance and use through capacity building programme which has been prepared and promoted, and through workshops or conferences on the importance of the Inspire Directive. As a result, more public authorities provide their data publicly, so that discovery and download services are established. One of the pivotal results is accessibility of LIDAR terrain data for the whole Slovenian territory under the authority of Slovenian Environment Agency, which can be used by state

authorities, local communities and experts in flood mitigation processes. Other public authorities are included in the Inspire network (or in the process of inclusion). Network services specifying common interfaces for web services (discovery services, view services, download services and transformation services) are established or in the process of establishment. Instructions and guidelines have been prepared on how to establish such services according to the Inspire Implementing Rules. The network services are accessible through Slovenian Inspire geoportal and will be available also through European Inspire geoportal. The increased exchange of information on environmental impact, status and trends between Beneficiary States and other EU Member States was reported in the national report on Inspire implementation. The awareness about the need for cooperation between public bodies and promotion of standardisation in the field of SDI has improved by (1) better promotion of achieved results, (2) support from credible partners with sound results, such as Norwegian SDI implementation, and (3) establishment of data coverage for the whole of Slovenia (not only samples), such as digital terrain data or topographic data in future, which may be used by every user in any part of Slovenian territory.

Outcome	Indicator	Indicator value		
		Baseline	Target	Total achieved
Increased exchange of information on environmental impact, status and trends between Beneficiary States and other EU Member States	Number of public authorities that link their spatial datasets to the INSPIRE network	1	3	3
	Implementation of INSPIRE Implementing Rules	0	3	3
	Accessibility of spatial data	1	3	3

### Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

To achieve the overall programme objective (halt the loss of biodiversity) the programme focuses on the areas with the highest biodiversity which lie within the EU Natura 2000 network. Four projects were implemented on Natura 2000 sites with the greatest need to improve unfavourable conservation status of Natura habitat types (HT) and species. Project activities targeted 25 Natura habitat types and species, three forest HT and five forest species, three wetland HT and five wetland species, and four grassland HT and five grassland species. Additionally, the projects expanded existing monitoring and surveys to those Natura species whose conservation status was unknown due to insufficient data. Implemented projects extended the scope of the monitoring and survey of unknown species and contributed to improved conservation status of 16 habitat types and species, resulting in the final improvement of five of them.

Information, education and awareness activities took place to support the implementation of conservation activities previously described, to achieve an added value effect and ensure sustainability. Higher acceptance of implementation of the Natura 2000 site management

programme, especially those implemented in project activities, has been noticed. The final situation in achieving programme indicators is shown below:

Outcome	Indicator	Indicator value		Total achieved
		Baseline	Target	
Increased capacity to manage and monitor Natura 2000 sites effectively	Number of management plans for Natura 2000 areas implemented	109 plans in forestry / 19,600 ha agriculture	115 plans in forestry (+6) / 20,180 ha in agriculture (+580 ha)	+ 115 plans forestry (+6 plans) = 20,218 ha in agriculture (+ 618 ha)
	Number of Natura 2000 species / habitat types monitored and the share of their population / range covered by monitoring	110 species/ habitat types	116 species/ habitat types (+ 6 species / HTs)	123 species / habitat types (+13 species / 0 habitat types)
	Number of Natura 2000 species / habitat types in favourable or improved conservation status	Total 176 units out of 748	Total 181 units (+5) out of 748	181 units out of 748 (+5 units)

The number of Natura 2000 species/habitat types in a favourable or improved conservation status was calculated based on a complex methodology and final values could not be reported in interim reports, only their estimates. Final assessment confirms the improvement of the conservation status for five units, thus reaching 181 units.

The number of newly monitored Natura 2000 species and habitat types slightly surpassed the expected indicator value. This can be explained by a high number of research / monitoring institutions being project partners. Their basic interest is monitoring activity; as a result, monitoring was included in every project and was successfully implemented.

### Conservation and Revitalisation of Cultural and Natural Heritage

The Programme objective was to safeguard and conserve cultural and natural heritage for future generations and make it publicly accessible.

In the area of conservation and revitalisation of *natural heritage* the Programme contributed to the improvement in conservation and revitalisation of natural heritage in three natural heritage sites that attract many visitors. New infrastructure was developed and improvement of the old infrastructure were made in order to connect the achievement of nature conservation goals concerning natural heritage sites and environmentally acceptable public access to natural assets.

The outcome indicator on the annual number of visitors has been considerably surpassed, yet, it has shown a fall in the figures since the beginning of the selected projects. The indicator value was surpassed because there were two projects selected instead of only one; the two projects included highly visited natural heritage sites. As a result, more than 200,000 visitors experienced three natural heritage sites in an improved way. In other words, tourists enjoyed improved information on the nature conservation, they experienced natural heritage sites in a nature-friendly way, while noticeable increase in the use of sustainable transport options when visiting protected areas was recorded. The recorded figures surpass by far the minimum indicator value planned in the

Programme. The decrease in visitor numbers was observed only in the project “Park and Experience Nature”. It is expected that the number of visitors will increase again in 2018 and 2019, and will easily reach the baseline number from 2015.

We believe that the most important achievement of the natural heritage part of the Programme is its contribution to increased awareness of more than 200,000 visitors annually about the benefits of using sustainable mobility when visiting protected areas. The environmentally friendly way of visiting natural heritage sites contributes directly to the climate change prevention and mitigation through the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Natural heritage sites which are protected and revitalised with support from the EEA Grants have become an important messenger spreading the word about Slovenia as a green destination where measures are being actively implemented to safeguard well-preserved nature for future generations.

Outcome	Indicator	Indicator value		
		Baseline	Target	Achieved
Cultural heritage made accessible to the public	Number of natural heritage sites protected or revitalised	0	1-3	3
Number of natural heritage sites	Annual number of visitors of cultural and/or natural heritage sites and/or museums	5000	5000	210,106

In the area of Cultural Heritage the Programme contributed to the achievement of the outcome “Cultural heritage restored, renovated and protected”. The priority of the Programme was to invest into projects of national importance, into cultural monuments.

The achievements in this area include improved accessibility and protection of cultural heritage as well as the restoration and renovation of cultural monuments of national importance and the establishment of necessary infrastructure. At the end of project implementation in the beginning of 2017, three cultural monuments which represent immovable cultural heritage were revamped – renovated, restored and safeguarded, thus contributing to having cultural heritage publicly accessible, renovated, restored and conserved.

The effects of implemented projects within the programme area are reflected in the preservation and protection of cultural and natural heritage, diversification and better quality of tourism offer of tourist destinations, in the possibility to create integrated cultural and natural products, development of other services in different areas and in increased number of tourists and other visitors.

#### 4.2 Horizontal concerns

The projects under the EEA Financial Mechanism Programme addressed to some extent the topics of tolerance and respect for vulnerable groups. Natural and cultural heritage projects pursued the development of infrastructure for visitors of natural heritage sites and renovated cultural monuments which would also be adapted to cater to the needs of visitors with special needs (for example people with disabilities, blind and visual impaired persons).

Project partners of the project called AS developed and tested interpretation programmes for visitors with special needs. The investment in the project Idrija - Smelting Plant Area was completed to allow access to people with special needs as well. Special equipment ensuring accessibility for vulnerable groups was purchased.

### 4.3 Cross-cutting issues

Three cross-cutting issues were integrated into the design of the Programme: good governance, sustainable development and gender equality. Programme Operators identified the procedures for ensuring that the cross-cutting issues were taken into account at the project level.

The cross-cutting issues were integrated in the Programme implementation process with special consideration to the following crucial phases:

- call for proposals for the EEA Financial Mechanism Programme 2009-2014 development phase;
- EEA Financial Mechanism Programme 2009-2014 applications rating and project selection phase;
- EEA Financial Mechanism Programme 2009-2014 project implementation control and monitoring system.

Sustainable development was addressed in all areas of the Programme: Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services; Cultural and Natural Heritage and Environmental Monitoring and Integrated Planning and Control. Additionally, the projects were expected to have a positive impact on the environment and sustainable development even after they would be completed; indeed, as many as 90 per cent of the projects within the Programme were assessed as projects with a high impact on sustainable development having a positive impact on the environment and sustainable development long after their completion. The abovementioned assessment was part of the project management self-assessment of the project implementation. It is expected that, over a longer period, the implemented activities will help reduce the negative impacts on natural and cultural heritage in the Simonov zaliv bay, Piran salt pans and the Triglav National Park, have a positive economic impact on local areas in Idrija, Vrhnika and communities in the Ljubljana Marshes, and that the conditions for habitats and target species in the Pohorje hills area, Mura river area and Goričko meadows will improve.

The results of the project Modernization of spatial data infrastructure to reduce the risks and consequences of floods provide support for space management in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. The use of data provides the basis for the management of environmental and spatial policy in Slovenia, and enables more efficient planning and management of the area and protection of the environment. This ensures better quality of life, citizens' safety and a more stable environment for economic development.

Good governance was ensured at the programme and at the project level. The principles of good governance were respected throughout the implementation of the Programme. The Programme Operator (PO) actively involved all relevant stakeholders and target groups in the preparation, implementation, selection and decision making procedures. All procedures were public and subject to in-house and external supervision. 80 per cent of the projects were assessed in the project management self-assessment as projects with a high impact on the cross-cutting issue **good governance**. One particular example of good governance at the project level was the ability to extend project period due to unforeseen events or circumstances without any major problems owing to good project management. The implementation was possible with additional resources of the project partners.

Moreover, the projects strived to integrate the horizontal concern of gender equality. Generally speaking, Slovenia ranks high in gender equality indicators, thus, performance in this field was least

tracked at the project level. Despite that 40% of projects had a high impact on gender equality according to the self-assessment of project managers.

As stated in the final evaluation report, the projects contributed to the equalization of rights, opportunities and power in various social areas. Both men and women were equally represented in project groups, and all project activities targeted both men and women. In terms of physically demanding work in some of the projects men prevailed, but this was offset by a greater number of women in other tasks. The outputs and outcomes of the projects are equally applicable to both men and women and do not distinguish between the two genders.

#### **4.4 Capacity building**

Individuals and organizations broaden their knowledge and improve their skills necessary for everyday work through the implementation of a Programme and related projects.

The projects in the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Programme area affected individuals, partner institutions and the target group both directly and indirectly as they helped build knowledge and raise awareness. Familiarization with numerous problems in the area helped focus on the importance of establishing interpersonal relations as a foundation for the establishment of dialogue, problem solving, and reaching solutions. The newly acquired knowledge, and experience with project leadership can now be used, shared and transferred to other projects, and similar activities can be continued thanks to funding by other programmes. The acquired experience will be used by the participants in their everyday work. The target group considerably benefitted from the implementation of the projects in that awareness was raised about the importance of environmental management, about the areas vital for preservation of biodiversity, and through general awareness-raising of the local population and visitors.

Thanks to the projects implemented in the area Conservation and revitalisation of cultural and natural heritage individuals gained new experience and knowledge in the field of project leadership, they were able to transfer knowledge between the experts from different institutions, and to use the skills gained in their everyday work. Additionally, there are more connections established between partner institutions, and the amount of interdisciplinary work has grown. New professional contacts and new solutions were established, which will be further improved because of their desire to continue with similar activities within the frame of other projects. At the local level, positive results of the projects in the Cultural Heritage programme area are reflected in improved awareness, upgraded knowledge, and newfound respect for cultural heritage. This makes people more aware of the potential of cultural heritage in strengthening the identity of the local environment, while opening new options for the development of creative industries and tourism.

The establishment of the geodetic reference system within the programme area Environmental Monitoring and Integrated Planning and Control (pre-defined project) which is regularly used by geodesists, and represents the basis for the new coordinate system, has made geodesy sector more conscious of its importance. Slovenia has joined the most developed countries in this field, and the interest in the area is increasing.

Cooperation with Donor State institutions at the programme and project level contributed to the exchange of knowledge, experience and good practices and facilitated strengthening of bilateral relations between Slovenia and the Donor States. The partnerships forged and friendships made will undoubtedly lead to further cooperation in numerous areas in the future.

## 5. Reporting on bilateral relations

### 5.1 Bilateral outcomes

EUR 155,000 was available for strengthening bilateral relations between Slovenia and the Donor States under the EEA Financial Mechanism Programme. The activities were implemented both at the programme and project level.

#### Extend of cooperation

Funds from the bilateral fund of EEA programme, were available for the additional activities within the pre-defined project. A study visit to Norway was organised in the framework of the programme area Environmental Monitoring and Integrated Planning and Control. The study visit was attended by the representatives of the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning and the Slovenian Environment Agency. The aim of the study visit was to gain experience at the operational level of the NVE (Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate) and experience pertaining to Geoportal data management and publication/distribution of LIDAR data with which the NMA (Statens kartverk, Norwegian Mapping Authority) operates. The major part of the solutions, which were presented during the study visit are conceptually acquired in projects that are currently being implemented in the Republic of Slovenia.

The bilateral relations on natural heritage protection and protected area management were established through two study visits in Slovenia and Iceland in 2017. In the framework of the study visits nature conservation systems of both countries were presented through a workshop in Slovenia and a working meeting in Iceland. Management of natural heritage sites in general and especially visitor management of sites share many similarities, which was confirmed during field visits in both countries. Active management is needed, especially in sites that have high numbers of visitors, in order to prevent direct damage to natural heritage sites and also to raise awareness about the importance of environmentally acceptable manner of visiting, including nature conservation and reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The measures implemented and presented during the field visits both in Slovenia (e.g. Cars-Out with closing some parts of the area for motor vehicles) and in Iceland (e.g. needs for enlargement of the Information centre with visitor facilities and taking care for the hiking trails) were inspiring for participants from different organisation and both countries. One of the important issues discussed during study visits was also the importance of stable financial sources for visitor infrastructure, coming also from the tourism sector and not only from the state budget for nature conservation, entrance fees and occasional projects.

Additionally, due to the implementation of projects, in some cases cooperation between Slovenian and partners from donor states will continue also in the future.

#### Wider effects

For the project promoters additional funds were available for the activities, which enable integration, exchange and transfer of knowledge, technologies, experience and best practice among with organisations from donor countries. With this regard two calls for proposals under bilateral cooperation at the programme level were launched. Within first call two types of activities were foreseen: 1/Type 1: participation of Slovenian representatives in conferences, seminars and workshops in Norway, and 2/Type 2: organisation of bilateral conferences, seminars and workshops in Slovenia. The call for proposals was open for project promoters under the programmes whose projects had been selected under the call which had two application deadlines (i.e. 30 July 2016 and 30 September 2016). The funds made available under the Fund for Bilateral Activities under the Programme SI02 stood at EUR 40,000. Two proposals were received. The latter were both approved and received grants for activities of Type 1. Due to lack of interest of the target groups and because

the implemented activities cost less than initially estimated, all available funds were not spent and the second call was launched in February 2017. Three proposals were received and approved. Representatives of two project promoters participated in a conference and workshops in the Donor States, and one project promoter organized a bilateral workshop in Slovenia.

Additionally, due to the funds from the bilateral fund, some Slovenian project promoters and organizations from donor states met for the first time to share experiences and good practices.

#### Shared results and improved knowledge

Slovenian project promoters was relatively successful in finding partners from donor states, since 50% of all programme-related projects were implemented in cooperation with donor project partners.

Bilateral cooperation activities in the form of regular meetings, study visits and exchange of knowledge and experience further took place under five projects which involved Donor State partners. For example, bilateral partnership within the project “AS”(SI02-0002) mainly contributed to the implementation of innovative digital solutions, transfer of knowledge and increased visibility of the archaeological park, the monument and increased accessibility of the site.

In general, bilateral cooperation at the project level was very successful According to the survey carried out by external evaluators the bilateral cooperation on project level contributed to strengthening relations between the donor states and Slovenia. Also, knowledge of project partners about culture, political and socio-economic situation in both countries improved.

#### SI02 - Bilateral indicators

Indicator	Baseline	Target	Achievement
			Total
Number of articles published in one country about the other partner country	0	2	18
Number of European and international networks where project and programme partners participate together	0	1	9
Number of joint (bilateral) articles published, written by persons from an institution in both a Beneficiary and Donor State, published in a national or international publication, originated from a project financed by the programme	0	3	3
Number of joint, sector-wide initiatives, in a Beneficiary or Donor State, beyond the programme	0	1	1
Number of men involved in exchange visits between Beneficiary and Donor States	0	7	83
Number of project partnership agreements in beneficiary civil society	0	0	0
Number of project partnership agreements in the beneficiary private sector	0	0	1
Number of project partnership agreements in the	0	2	4

beneficiary public sector			
Number of women involved in exchange visits between Beneficiary and Donor States	0	6	36

Due to the fact that a number of projects that were carried out with partners from donor countries was much higher than we expected, most target indicators values were exceeded.

## 5.2 Complementary actions

The activities that covered, inter alia, exchange of good practices and sharing of experience among Programme Operators in Beneficiary States took place in 2016 and 2017.

The Programme Operator participated in two events in 2016. The Bulgarian Ministry of Environment and Water invited Programme Operators in the area of biodiversity and ecosystem services to a two-day meeting held in October 2016. The event was a perfect opportunity for the participants to network and share knowledge, experience and good practices. A three-day meeting of Programme Operators in the area of cultural heritage was held in the Czech Republic in November 2016. The event was dedicated to networking of Programme Operators and to the presentation of several projects implemented in the area (the Slovenian project was showcased as well) and exchange of experience and good practices. Both events featured representatives of the Donor States.

Several programme closing events were organized in the beneficiary countries in 2017. The Programme Operator for the SI02 programme attended four closing conferences in the area biodiversity and ecosystem services, namely in Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Poland.

## 6. Reporting on sustainability

Positive effects of the EEA Financial Mechanism Programme 2009-2014 will persist after the funding period at bilateral, national, programme and project level. As much as 30 per cent of all projects reported that they planned to continue cooperation with project partners from donor countries (50 per cent of projects had a project partner from a donor state). Cooperation will continue in different fields and in planned future projects.

All projects under the EEA Financial Mechanism Programme 2009-2014 also plan to sustain project results at least five years after the end of project. All of the abovementioned projects had a project promoter that is directly or indirectly financed from national budget.

Once the sustainability of outcomes and outputs at the project level is ensured, the impacts at the programme and national level become sustainable as well. Projects on *biodiversity and ecosystem services* lasted only 1-2 years, which is a relatively short period to introduce changes in biodiversity conservation. However, these projects were an important milestone in terms of adopting a proactive approach to nature conservation in Slovenia. At the policy level they supported the inclusion of proactive habitat conservation in the operational programme for the implementation of EU policies. Inclusion of this policy in the Operational Programme for the Implementation of the EU Cohesion Policy 2014 - 2020<sup>6</sup> particularly helped continue efforts started by the EEA projects. Operational Programme's priority axis 2.6.4. *Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting*

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.svrk.gov.si/fileadmin/svrk.gov.si/pageuploads/KP\\_2014-2020/Operativni\\_program/OP\\_koncno\\_ang\\_19\\_01\\_2015.pdf](http://www.svrk.gov.si/fileadmin/svrk.gov.si/pageuploads/KP_2014-2020/Operativni_program/OP_koncno_ang_19_01_2015.pdf)

*ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure* enables financing of such projects. Three EEA projects resulted in the development of further project activities for proactive conservation of endangered Natura species and habitat types at these Natura 2000 sites (Goričko, Ljubljansko barje and Pohorje), and are or will be financed from this OP with the European Regional Development Fund. At the fourth site (Mura), project development is still in early stages.

In the case of the two selected projects in the area *natural heritage* the sustainability of the project results has been guaranteed through the legally binding responsibility of management authorities of the nationally protected areas involved in the projects for further management of visitor infrastructure. Especially in the case of the Triglav National Park similar activities to the project activities from the Programme are planned to be implemented within a Natura 2000 project co-financed from the European Regional Development Fund. The Sečovlje Salina Nature Park, which is considerably smaller than the Triglav National Park and has characteristics of a nature reserve, the conservation status of the area and also visitor management achieved relatively high standards and serves as best practice example (with the help of state funding and many projects, including the project from the EEA Grants); as such it has entered a competition for the Natura 2000 award in 2018<sup>7</sup>.

Sustainability of the project results of the three selected projects in the area of cultural heritage has also been guaranteed. For example, a cultural monument underwent restoration and an archaeological monument was upgraded with the help of the projects AS and Idrija Smelting Plant respectively. The Project promoter Idrija Mercury Heritage Management Centre is a public institute founded by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia with the goal of ensuring an integrated and sustainable management, and preservation of cultural heritage connected to the Idrija ore deposit. As a founder, the Government will provide the necessary finance for the activities of the Centre. The project represents the first phase of renovation of the cultural monument; the Centre will seek new funding sources at home and abroad to be continued.

One of the results of the LJUBLJANICA project was to design a permanent exhibition “Moja Ljubljana”. The exhibition area is managed by the local community in cooperation with the Museum and Galleries of Ljubljana. The programmes which include workshops and events for different target audiences are organised at the exhibition area, in public areas, schools and at the site of the monument itself. Active involvement of the public, cooperation of the public and the non-government sector, and programme integration in the wider region are of utmost importance.

These three projects have built a basis for marketing of new and improved tourism products, and consequently encouraged the development of the local areas.

## **7. Project selection and implementation**

### **7.1 Project selection**

The projects for the programme areas of Biodiversity and ecosystem services and the Conservation and revitalisation of cultural and natural heritage were selected within the Public Call for proposals to co-finance projects under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism Programme 2009-2014 and the EEA Financial Mechanism Programme 2009-2014 published on 27 December 2013 in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, no. 110/2013. The deadline for the submission of proposals to co-finance projects was 28 February 2014.

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<sup>7</sup> EC, Natura 2000 Award 2018. [http://natura2000award-application.eu/en/all-applications?field\\_project\\_countries\\_involved\\_value\\_1=SI&field\\_project\\_category\\_tid=All&title\\_1=&=Apply](http://natura2000award-application.eu/en/all-applications?field_project_countries_involved_value_1=SI&field_project_category_tid=All&title_1=&=Apply)

A committee was established in narrow and extended compositions for the implementation of the relevant Public Call and appointed with decision no. 544-13/2013/6 and amending decisions no. 544-13/2013/19 of 27 March 2014 and no. 544-13/2013/20 of 25 April 2014.

The review of the administrative suitability and eligibility of applications was conducted by the Narrow Committee. 43 proposals were received, of which 11 did not have suitably marked envelopes. In compliance with tender conditions, the Narrow Committee rejected these 11 applications from the total of 43 applications. The envelopes of rejected applications were not opened. It was established that 8 applications were submitted for area Biodiversity and ecosystem services, 3 applications for area natural Heritage and 21 applications for area Cultural Heritage. Therefore, 32 applications were distributed among the members of the Narrow Committee. After reviewing compliance with administrative and eligibility criteria 28 applications were identified as complete:

#### Statistics on the completed review of the administrative suitability and eligibility of applications

RECEIVED APPLICATIONS	DISMISSED AND REJECTED APPLICATIONS				COMPLETE APPLICATIONS	
	Unsuitably marked envelope	Administrative phase and eligibility of applications phase	Total dismissed/rejected applications	Share of received applications	Complete applications	Share of received applications
<b>43</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>34.9%</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>65.1%</b>

The applicants requested a total of EUR 44,072,520.24, which is by 6.03 times more than the available funding amounting to EUR 7,301,756.00. The average requested amount of grants equalled EUR 1,377,266.26. The applications with an inadequately marked envelope (11) were not opened and the data was not collected.

#### Available funding according to individual areas compared to the requested amount of grants for EEA Programme (in EUR)

	Available grants	Requested amount of grants	Average requested amount of grants
<b>EEA PROGRAMME</b>	<b>7,301,756.00</b>	<b>44,072,520.24</b>	<b>1,377,266.26</b>
<b>BRIES</b>	2,030,508.00	4,772,050.23	596,506.28
<b>ND</b>	1,271,248.00	1,990,527.86	663,509.29
<b>KD</b>	4,000,000.00	37,309,942.15	1,776,663.91

Quality assessment was performed for 28 applications: 7 from the area Biodiversity, 3 from the area Natural heritage and 18 from the area Cultural Heritage.

Each application which fulfilled the administrative and eligibility criteria was assessed by two evaluators from the selected area. After scoring, the applications were classified according to the average number of points per individual application awarded by both evaluators.

The Extended Committee (Selection Committee) at its session on 18 November 2014 confirmed the lists of selected projects on the basis of priority lists made by external evaluators. Nine projects were selected for the implementation: 3 in the area Biodiversity, 2 in the area Natural heritage and 3 in the area Cultural Heritage. The Committee assessed that by implementing the selected nine projects

the programme output indicators referring to the programme outcome would be attained: Increased capacity to manage and monitor Natura 2000 sites effectively; Cultural heritage restored, renovated and protected and Cultural heritage made accessible to the public.

**Successful rate of applications (Applications which was submitted for the quality assessment)**

Area	Number of applications which was submitted for quality assessment	Selected project for the implementation	Success rate of applications
Biodiversity and ecosystem services	7	4	57.14 %
Natural heritage	3	2	66.67 %
Cultural Heritage	18	3	16.67 %
Total	28	9	32.14 %

The selection process was prolonged due to unsuccessful public procurement for the selection of experts assessing the quality of projects. This consequently meant a shorter time for the project implementation.

In the area Environmental Monitoring and Integrated Planning and Control the pre-defined project “Modernisation of Spatial Data Infrastructure to Reduce Risks and Impacts of Floods” had been implemented since 2013.

## 7.2 Project implementation

As many as nine projects selected under a call for proposals and one pre-defined projects were implemented under the EEA Financial Mechanism Programme. The selected projects promoted collaboration and pursued the principle of sustainability. They made significant contribution to advancement in the areas of biodiversity and ecosystem services, conservation and revitalisation of cultural and natural heritage and the environment.

The projects selected under the call for proposal were kicked off in 2015, while the pre- defined project started with implementation in mid-2013. All project promoters were informed about the possibility to extend their projects. The deadline was extended for 8 out of 10 projects.

The majority of the requests for period extension stated that the time for project implementation achieving all project objectives was too short. Most of the projects in the Programme also included the implementation of large-scale investments, therefore long-term procurement procedures were one of the key reasons for extending the duration of projects. The project period extension resulted in a better quality of the implementation of activities, optimisation of project activity scheduling, but above all, additional time made it possible for project promoters to achieve the set objectives and indicators of projects; as it turned out, the latter were surpassed in a large number of projects at the end.

Project promoters and Programme Operator put every effort into successful implementation and completion of all projects. The Programme Operator provided support to project promoters and monitored the substantial and financial progress of the projects. The projects were subject to on-the-spot verification whose findings were positive and did not unveil any significant shortcomings. Project promoters regularly reported on the project progress.

Most of the projects under the Programme SI02 were completed by the end of 2016, while four projects were completed in January 2017. All final project reports were approved and all payments related to final project reports were executed by the end of December 2017.

According to the recommendations set out in the Evaluation report on programmes financed by the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009–2014, it would be necessary to shorten the timing of the interim financial reports review, as some project promoters had many problems due to long payment deadlines. A longer duration of projects, as well as a change to administrative procedures with the aim of simplifying them was also recommended

Notwithstanding the above, project promoters had been very successful in implementing projects as the absorption rate amounted to more than 97% of all allocated funds. This has also been validated by the results of the survey conducted in the context of the evaluation of programmes financed by the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009–2014. The respondents and interviewees perceived their projects as successful or very successful in terms of the results achieved. The experience gained during the implementation of the project will help them create similar, larger projects with comparable goals and a positive public response in connection with project activities.

## **8. Monitoring and audit**

### **MONITORING**

The monitoring of projects was carried out by the PO in accordance with the annual monitoring plan submitted to the FMO as an annex to the Annual Programme Report. The inputs received from the PPs and through the projects will feed into the revision of the plan and monitoring results will feed into the PO's annual reporting.

The following monitoring tools for project monitoring were used by the PO during the implementation of the Programme:

- on-site monitoring visits,
- project interim report reviews,
- other day-to-day monitoring,
- post-closure project monitoring.

#### **On-site visits**

All ten projects were subject to on-the-spot verification whose findings were positive and did not unveil any significant shortcomings.

During on-site visits the Programme Operator with the Control Unit checked the progress of the project implementation and its compliance with the project contract, as well as with requirements of the Regulation and all documents governing the SI02 Programme and project implementation. It also verified procurement procedures and the cost efficiency of incurred expenditures.

#### **Project interim report reviews**

The Programme Operator carried out regular reviews of project interim reports (PIRs). Each PIR consisted of:

- the activity report on project activities implemented within a given reporting period, and
- the financial report comprising expenditures incurred in a reporting period.

The PO used activity report reviews to examine the progress in the implementation of project activities and achievement of its outputs and outcomes, while financial report checks helped

establish the regularity of the expenditures and their compliance with the project contract, the Regulation, the Programme Agreement and applicable law, including law on public procurement.

### **Day-to-day monitoring**

On-going day-to-day monitoring of the projects was carried out in all stages of projects implementation. Each Project promoter of a selected project was invited to a face-to-face meeting prior to project contract signing where all possible risks for implementation delays and corresponding mitigation measures were discussed.

The Programme Operator promoted regular direct communication with project promoters, mainly by phone and by e-mail.

Additional meetings with project promoters were held if implementation-related problems arose during the project duration.

After the Project Promoters submitted first interim reports certain ambiguities were identified and contract managers within the Programmes SI02 and SI05 decided to organise individual meetings with the lead partners and control unit. These meetings were very useful and a lot of open issues were resolved.

### **Post-closure project monitoring**

At the end of the project implementation the Project Promoters prepared a project completion report and submitted it to the Programme Operator which reviewed the report in order to check the achievement of the outputs, outcomes and objectives of the project and to assess the project's contribution to the overall objective and outcomes of the programme.

The Programme Operator verified the fulfilment of special conditions for purchased equipment within the project as well, insofar the project was granted an exemption from the general rule of Article 7.3.1 (c) of the Regulation.

## **AUDIT**

The EEA Financial Mechanism Programme was subject to several external audits of the Audit Authority in the period between 2014 and 2017.

1. In the period between March 2014 and May 2014, the Audit Authority performed a system audit of the management and control system. The system was found to be in compliance with the Regulation, Articles 4.7 and 4.8.
2. In November 2014, the first interim report of the programme was audited, where no ineligible expenditure was detected.
3. In the period between September 2014 and April 2015, the Audit Authority carried out a review of the adequacy and consistency of the functioning of the management and control system in the EEA FM Programme implementation framework. On the basis of the audit carried out, it was estimated that the system was operating, recommendation to improve the system were given such as (preparation of forms and checklists for on the spot checks of projects).
- 4.
5. In January 2017, the Audit Authority carried out a follow-up audit of the adequacy and consistency of the management and control system in the framework of the EEA FM Programme implementation. The basis for carrying out the audit was the verification of the implementation of the recommendation given in previous audits. It was found that the

recommendations of the Audit Authority were taken into account, with the exception of the recommendation related to the establishment of a special information system by the National Focal Point – GODC, which also acts as the Programme Operator of the SI02 programme.

## **9. Irregularities**

No irregularities were detected.

## **10. Risk management**

Several risks were identified as important factors that could hamper the implementation of the SI02 programme, but not all of them actually occurred. The risk assessment, including risk mitigation measures at the programme level were both prepared on a yearly basis and attached to the Combined Strategic and Annual Report.

The first important issue were the delays in starting the programme and publishing the call for project proposals, which shortened the time for project implementation. At the very beginning of the preparation and implementation of programme, institutional changes considerably delayed the implementation of programmes and projects. In order to mitigate the consequences of the delays the PO speeded up all the administrative and management procedures and thus ensured that project promoters started projects as soon as possible.

The second important risk that was the one associated with failure to achieve the projects' outcomes and indicators. The most important measure mitigating the risk of not achieving project and programme outcomes and indicators was the extension of programme duration. The majority of project promoters decided to extend the duration of their projects, which enabled them to finish projects successfully.

In terms of bilateral activities, the identified risk involved insufficient interest of target groups to participate in the activities. In order to reduce the risk, the Programme Operator regularly informed all target groups of the funding opportunities concerning bilateral activities.

Human resources management is important for an effective implementation of a Programme and shortage of staff and unforeseen changes put efficient implementation at considerable risk. Each phase of implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism Programme required an adequate number of appropriately skilled staff to carry out the required tasks. It is also important to have the support of all the supporting services within the office (i.e. the legal department, public procurement department, IT department, etc.). Flexibility in assuring human resources in terms of quantity and skills according to actual needs and adequate reorganisation and education of staff is very important for a successful implementation of the Programme.

## **11. Information and publicity**

The GODC developed a communication strategy on the basis of lessons learned in the previous financial perspective in order to reach the objectives with the aim of highlighting the role of the EEA and Norway Grants 2009–2014 and to ensure that the assistance from the mechanisms is transparent. The communication strategy took into account the programme level, with different

priority areas and target groups and was compliant with the Information and Publicity Requirements in Annex 4 of the Regulation on the implementation of the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2009–2014.

In terms of appropriate channels of communication for target groups, it needs to be underlined that the GODC acts both as NFP as well as PO for two programmes, including the EEA FM Programme – Programme SI02. One of the communication channels for users, potential users and other public was the web page [www.norwaygrants.si](http://www.norwaygrants.si) which is a joint web page for both Financial Mechanisms. The web page is in Slovene and English and provides many relevant information and documentation. The Facebook page is also active (EEA and Norway Grants Slovenia); up until 10 December 2017 there were 1,138 followers.

The Norway Grants and EEA Grants 2009-2014 final event titled “Working Together Towards Common Goals” was held on 7 October 2016. The event was an occasion bringing together the stakeholders to share experience and disseminate results, and featured representatives of the Donor States. The closing event featured some of the projects that received support, while all the projects funded under both financial mechanisms are compiled in a publication of the same title as the final event Working Together Towards Common Goals. Furthermore, the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Budapest supported the shooting of a short promotional video of the final event, which was published on the website and Facebook profile. A procurement procedure was carried out to purchase promotional material. A promotional bag containing promotional items was distributed among participants at the final event.

At the project level, Project Promoters used different communication channels for informing users, potential users and other public about the projects. All projects had project webpages, and the channel used most often for informing users and other public was the project web page. As the survey among project promoters showed<sup>8</sup>, they used a variety of communication channels. Hence, they reported using many local communication channels (local radio (88 %) and local print media (100 %)) and also national television (88 %), print media (88 %) and national radio (63 %).

## 12. Conditions set in the Programme Agreement

### 12.1 Compliance with conditions

Condition:

1) Bilateral, outcome and output indicators shall be reported on in the annual programme report.

Statement:

1) Bilateral, outcome and output indicators were reported in the annual programme reports.”

Condition:

2) The National Focal Point shall ensure that any public support under this Programme complies with the procedural and substantive state aid rules applicable at the time when the public support is granted. The National Focal Point shall, by way of the programme implementation agreement, ensure that the Programme Operator maintains written records of all assessments concerning compliance with state aid rules, particularly decisions to award grants and set grant rates, and provides such records to the FMC upon request. The approval of the Programme by the FMC does not imply a positive assessment of such compliance.

Statement:

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<sup>8</sup> Source: Report on the evaluation of programmes financed by the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009–2014

2) The Programme Operator ensures that any public support under this Programme complies with the procedural and substantive state aid rules applicable at the time when the public support was granted. The Programme Operator ensures that it maintains written records of all assessments concerning compliance with state aid rules, particularly decisions to award grants and set grant rates, and provides such records to the FMC upon request. The approval of the Programme by the FMC does not imply a positive assessment of such compliance.

Condition:

3) Detailed selection criteria, developed by the Programme Operator and adopted by the Selection Committee shall be submitted to the FMO before the deadline referred to in Article 6.3.4 of the Regulation.

Statement:

3) The Programme Operator ensures that detailed selection criteria, developed by the Programme Operator and adopted by the Selection Committee, was submitted to the FMO before the deadline referred to in Article 6.3.4 of the Regulation.

Condition:

4) Details on the use of the fund for bilateral relations, the detailed procedures and criteria for awarding support from the fund and any other relevant details will be developed by the Programme Operator and submitted to the FMO.

Statement:

4) The Programme Operator ensures that details on the use of the fund for bilateral relations, the detailed procedures and criteria for awarding support from the fund and any other relevant were developed by the Programme Operator and were submitted to the FMO.

Condition:

5) A methodology on the calculation of the flat rate to be applied to indirect eligible costs (overheads) in accordance with Article 7.4.1(b) of the Regulation shall be submitted to the FMO no later than four weeks prior to the deadline for providing to the FMC the text of the call for proposals, as required by Article 6.3.4 of the Regulation.

Statement:

5) The Programme Operator ensures that a methodology on the calculation of the flat rate applied to indirect eligible costs (overheads) in accordance with Article 7.4.1 (b) of the Regulation. The Programme Operator ensures that a methodology was submitted to the FMO no later than four weeks prior to the deadline for providing to the FMC the text of the call for proposals, as required by Article 6.3.4 of the Regulation.

Condition:

6) The National Focal Point shall ensure that the Programme Operator ensures that Project Promoters who have, in line with this Agreement, received an exception from the general rule in Article 7.3.1(c) of the Regulation with respect to any equipment (the excepted equipment):

- Keep the excepted equipment in their ownership for a period of at least 5 years following the completion of the project and continue to use that equipment for the benefit of the overall objectives of the project for the same period;
- Keep the excepted equipment properly insured against losses such as fire, theft and other normally insurable incidents both during project implementation and for at least 5 years following the completion of the project; and
- Set aside appropriate resources for the maintenance of the excepted equipment for at least 5 years following the completion of the project.

The specific means for implementation of this obligation shall be specified in the project contract: provided however that the Programme Operator may release any Project Promoter from the above obligations with respect to any specifically identified excepted equipment where the Programme Operator is satisfied that, having regard to all relevant circumstances, continued use of that equipment for the overall objectives of the project would serve no useful economic purpose.

The National Focal Point shall furthermore ensure that the Programme Operator keeps a list of the excepted equipment for each project.

Statement:

6) The Programme Operator ensures that the Project Promoters who have, in line with Agreement, received an exception from the general rule in Article 7.3.1(c) of the Regulation with respect to any equipment (the excepted equipment):

- Keep the excepted equipment in their ownership for a period of at least 5 years following the completion of the project and continue to use that equipment for the benefit of the overall objectives of the project for the same period;
- Keep the excepted equipment properly insured against losses such as fire, theft and other normally insurable incidents both during project implementation and for at least 5 years following the completion of the project; and
- Set aside appropriate resources for the maintenance of the excepted equipment for at least 5 years following the completion of the project.

The specific means for implementation of this obligation was specified in the project contract: provided however that the Programme Operator may release any Project Promoter from the above obligations with respect to any specifically identified excepted equipment where the Programme Operator is satisfied that, having regard to all relevant circumstances, continued use of that equipment for the overall objectives of the project would serve no useful economic purpose.

Furthermore, Programme Operator ensures a list of the excepted equipment for each project is kept.

Condition:

7) The Programme Operator will no later than three months after the National Focal Point signs this Programme Agreement, assign additional staff, temporarily or permanently to assist in the implementation of this programme and the Programme SI05 "The Norwegian Financial Mechanism Programme.

Statement:

7) The Programme Operator has no later than three months after the National Focal Point signed the Programme Agreement, assigned additional staff, temporarily or permanently to assist in the implementation of the programme and the Programme SI05 "The Norwegian Financial Mechanism Programme.

## **12.2 Changes to the Programme**

There were six modification of the programme agreement; however the programme did not change significantly during its implementation. Changes were related to the implementation of the public call, budget transfer and the extension of the programme implementation deadline. In the context of the amendment, which entered into force on 11 September 2013, the deadline for the public call implementation changed due to the publication-related delay. The amendment dated 18 November 2013 slightly revised the text regarding the eligibility of applicants under the »Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services« programme area.

The modification concerns the approval of a different project selection procedures (in line with Article 6.5 of the Regulation) dated 17 September 2014 enabled the Programme Operator to approve the list of expert evaluators and finalize the project selection procedure.

The amendment dated 26 November 2015 was necessary because of the extension of the programme implementation deadline. This was the most significant change to the programme that enabled successful implementation and completion of projects. With modification dated on 29 November 2016, unspent fund from the budget line "Preparation of programme proposal" was transferred to budget line "Complementary action".

### **13. Attachments to the Final Programme Report**

- 1) Project list
- 2) List of irregularities
- 3) Audit overview

## Audit overview

Type of audit	System audit of management and control system
Entity subject to audit	GODC, Programme Operator for SI02
Audit company/ entity	Budget Supervision Office
Period covered	/
Date of final report	May 2014
Summary of findings	Based on the audit carried out and the audit findings the Budget Supervision Office issued an unqualified opinion on the assessment of compliance of the management and control systems with the requirements set in the Regulation on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014.
Follow-up measures	Recommendation (Preparation of guidelines to describe in detail the controls and checklists for the controls)

Type of audit	First interim report of the programme
Entity subject to audit	GODC, Programme Operator for SI02
Audit company/ entity	Budget Supervision Office
Period covered	
Date of final report	November 2014
Summary of findings	No ineligible expenditure was detected
Follow-up measures	

Type of audit	Audit of the management and control system in the EEA FM Programme implementation framework
Entity subject to audit	GODC, Programme Operator for SI02
Audit company/ entity	Budget Supervision Office
Period covered	/
Date of final report	
Summary of findings	The system was operating, recommendation to improve the system were given.
Follow-up measures	Follow-up audit

Type of audit	Follow-up audit of the management and control system in the EEA FM Programme implementation framework
Entity subject to audit	GODC, Programme Operator for SI02
Audit company/ entity	Budget Supervision Office
Period covered	/
Date of final report	February 2017
Summary of findings	Recommendations of the Audit Authority were taken into account, with the exception of the recommendation related to the establishment of a special information system by the National Focal Point – GODC, which also acts as the Programme Operator of the SI02 programme.
Follow-up measures	