



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

GOVERNMENT OFFICE FOR DEVELOPMENT  
AND EUROPEAN COHESION POLICY

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**Financial Mechanism Office**

**Ms Stine Andresen, Director**

**Rue Joseph, 12-16 – 1000 Brussels**

Number: 544-1/2015-35

Date: 18 June 2015

Subject: **Minutes of the annual meeting, March 2015**

Dear Ms Andresen,

Please find attached the minutes of the annual meeting, held on 16 March 2015 in Ljubljana.

Yours sincerely,



  
Nina Seljak, MSc

Director of the European Territorial Cooperation  
and Financial Mechanism Office, Head of the  
National Focal Point

Annexes:

- Minutes of the Annual meeting, 16 March, Ljubljana



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA  
GOVERNMENT OFFICE FOR DEVELOPMENT  
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## **ANNUAL MEETING**

**OF THE EEA FINANCIAL MECHANISM AND THE NORWEGIAN FINANCIAL MECHANISM 2009-2014**

## **MINUTES**

Ljubljana, 17 March 2015

**Date and time:** 17 March 2015, 9:30 – 12:30

**Location:** Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy, GODC  
Kotnikova 5 (II. floor conference room), Ljubljana

**Participants:** **Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs**  
Mr Tom Tjomsland, Senior Adviser for Central European and the EEA/Norway Grants

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Iceland**  
Ms Unnur Orradottir

**Financial Mechanism Office**  
Mr Rune Vistad, Head of Sector Team  
Ms Andrea Pietras, Senior Country Officer – Poland, Slovenia

**Embassy of the Kingdom of Norway in Hungary**  
Ms Katrine Steinfeld, Political Advisor for Slovenia

**Embassy of Iceland in Vienna**  
Mr Thórdur Ingví Guðmundsson

**Slovenian National Focal Point**  
Ms Nina Seljak, Head of NFP  
Mr Peter Ješovnik, Head of Financial Mechanism Division, NFP

**Ministry of Finance**  
Mr Peter Škofič,  
Ms Nataša Kušar

**Budget Supervision Office**  
Ms Mojca Krisch, Auditor  
Mr Božidar Hlebec, Auditor

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## **Programme Operators**

### SI02 EEA FM Programme – Programme Operator GODC

Ms Silvija Jakopovič, Responsible person

Ms Andreja Štravs

### SI03 NGO Programme – Programme Operator REC, CNVOS

Ms Tina Divjak

### SI04 Scholarship Programme – Programme Operator CMEPIUS

Ms Alenka Flander, Director

Ms Marja Medved

### SI05 Norwegian FM Programme – Programme Operator GODC

Ms Nataša Anderlič, Responsible person

### **Coordination and public relation division, GODC**

Ms Nataša Kogej

### **European Territorial Cooperation division, GODC**

Ms Maja Humar

## **Proposed Agenda:**

1. Opening remarks/adoption of the agenda
2. Presentation of the Combined Strategic and Annual Programme Report
3. Bilateral relations and Bilateral fund at national level
4. Status of programme implementation
5. Risk management
6. Publicity and communication
7. Horizontal concerns
8. Closing remarks

## **1. Opening remarks/adoption of the agenda**

After the opening remarks of Ms Seljak, Head of NFP, participants were also welcomed by Mr Tjomsland and Ms Orradottir. After a short introduction of participants the proposed agenda was adopted.

## **2. Presentation of the Combined Strategic and annual programme report**

NFP contact person has presented the Combined Strategic and Annual Programme Report on the implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism and Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009–2014 in Slovenia for 2014.

A brief description of developments in 2014, which was quite a busy and successful year, was given. Selection procedures were held in November and December for SI02 and SI05 respectively, and year 2015 will be the year of project implementation. SI03 had signed project contracts in 2014. SI04 also had very good results in 2014; the number of mobilities (student mobilities, staff, teacher and expert mobilities, researcher mobilities and mobilities in the school sector) was really high.

Regarding the management, the Description of management and control system for SI02, SI04 and SI05 was sent to the FMO in the beginning of June. Last year a lot of effort was put on strengthening of bilateral relations on national and programme level.

### ***Assessment of the effects of the grants***

A lot of effort was put on the chapter on assessment of the effects of the grants. It is important for Slovenia that all funds (national, EU funds, fund of the EEA and NOR FM) focus on social and economic development. Both mechanisms are included in the strategic document, Slovenia's Development Strategy 2014-2020, and the objectives of the cohesion policy in the 2014-2020 period. The presences of the funds are important because they complement European cohesion strategy/policy. Regarding the bilateral relations, the funds available made an important contribution for strengthening bilateral relations with donor countries (cooperation at national, programme and project level).

### ***Management and implementation***

Description of management and control system was sent to the FMO for three programmes. No irregularities have been detected in the last reporting period.

Ms Krisch, Budget Supervision Office, gave presentation about audits. Audits were performed by Ms Krisch and Mr Hlebec. Last year several audits were carried out, but not reported yet since the period of audit and annual reporting period are different. In September 2014 an audit of the system of NFP, SI02 and SI05 started and will be finished by the mid of April. In October they started with the audit of expenditures. The first audit has been carried out for SI02 and no relevant findings had been detected. SI05 and SI04 has been audited in February 2015, a specific amount of funds have been found ineligible for SI04. The recommendation was given that NFP should check all other reports and exclude all ineligible expenditures. There were no major findings for SI05. SI01 will be audited in the end of March 2015. All findings will be reported in the Annual Audit Report 2015. The annual audit report changed because of an error rate, due to two additional audits on expenditures.

Mr Tjomsland thanked for the presentation and said they look forward for the audit report.

NFP contact person continued with the work plan, and emphasised main points, namely contract signing (SI02 and SI05), organizing workshops for selected project promoters (SI02 and SI05) and joint event with NGO and Cmepius.

In the summary and recommendation, three issues have been raised: signing of contracts for SI02 and SI05 projects; selection of external evaluators (taking into consideration problems that small countries are faced – conflict of interest); request to postpone the implementation of projects, issue already raised by the Monitoring Committee.

Mr Ješovnik gave short presentation of conclusions of the Monitoring Committee, which was held on March 11th. It was agreed the NFP will report to the annual meeting on behalf of the Monitoring Committee. The strategic report for 2014 was discussed and unanimously approved. There were no significant remarks except the issue with ineligible costs under SI04 and extending the duration of projects.

Mr Tjomsland thanked the NFP for taking into account Donor comments on the previous annual report. The 2014 report was assessed as a very good one; it gives a good overview, bilateral relations, risk assessment and horizontal concerns are well covered and the report provides a lot of information regarding the individual programmes. For the next annual report it is suggested to develop the executive summary, which should focus on the main issues and results raised in the report; to restructure the bilateral assessment of the effect of the grants; to including more information on results as implementation progresses and to include an assessment of the management and control system. The FMO is planning to organize a communication workshop for NFPs, which will take place in Prague in April 2015. The Slovenian NFP will be invited to present its report as a good example. Furthermore, the annual report shall be published on the website together with the minutes of this meeting. The Combined Annual and Strategic Report was approved.

Ms Flander, Cmepius, PO for Slovenian Scholarship Fund, stressed problems they are facing. Firstly, there are severe delays, since their monthly reports haven't been checked since September 2014, so they do not have funds to refund for project implementation. This is their formal obligation and they do not want to be forced into disobeying the contract. The second issue is an issue of ineligibility of costs. The problem was not that there were no clear links. The issue was that they haven't calculated expenditures according to the guidelines, which they have not received. They have been acquainted with it during the audit in January. They did everything by the legislation, they are happy to correct, but they cannot accept this issue as their fault. They work well, have good results and are asking for solutions.

Ms Seljak expressed her believe that these issues can be resolved. Regarding the first point, she explained GODC is doing everything it can do with resources available. Regarding the second point, there are audits, which find some deviation, so the system can be improved. She noted that everyone who prepares guidelines, manuals, knows it is impossible to predict everything. When guidelines were prepared also other programmes, like the EU cohesion programmes?, were kept in mind. She believes this irregularity could be eliminated, what in a way that it was proposed by Budget Supervision Office, NFP has a deadline of two months and will check other reports. Ms Seljak

under lined that the NFP is obliged to follow certain procedures. The NFP will try to talk to other beneficiaries to make sure this problem will not happen again.

Ms Flander once again explained that the problem was, they haven't seen the manual and irregularities had been detected *postfestum*. Mr Hlebec commented that the problem was not in the manual, but that the employee worked 100% on another programme and not on the EEA&NOR programme. Ms Flander responded that 20% additional work is allowed by the legislation and only 20% was covered by grants. Mr Hlebec suggested going through the report once more. Ms Flander suggested clarifying the issue in question.

Ms Seljak commented that it is appropriate to stress this issue at this meeting but it is not the time and place to discuss this topic further. Anyhow, this should be dealt with and feedback should be given how it will be resolved.

Mr Tjomsland commented that this issue is an internal Slovenian matter. The FMO can give advice, but the issue should be resolved by the NFP and the relevant authorities in Slovenia.

### **3. Bilateral relations and bilateral fund at the national level**

Bilateral cooperation at the national level is carried out in line with three priorities: cooperation in the field of health, cooperation in the field of gender equality and Slovenian/EEA countries experiences in the past and future European integration. The NFP working group, which was established to monitor the implementation of the bilateral fund at the national level, met in September 2014 and February 2015. This kind of meetings are welcomed to exchange experiences and good practices. All ministries involved in the bilateral fund gave reports on the activities and made plans for the future. Under the first priority, the Ministry of Health suggested to postpone a study visit and a conference to April 2015 and autumn 2015, respectively. Under the second priority (cooperation in the field of gender equality), there was a study visit to Iceland in August 2014, and a very successful conference "Women – 20 Years after Beijing" was held in November 2014. A consultation meeting will be held in spring 2015. Under the third priority, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) visited the Norwegian MFA in the beginning of 2014 for a discussion and preparation of the conference "Different models of past and future European integration – a look from inside and outside the EU" held in October 2014 in Ljubljana. The Slovenian MFA has just sent another proposal for the year 2015. The NFP is pleased with the activities carried out so far, most of the plans were realized, main results pointed out in the work plan were achieved.

Ms Seljak added that at the last annual meeting it was said Slovenia was very attractive for bilateral cooperation.

Mr Tjomsland noted that in general bilateral cooperation is progressing well and health and gender related issues are priorities for bilateral cooperation in Slovenia. The open calls have shown that there is a good interest in bilateral cooperation in these areas. Under the scholarship programme bilateral cooperation is also strong. Overall, there is a potential for further development of bilateral relations. This is something to build on in the next period. The Embassy explained a proposal for study trip for Slovenian Parliamentarians to Norway which is under discussion.

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Mr Vistad commented that the bilateral fund is an important instrument of the Grants. The scholarship fund projects visited on 16<sup>th</sup> March are good examples how cooperation can lead to some changes on both sides. More of these effects could be shown in the next Combined Annual & Strategic report.

Mr Tjomsland added that ways of improving bilateral cooperation instruments are being explored for the next funding period.

Ms Seljak added that it is also in Slovenia's interest that partnerships are not short-term but long-term.

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

##### ***SI01 – Technical Assistance and Bilateral Fund at the National Level (NFP contact person)***

The main aim of the technical assistance programme is to contribute to the management cost at the NFP, certifying authority and the Audit Authority related to the implementation of the EEA and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism. In 2014 DORIS training was organized for programme operators, monitoring committee and annual meeting were organized as well. The NFP also attended certain workshops and conferences. The NFP believes these workshops are important to exchange knowledge, practices, and maybe to solve certain issues.

##### ***SI02 – EEA Financial Mechanism Programme (Ms Silvija Jakopovič)***

EEA consists of three different areas: Biodiversity and ecosystem services; Conservation and revitalisation of cultural and natural heritage; and Environmental monitoring and integrated planning and control.

The main focus of work in the framework of the EEA Financial Mechanism Programme in 2014 was on: establishing a system of project implementation and reporting; concluding/signing contracts for a predefined projects; and carrying out the whole process of selecting projects (public call).

Regarding the pre-defined project, implemented under the area ' Environmental monitoring and integrated planning and control', it is carried out by the Project promoter Slovenian Surveying and Mapping Authority in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment and Donor Project Partners, the Norwegian Mapping Authority (Statens Kartverk) and the National Land Survey of Iceland (Landmaelingar). Positive appraisal of the project was given on 25 July 2013, the contract has been signed in 2014. The project is divided into four subprojects and is being implemented in accordance with the Project Implementation Plan. The general assessment of the project as a whole is that 46% of the project has been realised by the end of 2014. Despite this fact, the project promoter has expressed the need for extending the project duration until November 2016.

Under other programme areas, projects were selected under the public call. There were 43 applications received, 28 applications entered the quality assessment. In the end nine projects have been selected for co-financing. Eight out of nine selected projects have already started with



implementation, since they have already received decisions on the allocation of funds. For the 9<sup>th</sup> project the decision is in the procedure of signature. There are four projects with bilateral partners, three from Norway and one from Iceland.

The main focus in 2015 will be on signing of project contracts, workshops, regular monitoring, on-set monitoring of the predefined project and one or two projects selected in the public call.

Regarding bilateral cooperation, the work plan of activities under the fund for bilateral relations was prepared in 2013 by both the programme operator and the members of the working group from relevant ministries involved in the preparation and implementation of the programme. Since the focus last year was on the call procedures, activities planned for 2014 will be postponed to 2015 and 2016. In December 2014, responsible person for SI02 attended the 1st Programme Operator and Donor Programme Partner Workshop for EEA and Norway Grants Environmental, Energy and Climate Change Programmes. In May 2015 responsible person for SI02 will attend the Conference on Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems and their Services in Trondheim.

Several activities were carried out within the pre-defined project, such as launching conference, organization of two international workshops and a meeting of the project's consortium in Oslo.

In the Strategic report bilateral indicators achieved by the end of 2014 are presented.

Mr Tjomsland commended the NFP for the efficient organisation of the selection committees of the SI02 and SI05 calls and the detailed preparation of documents. He emphasised the need for results in bilateral relations under both programmes. Moreover, he requested the NFP and the Certifying Authority to keep that the deadlines set by the regulation for the submission of interim financial reports.

Mr Vistad pointed out that it is important to sign project contracts swiftly and to start implementation. Ms Jakopovič explained that decisions have been issued for eight projects, and for the ninth it is in the signature procedure. Mr Vistad reminded of the importance that project level information (PLI) needs to be entered into Doris 15 days after signing the contracts.

Ms Seljak said we accepted comments regarding the delays and will respect the deadlines. After the projects are submitted it is very important that everything is clear and settled before signing the contract. The NFP's decision was that this process of issuing the decision and signing the contracts was a bit longer in order to ensure that following a decision a project is ready to be implemented. After eliminating all potential problems the NFP expects the implementation phase will run smoothly. The NFP and PO puts a lot of emphasis on face-to-face meetings with project promoters. This approach is followed based on experience also with EU funded projects.

### ***SI03 – NGO Programme (Ms Tina Divjak)***

In connection to the SI03 programme, most issues have already been discussed at the last annual meeting. The implementation of the programme is following the proposed scheduled; there are no delays. Both calls are finalised; contracts were signed in February and October 2014. The Fund Operator (FO) is overburdened with only 2.5 employees working on the programme. The FO invested

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a lot of additional resources for the selection procedure. Around 600 applications were; 33 projects were approved. 10 out of 15 applicants under big and medium project have bilateral partners, and 3 of 18 under small projects. Projects are now in the implementation phase.

The FO is at this stage increasingly focusing on visibility and project promoters are also doing this on their own account. The project promoters are very present in the media. The FO is guiding and supporting them to make their work more visible in the media. The FO will participate in organizing a joint event with Cmepius and the NFP in connection to project promoters that have similar activities to connect them and to think about what they can do together.

The NGO programme is directly contracted by the FMO. The FO is very satisfied with the relations and support. An audit scheduled for April 2015. To date one irregularity was detected, because one project promoter submitted a fake annual report in the application period for a small project. The FO resolved the contract and reported the fraud to the Prosecutor. In 2015 the FO will carry out on-the-spot visits, monitoring and continued support to project promoters. The implementation is on schedule; there is no need to prolong the implementation period, because projects started on time. However, the FO supports the idea of extensions for the achievement of better results.

Mr Tjomsland expressed satisfaction with the work of the FO and noted that the two calls have been very successful and the programme is running well. The Donors take note of the high management costs and the comment on extensions.

Mr Vistad added that FMO is very pleased with the success of the programme. The NGO programme in Slovenia is one of the best NGO programmes. Moreover, he commended the FO for the firm action taken with regard to the detected irregularity. The audit contracted by the FMO in 2015 and will be a system audit.

#### ***SI04 – Slovene Scholarship Fund (Ms Marja Medved)***

For the SI04 programme, there were funds of 1.9 million EUR available. The PO will use all the funding available. Under the first call in 2013, 15 projects had been selected; under the second call in 2014 18 projects had been selected; and under the last call in 2015, 15 have been selected.

The main tasks of the programme operator in 2015 will be dedicated to monitoring visits and on-the-spot checks. As a part of the monitoring system in 2014, the PO developed MOBIUS, an IT system to monitor projects which is a very useful tool. Every three months the PO's coordinator is in touch with project promoters, to know what is going on within the projects.

The PO is now strongly focused on promotional activities. Daily activities relate to publishing information regarding the projects on website, Facebook and in the PO's magazine. Since the PO is a national agency also for other programmes, it tries to find synergies with the EEA and NOR grants and to link all activities. In November 2014 the PO held a seminar for joint study programmes, and published a manual. In June 2014 the PO gave a presentation of projects to the Norwegian ambassador.

Regarding bilateral activities, it was noted that study visits are a great way to improve bilateral relations, mutual understanding, and are great for sharing ideas. In 2014 there was a contact seminar in Norway attended by Slovenian institutions. In October 2015 there will be a meeting of POs and Cooperation Committee meeting.

The PO is planning a joint event in May 2015, together with the Embassy, NGOs and the NFP. The PO is also planning monitoring activities, final evaluation and thematic activities, further promotion of concrete project results and study visits to the donor countries.

Mr Tjomsland noted the positive development of the programme implementation and thanked Cmepius for the organisation of the site visit the day before the annual meeting.

Mr Vistad added that it was very interesting to see the projects.

#### ***SI05 – Norwegian Financial Mechanism Programme (Ms Nataša Anderlič)***

On 1<sup>st</sup> December 2014, 24 projects were selected for co-financing in the areas of health and gender equality. Following an information meeting with project promoters was held. The main guideline was that project does not change except in the time frame. No project promoter has dropped out. The NFP's focus is to avoid double financing. At this stage no double financing has been detected, however projects will be continuously monitored. All decisions were issued except for three projects and the implementation phase is now starting.

Steps ahead are concluding the contracts, supporting to project promoters, supervision of implementation, efficient reporting system, plan of bilateral activities (no meeting of cooperation committee was held last year due to the circumstances, the next meeting will follow very shortly after the annual meeting, in April or in May), promotion of results, sustainability of results and lessons learnt.

Ms Anderlič announced that she is leaving GODC and thanked all. Ms Seljak also thanked Ms Anderlič.

Mr Tjomsland reiterated that gender and health are priorities for the Donors; therefore this programme is a very important one.

Mr Vistad commented that the programme is slightly behind schedule; the programme management is dependent on key persons. He also pointed out that it is important to balance control with results. Moreover, it is important to communicate results.

#### ***SI22 (Mr Rune Vistad)***

SI22 is the smallest programme in Slovenia. It is managed by Innovation Norway and is finalised. Two projects were implemented: *Decent project for decent work* addressed youth; and *Decent Retirement*

focused on the establishment of a national tripartite platform. In IN's opinion the projects achieved very good results and the cooperation was very good.

Ms Seljak said that progress in all programmes has been made since the last meeting a few months ago. It will be possible to report on results under the programmes at the next annual meeting.

## 5. Risk management

The issue that was already raised at the monitoring committee last and this year was the extension of the project duration, since it is very important to achieve objectives of programmes. NPF also presented risk assessment at the national level which are: poor implementation/management of awarded projects/activities, insufficient dissemination of results, lack of sustainability, lack of interest for co-operation with donor countries, shortage of staff. It was also presented the mitigation measures planned/done: efficient monitoring of project implementation; additional promotion of projects results (webpage, brochure, events for presenting the results of the projects); adequate evaluation of sustainability in projects, enhanced promotion; increase the promotion of pre-defined and other selected projects; connecting potential partners through the common point; flexibility in assuring human resources in terms of quantity and skills according to actual needs; adequate reorganisation and education of staff.

Risk management at the programme level SI02 and SI05 was presented by Ms Anderlič. The following risks had been identified:

- Delay in starting the project: on the basis of the results and indicators this delay does not have the major impact, activities will be intensified.
- Shorter time for project implementation due to delays.
- Poor implementation/management of projects.
- Poor results and lack of sustainability.
- Failure to achieve project/programme outcomes and indicator values.
- Insufficient will/interest of target group to be involved in the project activities.

Mitigation measures: Support to potential applicants (publication of FAQ on the web site, workshops) accelerating all administrative and managerial processes in order for applicants to start projects as soon as possible; good communication between the Programme operator and Project promoter in order intensify project activities where possible; preparation of a list of selected projects with estimated high to low implementation risks by the Programme operator and a well-prepared and implemented monitoring plan for 2015, 2016 and 2017; rapid response to identified risk and situations and adequate response to them by the Programme operator; risk of not achieving programme/project outcomes and indicators values could be identified (on the basis of project monitoring and project reports) in the second half of 2015, which could lead to the possibility of modifications (if necessary) to the programme and/or Programme Agreement; systematic and regular involvement of key target groups and good, target-based communication strategy.

The major point that will show how implementation is carried out will be control.

Mr Ješovnik said that Nataša Anderlič is leaving on 1<sup>st</sup> April and will be replaced by Ms Maja Humar, and Ms Štravs will go on a maternity leave soon. In order to strengthen control activities, it is suggested that Ms Štravs' position will be moved to the control unit for the time of her leave.

Ms Jakopovič (PO for SI02) added the need to extend project implementation, at least for projects under biodiversity and cultural heritage.

Ms Seljak added that some flexibility is expected from projects promoters. The NFP's task is to ensure that projects run smoothly. Focus so far was on the calls, now it is to strengthen the control unit that is why Mr Ješovnik's proposal is reasonable. As long as the NFP can detect errors, irregularities, corruption, the system works. Not everything has to be perfect. In Tallinn the NFP received information that the report by Transparency International was modified. The NFP is happy to see that Slovenia is somewhere in the middle of the spectrum, but it would be better to see a lower risk assessment.

Regarding the Transparency International report, Mr Tjomsland notified that the risk assessment process has been finished and the report will be published and circulated in the first half of this year. The FMO will contract external auditors to carry out two audits in 2015 on the SI02 and the SI05 programmes. The audits are planned for 4th quarter 2015. In line with Art 10.3.2 of the Regulation, the NFP and the POs will be given two weeks' notice before the audits are carried out. Regarding the queries on extensions of the eligibility period of projects, the Donor's letter from May 2014 is still valid. However, the Regulation stipulates that in exceptional circumstances prolongation might be requested. Discussions are being held by the Donors on these issues, however, no decision have been made.

Mr Vistad reminded that expenditures are eligible until end April but can be reported later. He recalled that the FO and PO for SI03 and SI04 estimate that projects will be completed in time. It would be useful to have an indication of absorption of funds.

Mr Ješovnik agreed and noted that when the information regarding the absorption will be known, it will be reported. But first reports need to be received to begin with. It is expected that by September/October 2015 the situation will be clear; then the NFP can be more specific.

## **6. Publicity and communication**

Publicity and communication activities are performed also in cooperation with the Public relations department. Information regarding the bilateral activities is published on the website. The NFP gave a lot of information on the public call and about the programmes. A lot of lot of journalist questions had been received about the progress of the public call. The complaint mechanism has also been upgraded on the web page.

Plans for 2015: Update of the webpage <http://norwaygrants.si> process; workshops for effective and timely implementation, attendance at chosen Project Promoters opening and closing ceremonies, promotion of bilateral activities (on programme and national level). All relevant informational and promotional activities will be published on the NFP's website and Facebook profile.

Ms Seljak added that a lot of questions were received from journalist, also positive ones.

Mr Tjomsland underlined the importance of communicating concrete results. It is important to disseminate information, communicate success stories, enter data into Doris and keep close contacts with the Embassy and the FMO. It is appreciated, that the webpage and FB are lively. The Donors appreciate the NFP's active presence in social media. He stressed the importance to promote bilateral cooperation. There will be a workshop in Prague in April 2015 addressing communication issues, which will be a useful forum for all beneficiary states.

Mr Vistad added that 2015 is an important year to report on results. Photos and videos are always useful in communication. It is also important to keep in contact with the FMO, and to send picture to the FMO picture database.

## **7. Horizontal concerns**

Special emphasis under SI02 and SI05 within the preparation of the public call was on good governance, sustainable development and gender equality, project applicants had to describe their management of these concerns.

The horizontal policies have to be observed and reported at the final report of projects implementation.

NGO fund follows the horizontal concerns (hate speech, racism and xenophobia, homophobia, Roma, sexual harassment and trafficking) within six priority areas: democracy, human rights, social inequalities, children and youth, environmental protection, welfare and social rights.

In relation to NGO Fund, Ms Divjak said that covering all these concerns always depends on project promoters. One of the very visible projects is monitoring hate speech, and has a very good access to the media. It is very important to cover homophobia these days. It is very important that project promoters have an opportunity to address this issue by these grants.

Mr Tjomsland said that horizontal concerns are examples of the fundamental European values underpinning the Mechanisms; they are not only part of NGO programme, but also SI02 and SI05 are addressing these issues. The Donors appreciate that the NFP follows and reports on the implementation of horizontal concerns and cross-cutting issues. The NFP is encouraged to continue in this direction.

Mr Vistad agreed that it is important to address these issues, which are fundamental principles promoted by the EEA and Norway Grants. It is important to communicate on the implementation of the horizontal concerns.

## **8. Closing remarks**

Ms Seljak emphasised that GODC is also responsible for European territorial cooperation. GODC is now in final phase to send the crossborder Cooperation Programmes to the Commission. GODC gains valuable experiences, but the road is not easy. This knowledge in GODC is really valuable, it is important to share some inputs, experiences also to other programmes. Ms Humar, who is an expert how to develop programmes in the cohesion, gave a short presentation about the Cohesion Policy 2014–2020.

Firstly, Ms Humar presented key highlights/new features of the 2014 – 2020 programming period. Differences between the previous and new programming period among others refer to partnership agreement, one OP for all three Cohesion Policy Funds, division of Slovenia into two cohesion regions, division of ERDF and ESF support by two cohesion regions, concentration on key thematic objectives.

Secondly, content of the key programming and strategic documents was presented. The Partnership Agreement is a strategic document covering 5 EU structural and investment funds which cooperate and complement one another. Common provisions are set out in Regulation (EU) no 1303/2013. Under the new programming period Slovenia is eligible approximately to 4.118 billion EUR.

Operational Programme for the implementation of the EU Cohesion Policy, which has already been adopted, is a programming document covering the ESF, ERDF and CF. The support from EU funds available to Slovenia for European Cohesion Policy implementation in the 2014-2020 programming period is 3.255 billion EUR. The OP is covering 14 priority axes (11 thematic objectives + 3 for Technical Assistance). Slovenia is concentrating the support on 3 thematic objectives: international competitiveness of research, innovation and technological development; dynamic and competitive entrepreneurship for green economic growth; and improvements of the environment and biodiversity status.

Coordination of the OP will be done by the managing authority which is GODC. There is also an Inter-ministerial Coordination Committee which is monitoring the achievement of the set objectives and coordinating the ESI Funds.

Within the European territorial cooperation goal the ERDF supports especially investments in research and innovation, tourism and in enhancing institutional capacity.

Finally, it was summarized that:

- The methodology developed in programming of Cohesion Policy Funds will be used for programming the EEA & Norwegian FM;
- The beneficiaries as well as the implementing structures are familiar with the concept and structure of Cohesion Policy; it is reasonable to build on that;
- Within Cohesion Policy support greater emphasis is put on investing in the so-called soft actions and measures. The differentiation of FM to also allow investments/infrastructure would increase visibility;
- GODC aims to simplify implementation.

Ms Seljak said the programming process is a hard job, GODC knows that something will follow the NOR&EEA 2009-2014 period, and she challenged donors to present what is happening with the programming process. She asked if the draft of the new Regulation will be sent to member states before its endorsement, in order to prepare for the system to follow.

Mr Tjomsland confirmed that the Regulation will be sent to all beneficiary states for consultation. The main message regarding the next period is to keep as much as possible from the present period. A lot of new features have been introduced in this period and the aim is not to include too many

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novelties in the new perspective. There might be more regional cooperation; possibly programmes will combine several programme areas and possibly the Regulation will be more flexible.

Ms Humar commented that the work of Working Party on EFTA is followed and for this purpose GODC collaborates with our Permanent representation in Brussels.

Ms Pietras underlined two issues, namely to submit project information into DoRis timely and to speed up contracting for the SI02 and SI05 projects.

Ms Seljak thanked all for the constructive meeting, which was a good opportunity to share thoughts and information, what is beneficial, since it is good to hear what can be upgraded and improved.



