



## COMBINED STRATEGIC AND ANNUAL PROGRAMME REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE

### EEA FINANCIAL MECHANISM AND NORWEGIAN FINANCIAL MECHANISM 2014–2021 IN SLOVENIA

**Reporting period:** January 2020 – December 2020

**Prepared by:** National Focal Point

Government Office for Development and European Cohesion  
Policy



## A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Due to the health situation and declared epidemic Covid-19 in spring and autumn 2020 in Slovenia, the past year was full of challenges. Flexible adaptation to the circumstances and work processes were necessary.

The activities for the implementation of the EEA and Norway grants continued as effectively and efficiently as possible, however certain limitations and delays have occurred as a result of exceptional work conditions.

### National level

In the first half of 2020 the first priority of the National Focal Point (hereinafter NFP) was to finalise the Decree on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism and EEA Financial Mechanism in the Republic of Slovenia in the period 2014–2021. Finally, the Decree was approved by the Slovene Government in November 2020.

The second priority of the NFP, the Programme Operator (hereinafter PO) for the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship and the PO for the Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation was to set up the monitoring system eMS in order to have all management, control, information and audit trail flows in one place.

In September 2020 the NFP approved the Description of the management and control system (hereinafter DMCS) of the PO for the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Programme and the DMCS of the PO for the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship and informed the Financial Mechanism Office (hereinafter FMO) on the matter.

Due to the donor Regulations in November 2020 the NFP submitted the proposal for the allocation of the reserve defined in the Memorandum of Understanding on the implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014–2021 and the Memorandum of Understanding on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014–2021 to the FMO and is waiting for the response from the Donors.

Most of information and communication activities in 2020 had to be adapted to the Covid-19 epidemic situation, meaning that certain planned activities were postponed and certain implemented through online tools (i. e. NFP and programme websites, Facebook, IG ...).

### Programme level

In the past year the majority of the implemented activities by the PO for the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship and PO for the Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation were dedicated to the preparation of the Call for Proposals and the Application Pack, consisting of the Guide for Beneficiaries and necessary templates and samples to be signed by project promoters and their partners.

Both POs were harmonising the proposed texts of the Call for Proposals with the relevant Slovene line ministries and Donor Programme Partners (hereinafter DPPs). The Call for Proposals for both Programmes is scheduled to be published in the first quarter of 2021.

In May 2020 a significant change was made to the implementation of the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship, namely CMEPIUS as the Fund Operator for the Small Grant Scheme informed the NFP of its irrevocable resignation. In July 2020 the allocation of the funds relating to the Small Grant Scheme was discussed at the videoconference among FMO, DPPs, NFP and PO for the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship. The PO for the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship and the NFP sent a letter to the FMO in August 2020

proposing that the funds, reserved for the Small Grant Scheme should be transferred to a new pre-defined project.

The FMO and DPPs agreed with the proposal and joint development of a pre-defined project “*Blended learning in vocational education and training*”. In December 2020, a draft version of the pre-defined project was sent to the FMO and both DPPs.

In March 2020 another pre-defined project within the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship “*Children’s house/Barnahus*” was confirmed by the FMO, and at the beginning of 2021 positively appraised by the PO.

In 2021, POs shall focus on the launch of the Call for Proposals for the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship and for the Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation. The NFP will also hold a launch event after the publication of the Calls for Proposals to present the aim of the Programmes that will be implemented in Slovenia. In line with the agreement at the Annual Meeting in October 2020, the launch event will be combined with the workshop for potential projects promoters.

### Bilateral relations

Due to epidemic Covid-19 certain pre-agreed bilateral activities within the Fund for Bilateral Relations need to be postponed or carried out in a different form (i. e. online videoconferences). At the request of project promoters several changes have been included in the Work Plan and submitted to the JCBF for approval via written procedure, launched on 2 September 2020 and closed by 24 September 2021. The NFP did not receive any comments, therefore the amended Work Plan was considered approved.

The bilateral initiative “Research on equal opportunities in national diplomacies was finished by the end of 2020. The research was published and is available in English on the [website](#). The study showed that despite many cultural and organisational differences between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Iceland and Slovenia, the challenges that both diplomacies experience in pursuit of gender equality are remarkably similar, highlighting universal difficulties posed to women in pursuit of a successful diplomatic career. On the basis of the findings, several recommendations were put forward, beginning with a clear commitment to change that needs to come from the top-level leadership of the institutions.

### Active Citizens Fund 2014–2021 Slovenia

In 2020 a Call for medium and large projects was concluded and 21 projects were selected for funding; 13 medium projects and 8 large projects. One medium project was withdrawn leaving a total of 20 project contracts signed.

In April 2020 ACF Slovenia opened an on-going Call for quick response (micro) projects. Since June 2020 50 applications were received and 14 contracts signed. ACF Slovenia also prepared a Call for institutional (organisational) grants, but the publication was delayed due to development of a new funding scheme by FMO. It was postponed from June 2020 to January 2021 when it was published.

According to published calls ACF implemented two informational workshops for project applicants, one for 2<sup>nd</sup> stage medium and large projects and one for quick response projects. They also organised two workshops for project promoters of medium and large projects regarding reporting and communications.

## B. PERFORMANCE

### 1. Programme context

#### Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship

The Programme Operator in Slovenia is the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy (hereinafter GODC).

The Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship, whose objective is to improve human capital and knowledge base, aims at strengthening human capital, supporting the development of the 21<sup>st</sup> century competences and creative economy (industry), improving the relevance of education and training to adapt to the real environment, and encouraging the development of supportive measures for inclusion in life and work of disadvantaged groups that are excluded or have limited access to support services.

The Programme comprises five outcomes and covers three programme areas:

- Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeships and Youth Entrepreneurship,
- Work-Life Balance,
- Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency.

Due to the Covid-19 epidemic the PO had to adapt the work processes in the second and the fourth quarter of 2020.

Nevertheless, two major preconditions for publishing the Call for Proposals were implemented in 2020. First, the DMCS of the PO was approved in September 2020 (more detailed information is presented in Chapter 3 Implementation – Management and Control System), and second, the Decree on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism and EEA Financial Mechanism in the Republic of Slovenia in the period 2014–2021 was approved by the Slovene Government in November 2020.

In 2020 the majority of the implemented activities of the PO were dedicated to the preparation of the Call for Proposals and the Application Pack, consisting of the Guide for Beneficiaries and necessary templates and samples to be signed by project promoters and their partners.

During the second and the third quarter of 2020 a draft Call for Proposals in Slovene language was prepared and discussed with the relevant Slovene line ministries. After that the draft Call for Proposals was translated into English language and sent to the FMO and DPPs for comment. In the last quarter of 2020 the PO was working mainly on translation of the whole Application Pack documentation in order to be presented to the FMO and DPPs and later discussed on the Cooperation Committee.

Since the programme is using the eMS monitoring system, where all data shall be stored in computerised form, the PO was intensively working during 2020 on the development and testing. Also, part of the Application Pack was being prepared to guide the applicants on how to use the system during the project application phase and later in the reporting phase. Additionally, there are two pre-defined projects to be implemented under the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship. More information is presented in Chapter 2 (Pre-defined projects) of this document.

**State of play in 2020**

18 February 2020	1 <sup>st</sup> Interim Financial Report for the Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship was submitted via GrACE.
20 March 2020	The pre-defined project “Children’ House/ Barnahus” was confirmed by the FMO.
18, 26 and 30 June 2020	DPPs and POs on line meeting.
10 June 2020	Letter to the FMO – the FMO was informed that CMEPIUS irrevocably resigned from the implementation of the Small Grant Scheme.
2 July 2020	On-line meeting among NFP, PO, DPPs and FMO about withdrawal of the Small Grant Scheme's operator.
8 July 2020	Letter to the FMO regarding the proposal for reallocation of funds for Outcome 2 (Small Grant Scheme) to the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation programme.
24 July and 8 August 2020	Answer from the FMO and DPP regarding NFP/PO proposal for the reallocation of funds for Small Grant Scheme and FMO/DPP suggestion about the alternative solutions for the reallocation of funds.
13 and 20 August 2020	NFP/PO response to the FMO and DPPs regarding solution for reallocation of funds.
31 July 2020	The PO's DMCS was submitted to the NFP.
15 September 2020	The Audit Authority gave its positive opinion that PO's DMCS comply with the requirements (5.1, 5.6 and 5.7) of the Regulations, comply with generally accepted accounting principles and are adequate and proportionate to effectively achieve the objectives of the Programmes.
25 August 2020	2 <sup>nd</sup> Interim Financial Report for the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship was submitted via GrACE.
22 September 2020	1 <sup>st</sup> draft of the Call for Proposals (longer version) was sent to the Donor Programme Partner (DIKU) for comments.
19 October 2020	On line meeting with the relevant ministries, the content of the Call for Proposals was confirmed.
2 December 2020	1 <sup>st</sup> draft of the Call for Proposals (short version) was sent to Donor Programme Partner (DIKU).
16 December 2020	Guide for Beneficiaries, Part 1, as part of the Application Pack was sent to Donor Programme Partners and the FMO.

## Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

The Programme Operator in Slovenia is the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy (hereinafter GODC).

The Programme *Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation* aims to accelerate planning, strengthen institutional capacity and support the implementation of pilot/demonstration measures that will contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation at the local, regional and national levels. The measures will focus on sustainable mobility, restoration of the Natura 2000 Network ecosystems, circular economy, and promotion of use of geothermal energy and other less established renewable energy sources.

The Programme includes three programme areas:

- Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation,
- Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency and Energy Security,
- Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency.

Nevertheless, two major preconditions for publishing the Call for Proposals were implemented in 2020. First, the DMCS of the PO was approved in September 2020 (more detailed information is presented in Chapter 3 Implementation – Management and Control System), and second, the Decree on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism and EEA Financial Mechanism in the Republic of Slovenia in the period 2014–2021 was approved by the Slovene Government in November 2020. In 2020 the majority of the implemented activities of the PO were dedicated to the preparation of the Call for Proposals and the Application Pack, consisting of the Guide for Beneficiaries and necessary templates and samples to be signed by project promoters and their partners.

During the second and the third quarter of 2020 a draft Call for Proposals in Slovene language was prepared and discussed with the relevant Slovene line ministries. After that the draft Call for Proposals was translated into English language and sent to the FMO and Donor Programme Partner for comment. In the last quarter of 2020 the PO was working mainly on translation of the whole Application Pack documentation in order to be presented to the FMO and Donor Programme Partner and later discussed on the Cooperation Committee.

Since the programme is using the eMS monitoring system, where all data shall be stored in computerised form, the PO was intensively working during 2020 on the development and testing. Also, part of the Application Pack was being prepared to guide the applicants on how to use the system during the project application phase and later in the reporting phase.

### State of play in 2020

8 January 2020	1 <sup>st</sup> Financial Report for programme management costs for the period from 18 April 2018 to 31 December 2019 was submitted in the monitoring system (eMS).
18 February 2020	1 <sup>st</sup> Interim Financial Report for the Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation was submitted via GrACE.
31 July 2020	The PO's DMCS was submitted to the NFP.
15 September 2020	The Audit Authority gave its positive opinion that PO's DMCS comply with the requirements (5.1, 5.6 and 5.7) of the Regulations, comply with generally accepted accounting principles and are adequate and proportionate to effectively achieve the objectives of the Programmes.
14 September 2020	2 <sup>nd</sup> Interim Financial Report for the Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation was submitted via GrACE.

6 September 2020	1 <sup>st</sup> draft of the Call for Proposals (longer version) was sent to Donor Programme Partner (NEA) for comments.
19 October 2020	On line meeting with the relevant ministries, the content of the Call for Proposals was confirmed.
2 December 2020	1 <sup>st</sup> draft of the Call for Proposals (short version) was sent to Donor Programme Partner (NEA) and the FMO.
15 December 2020	Guide for Beneficiaries, Part 1, as part of the Application Pack was sent to Donor Programme Partner and the FMO.

## Active Citizens Fund

Overall focus of Active Citizens Fund (ACF) 2014-2021 as a part of the Programme Civil Society of FMs is set to long-term sustainable development and capacity building of the non-governmental sector. The main objective of ACF at the EU level is 'Civil society and active citizenship strengthened and vulnerable groups empowered'. The Programme aims to strengthen the role of non-governmental organisations in the promotion of democracy, public inclusion in decision-making processes at the national and local level and human rights protection. An important priority of the Programme is also strengthening of bilateral cooperation between civil society organisations from Slovenia and organisations from Donor States - Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

Active Citizens Fund priority areas of support are:

- Democracy, active citizenship, good governance and transparency,
- Human rights and equal treatment through combating any discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or gender identity,
- Social justice and inclusion of vulnerable groups,
- Gender equality and gender-based violence,
- Environment and climate change.

Expected outcomes of the ACF in Slovenia are:

- Strengthened civil society watchdog/advocacy role,
- Increased support for civic education and human rights,
- Vulnerable groups are empowered,
- Enhanced capacity and sustainability of CSOs and sector,
- Strengthened bilateral cooperation between civil society organisations from Slovenia and organisations from Donor States,
- Strengthened regional civil society cooperation.

Active Citizens Fund is managed by Financial Mechanism Office - FMO based in Brussels, representing European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and reporting to Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Donor States Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

Upon a public invitation to bid CNVOS – Centre for Information Service, Co-operation and Development of NGOs, in consortium with Institute PIP – Legal and Information Centre Maribor, and DRPD Novo mesto – Society for the Advancement of Voluntary Work Novo mesto were selected to manage the Active Citizens Fund in Slovenia.

Total budget of ACF in Slovenia is EUR 3,000,000, and out of that EUR 2,5 million is intended for project co-financing.

The projects co-financing budget will be distributed via four public calls for proposals:

- Public call for proposals for medium and large projects,
- Public call for proposals for small projects,
- Public call for proposals for micro or »quick response« projects,
- Public call for proposals for institutional support.

Indicative timeline of remaining public calls for proposals:

- Public call for proposals for institutional support was planned for January 2021 (postponed from June 2020 due to development of the new funding scheme) and is open at the moment (until March 15, 2021),
- Public call for proposals for small projects is planned for March 2021.

Distribution of the ACF budget according to expected outcomes (Changes of PIA as of September 2020)

<b>OUTCOME</b>	<b>Indicative budget in EUR in total</b>
Strengthened civil society watchdog/advocacy role	946,995
Increased support for civic education and human rights	391,351
Vulnerable groups are empowered	361,496
Enhanced capacity and sustainability of CSOs and sector	647,158

## 2. Results

### **Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship and Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation**

Reporting on results under both programmes is not relevant, since no projects have been implemented in 2020.

#### **ACF Slovenia**

First quick response (micro) projects were contracted in July 2020, all are still on-going. As the Project Promoters need to submit only one, i.e. final, project report, ACF Slovenia cannot report on the results yet.

Similarly, first medium and large project started with the implementation in August 2021 and their first report is due in February 2021.

#### **Bilateral outcome**

### **Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship**

The Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship is being developed and implemented in partnership with two Donor Programme Partners:

- The Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education (DIKU), and
- The National Agency for International Education Affairs (AIBA).

Roles and responsibilities of DPPs in the preparation and implementation phase are defined in the Rules of Procedures of the Cooperation Committee. The DPPs will be invited to participate in the

selection process and will have a voting role in the body responsible for decision-making on project selection.

The programme puts a special emphasis on promoting active cooperation between institutions from the participating countries. It is therefore desired that projects are implemented in partnership with the donor states institutions. Such partnerships will also be awarded with the additional points in the selection process.

In the project implementation phase, the DPPs will support potential beneficiaries by providing advice on potential project partners and by offering opportunities for networking and sharing good practices with beneficiaries and other stakeholders. It is expected that DPPs will offer active support in searching potential projects partners for Slovene beneficiaries.

Additionally, the bilateral cooperation under the Programme was also strengthened through several meetings with DPPs where the exchange of experiences was performed.

At the meeting with DPPs, the FMO and other POs, organised in June 2020, certain ideas regarding bilateral cooperation and matchmaking in the corona times were presented. Some of them will be used for our potential project promoters in the frame of the upcoming public Call for Proposals for the two Programmes.

## **Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation**

The Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation involves cooperation of one DPP, i.e. Norwegian Environment Agency. The roles and responsibilities of the DPP in the preparation and implementation phase are defined in the Rules of Procedures of the Cooperation Committee.

In the project implementation phase, the DPP will support potential beneficiaries by offering advice regarding potential donor project partners and by offering opportunities for networking and sharing of good practices with beneficiaries and other stakeholders. The DPP will be invited to participate in the selection process and will have a non-voting role in the body responsible for decision-making on project selection.

It is expected that DPP will offer active support in searching potential projects partners for Slovene beneficiaries.

The PO is in contact with the Norwegian Environment Agency as the DPP in the process of developing of the Call for Proposals. DPP is sharing with the PO its knowledge, experiences and good practices with the Call for Proposals and the quality criteria.

## **Active Citizens Fund**

In the course of the 2<sup>nd</sup> application stage for medium and large projects there were some individual match-makings upon the request of project applicant and with the support of Norwegian Helsinki Committee. Due to Covid-19 pandemic Active Citizens Days were cancelled, as well as all other planned bilateral activities.

## **Pre-defined projects**

Two pre-defined projects are going to be implemented within the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship.

### **1. BARNAHUS/CHILDRENS HOUSE:**

The project "Barnahus/Childrens House" was pre-defined in the Programme Agreement, which was signed on 18 December 2019 and relates to PA 16: Good Governance, Accountable

Institutions, Transparency. The pre-defined project will, using the “Barnahus/Children's house” model, provide child-friendly justice in accordance with European directives and improve interagency cooperation in processes and procedures concerning the treatment of children who are victims of crime. The pre-eligibility condition was introduced in the Programme Agreement. The pre-defined project was confirmed by the FMO in March 2020. Unfortunately, also the implementation of this project was affected by the Covid-19 epidemic. Consequently, also the process of the appraisal of the project by the PO was delayed. Finally, the pre-defined project was reviewed by the PO (in line with Article 6.5.3 of the Regulation) and positively appraised in January 2021.

## 2. BLENDED LEARNING IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In May 2020 the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship was unexpectedly faced with a significant change. Small Grant Scheme Operator CMEPIUS informed the PO of its irrevocable resignation as operator of the Small Grant Scheme in Slovenia. After the consultation with the FMO in July 2020, the NFP and the PO decided to reallocate the funds from the Small Grant Scheme to the new pre-defined project “Blended learning in vocational education and training”. Due to the above mentioned resignation the PA and MoUs amendments will be needed.

However, in August 2020 the NFP informed the FMO that the funds from the Small Grant Scheme will be reallocated to a new pre-defined project. Further on in October 2020 a meeting between the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the NFP and the PO was held. During the meeting the possibility of financing a new project under the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship and its possible content was discussed. PO pointed out the expectation that such a project should be implemented in cooperation with a bilateral partner from the Donor States. Since the first meeting PO worked closely with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the project promoter due to the lack of knowledge regarding financial mechanisms. There were some challenges according to the content, financial plan and involvement of the partners from the donor states. The project proposal was already presented to the FMO and DPPs.

Further progress on the project shall continue in 2021.

## 3. Implementation

### Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship and Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

As the Programme Agreement for the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship and the Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation entered into force in December 2019 and the Calls for Proposals have not been launched in 2020 (progress is presented in Chapter B – Performance, 1. Programme Context), and the pre-defined projects were in the development phase in 2020 (progress is presented in Chapter B – Performance, 2. Results on pre-defined projects), the progress on implementation shall be reported in 2021.

### Active Citizens Fund

A vast majority of the activities was implemented as planned:

- A call for medium and large projects was concluded in June 2020: number of submitted applications in the 1st stage: 163, number of evaluated projects in the 1st stage: 133,

number of projects selected for the 2nd phase: 68, number of projects selected for funding: 21 (13 medium and 8 large; 52.3 % having a bilateral partner), number of contracted projects as of 8 January 2021: 18.

- An on-going call for quick response was published in April 2020: 50 applications were received since June 2020, 14 project contracts. A part from initial EUR 40,000 available for the call for proposals, app. EUR 60,000 of the remaining funds from the first call for proposals was transferred to this call. Funds still available as of 31 December 2020: EUR 30,867.71.
- A call for institutional (organisational) grants was prepared, but was delayed due to development of a new funding scheme by FMO and donors that was actually inspired by the idea of ACF Slovenia.
- All planned capacity building activities were implemented: 2 informational workshops for project applicants (one for 2nd stage medium and large projects and one for quick response) and 2 for Project Promoters of medium and large projects (reporting, communications); video tutorial for quick response call launched; 65 individual counselling to project applicants in the 2nd application stage.
- Active role in the Regional Civil Society Initiative Community for Action.

## Financial status

### Financial reporting in 2020

#### **Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship and Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation**

The Interim Financial Reports for the reporting period from 1 January 2020 to 30 June 2020 were submitted in September 2020. Within the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship the management costs occurred and were reported in the total amount of EUR 35,905, whereas within the Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation the management costs occurred and were reported in the total amount of EUR 37,163.

The Interim Financial Reports for the reporting period from 1 July 2020 to 31 December 2020 will be submitted by 15 March 2021.

#### **Active Citizens Fund**

Fund Operator paid out 1<sup>st</sup> prepayments for medium and large projects (40 – 50% of the total amount, depending on the length of the project) as well as 90% of the prepayments for all contracted quick response projects.

Spending on outcomes is as planned. There were some minor modifications after the 1<sup>st</sup> call was completed and remaining funds were transferred to quick response call. Also due to COVID-19 spending of bilateral fund and Civil Society Initiative was less than anticipated.

## Progress by the Joint Committee on Bilateral Funds

The Bilateral Fund Agreement in total amount of EUR 754,000 was signed on 13 September 2018. The purpose of the Bilateral Fund is to financially support activities that have a clear bilateral profile and contribute to strengthening bilateral relations between Donor States and Slovenia.

Within the Bilateral Fund EUR 100,000 has been earmarked for bilateral activities of the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship and EUR 100,000 for bilateral activities of the Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation. The rest, EUR 554,000 has been made available for activities of bilateral interest of participating countries that were approved by the JCBF.

Due to the size of the Bilateral Fund and not so good experience with the open calls for proposals in this area in the previous financing period, it was decided that the most effective and strategic use of funds would result from identifying a few pre-defined activities. Since the calls for proposals are not envisaged, a part of funds has already been allocated to four specific bilateral initiatives. It is expected that in the future other ideas for bilateral activities could be further explored, e.g. organisation of a joint conference on gender equality in Western Balkan; transfer of good practices concerning digitalisation of public tenders; awareness raising about the importance of international development co-operation, etc.

Any further needs of the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship and the Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation will be discussed with the DPPs, coordinated with the NFP, which will amend the Bilateral Fund Work Plan accordingly and submit it to the JCBF for approval.

The first version of the Bilateral Fund Work Plan, which was adopted at the first formal meeting of the JCBF on 10 April 2019, includes the following bilateral initiatives:

- Bilateral initiative No. 1: Organisation of bi-annual consultations and expert events on the topic of women, peace and security (20 years of the UN SC Resolution 1325),
- Bilateral initiative No. 2: Organisation of a conference on adaptation to extreme weather and climate events,
- Bilateral initiative No. 3: Consultations and expert events on modalities of funding for development,
- Bilateral initiative No 4: Research on equal opportunities in national diplomacies.

All four approved bilateral initiatives included in the first version of the Bilateral Fund Work Plan were supposed to be carried out by 2022. However, due to measures taken to fight the COVID-19 epidemic some bilateral activities have to be postponed or carried out in a different form (e.g. on-line videoconferences). At the request of the project promoter for all four bilateral initiatives (i.e. the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia) some changes were included in the second version of the Bilateral Fund Work Plan that was submitted to JCBF for approval by written procedure. The written procedure was launched on 2 September 2020 and concluded on 24 September 2020. The NFP did not receive any comments, therefore the amended Work Plan was considered approved.

### **The current status of implementation of the approved bilateral initiatives:**

#### **Bilateral initiative No. 1: Organisation of bi-annual consultations and expert events on the topic of women, peace and security (20 years of the UN SC Resolution 1325)**

Due to measures taken to fight the COVID-19 epidemic the planned bi-annual consultations have to be postponed to 2021 and 2023. Changes proposed by the project promoter were included in the second version of the Bilateral Fund Work Plan and approved by the JCBF by written procedure in September 2020. The Implementation Agreement between NFP and the project promoter was amended accordingly.

#### **Bilateral initiative No. 2: Organisation of a conference on adaptation to extreme weather and climate events**

In 2019, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs started in cooperation with the Slovenian Environment Agency to define detailed content and other aspects of the conference. However, due to Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 they were no longer able to continue with preparatory work. In ministry's opinion, the videoconference is also not an adequate solution since it would not have desired impact on the planned target groups, professional and general public. At the beginning 2021 the Ministry informed NFP that at the moment they do not have enough human resources to carry out the

proposed bilateral initiative. Therefore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia proposed the Initiative 2 - "Conference on Adaptation to Extreme Weather and Climate Events" in total amount 25,000 EUR to be deleted from the Bilateral Fund Work Plan. The decision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs still needs to be confirmed by the JCBF.

**Bilateral initiative No. 3: Consultations and expert events on modalities of funding for development**

The start of the bilateral initiative "Consultations and expert event on modalities of financing for development", was slightly postponed since the initiative needed to be checked with the proposed Norwegian partners. The first study visit by the project promoter (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia) to Norway took place in December 2019. The concept of the expert event on modalities of funding for development was discussed and further developed with Norwegian partners (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norfund, Norad, NABA – Norwegian-African Business Association, NHO – Norwegian Business Association).

Due to measures taken to fight the COVID-19 epidemic the project promoter requested to postpone the planned expert event to 2022. Changes proposed by the project promoter were included in the second version of the Bilateral Fund Work Plan and approved by the JCBF by written procedure in September 2020. The Implementation Agreement between the NFP and the project promoter was amended accordingly.

**Bilateral initiative No 4: Research on equal opportunities in national diplomacies**

The implementation of the initiative "Research on equal opportunities in national diplomacies" started earlier than foreseen. Already in July 2019, the deputy coordinator of equal opportunities of men and women at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia had the first discussions with Icelandic partners in order to harmonise the modalities of the research (e.g. main goals, methodology, indicators, time frame, financial resources, etc.). The purpose of the visit in Reykjavik was also to identify common challenges of both countries in the area of equal opportunities in diplomacies and to compare and share good practices in this area.

The implementation of this bilateral initiative was mostly carried out according to the plan. However, in 2020, this bilateral initiative was also affected by COVID-19 epidemic. Since the deadline for the implementation of the planned activities identified in the Implementation Agreement was 1 October 2020, the project promoter requested to extend the deadline for implementation for 3 months. The Implementation Agreement between the NFP and the project promoter was modified as requested.

All planned activities within this bilateral initiative were finished by the end of 2020, the research on equal opportunities in national diplomacies was published and is available in English on the [website](#).

The joint Icelandic-Slovenian study sought to assess gender equality and equal opportunities in both Ministries of Foreign Affairs by identifying key issues that are country-specific, apply to both diplomacies, and are relevant to diplomacy as a profession in general. Building on the results of the 2009 Slovenian study, the project was designed as a reciprocal peer-review exercise, providing an insight into individual good practices while looking into key gender gaps that continue to inhibit progress in achieving gender parity. The process of preparing the study led through a number of bilateral dialogues between steering groups that were formed in both Ministries of Foreign Affairs within the span of one year. Consultations revealed a complex nature of the gender gap in diplomacy, with factors such as power, culture, awareness, family/caring responsibilities as well as the prevalence of sexual harassment all playing important roles. The study showed that despite many cultural and organisational differences between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Iceland and Slovenia, the challenges that both diplomacies experience in pursuit of gender equality are remarkably similar, highlighting universal difficulties posed to women in pursuit of a successful diplomatic career. On the basis of the findings, several recommendations were put forward,

beginning with a clear commitment to change that needs to come from the top-level leadership of the institutions.

The final report has been prepared by the project promoter and submitted to the NFP in February 2021 and is currently being checked by the Control Unit.

### **The current status of implementation of the bilateral activities within the Programmes:**

#### **Bilateral activities of the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship**

A total of EUR 100,000 has been earmarked within the Bilateral Fund for bilateral activities of the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship.

In 2020 the following activities related to the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship have been carried out in the framework of Bilateral Fund:

- Study visits of Norwegian institutions in Oslo and Stavanger that deal with young drop-outs and other vulnerable groups of young people that have difficulties in entering labour market: Slovenian representatives had meetings with representatives of the Norwegian Ministry of Labour, NAV Asker, NAV Ullensaker, NAV Eiganes and Tasta. They also had the opportunity to visit some projects on-the-spot and get acquainted with concrete actions targeting the so-called NEET population (not in education, employment and training).
- A preparatory visit to the University College Kristiania in Norway: Slovenian representatives met with potential Norwegian partners.

#### **Bilateral activities of the Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation**

A total of EUR 100,000 has been earmarked within the Bilateral Fund for bilateral activities under the Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation. In 2020 no bilateral activities related to the Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation have been carried out in the framework of the Bilateral Fund.

### **Financial reporting in 2020**

The second interim financial report for the reporting period from 1 July 2019 to 31 December 2019 was submitted in January 2020. The reported expenditure in total amount of EUR 1,624 relates to the implementation of the initiative “Research on equal opportunities in national diplomacies”.

The third interim financial report for the reporting period from 1 January 2020 to 30 June 2020 was submitted in August 2020. No expenditure was reported in this report.

The fourth interim financial report for the reporting period from 1 July 2020 to 31 December 2020 will be submitted by 15 March 2021.

### **Conformity with specific requirements**

At the Annual Meeting, held as an on-line meeting in October 2020, the NFP and the POs presented the proposal of Programme Agreements modifications for the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship and for the Programme Climate Change Modification and Adaptation. The Programme Agreements modifications are necessary for further implementation of both programmes. The proposed modifications would directly affect the Calls for Proposals (project grant rate change, quality assessment of project applications). Additionally, within the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship other

necessary modifications would be needed due to developments in 2020 (i.e., a new pre-defined project instead of the Small Grant Scheme).

In November 2020 the NFP in close cooperation with the POs presented modification proposals to the FMO through official letter. Further developments regarding this issue are to be implemented in 2021.

## Management and control system

### National level

Due to developments in 2020 a few amendments to the MoUs should be agreed upon (changes regarding Small Grant Scheme, allocations of the reserve, new pre-defined project).

In 2020 the changes in management and control system were executed. The new Head of NFP was authorised in spring and the new Head of both POs was authorised in autumn. All changes have not been yet included in DMCS at national level. DMCS will be modified and submitted to the FMO in 2021. The Audit Authority was informed about these changes by letter.

### Programme level

In September 2020, the Audit Authority issued an opinion that the DMCS for the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship and the DMCS for the Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation complied with the requirements set out in Articles 5.1, 5.6 and 5.7 of the Regulations on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism and the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021, that its requirements were adequate and proportionate in relation to the effectiveness of achieving the objectives of the Programmes, and that they complied with the generally accepted accounting principles.

Also in September 2020, the NFP approved the DMCS of the Programme Operator for the Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation and the DMCS of the Programme Operator for the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship and informed the FMO on the approval.

Further on in December 2020 NFP sent the proposals for PA changes for both programmes, namely the change of the project grant rate and quality assessment of the projects.

### Active Citizens Fund

The management and control system was approved by the FMO in July 2020. Due to development of institutional support scheme the MCS will be modified in 2021 to include the needed changes in financial and technical monitoring of these projects.

## C. LEARNING

### Monitoring

In line with the DMCS at national level the NFP regularly monitors the progress on activities of both Programmes through joint meetings. Since the NFP and other entities involved in the implementation of the Programmes are using the Electronic Monitoring System (hereinafter eMS) that enables recording, collecting and storing of data and documents in computerised form, the NFP also performs monitoring by using the data aggregated by the POs.

The PO for the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship and the PO for the Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation have adapted the information monitoring system eMS for the management and control needs on project and programme level.

In 2020 the Audit Authority performed audits of declared expenditure for managing the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship and the Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation and for Technical Assistance and Bilateral Fund activities.

Considering the state of play of the implementation of the Programmes in 2020 the Audit Authority did not perform system audits.

## Evaluation

In 2020 no evaluations were performed due to the early stage of the implementation of the both Programmes. We are planning to implement a mid-term evaluation and a final evaluation for the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship, for the programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation and for the Fund for Bilateral Relations.

## Lessons learned

In 2020 the NFP and the POs often had to deal with excessive administrative burden, arising from the alignment of the national legislation/procedures and donor legislation/procedures.

Also, in 2020 the absence of clear procedures regarding the involvement and competences of the DPPs and the FMO on one hand and the NFP and the POs on the other caused confusion and the barriers to good communication. For the future we would recommend that roles and competences are more clearly defined in the relevant guidance or legal basis (i.e.: clearly defined roles of the Cooperation Committee, the Selection Committee, roles of DPPs).

## D. WORK PLAN

### Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship

1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2021:

- Finalising the Call for Proposals and supporting documentation in line with the FMO and DPPs comments
- Signing of the contract for the pre-defined project “Barnahus/Children’s House”
- Signing of the Programme Implementation Agreement between the PO and NFP
- Organizing a Cooperation Committee meeting
- Organizing a Selection Committee meeting in order to approve the Call for Proposals
- Submitting the third Interim Financial Report for the Programme
- Submitting the State Aid schemes and de-minimis scheme to the Ministry of Finance to notification under the GBER
- Approval of the State Aid schemes and de-minimis scheme by the Ministry of Finance
- Publishing the Call for Proposals
- Implementing promotional activities related to the publication of the Call for Proposals
- Implementing necessary activities for the confirmation of the pre-defined project “Blended learning in vocational education and training” and consultations with DPPs

2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2021:

- Implementing necessary activities for the confirmation of the pre-defined project “Blended learning in vocational education and training” and consultations with DPPs
- Monitoring of the pre-defined project “Barnahus/Children’s House”
- Cooperation at the Lunch event of the Programmes in Slovenia
- Organization of the on-line Workshop for applicants
- Implementing promotional activities related to the publication of the Call for Proposals
- Implementing activities, related to the support to project applicants (i.e. preparing answers to frequently asked questions, meeting related to the project development support ...)
- Supporting activities, relating to matchmaking of Slovene project promoters and Donor Project Partners
- Preparation of the list of quality evaluation experts

### 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2021:

- The PA modification regarding the pre-defined project “Blended learning in vocational education and training”
- Monitoring of the pre-defined project “Barnahus/Children’s House”
- Start of pre-defined project “Blended learning in vocational education and training” implementation
- Submitting the fourth Interim Financial Report for the Programme
- Administrative and eligibility check of the projects submitted within the 1st deadline of the Call for Proposals
- Preparation of the list of projects for quality evaluation procedure

### 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2021:

- Monitoring of the pre-defined project “Blended learning in vocational education and training”
- Monitoring of the pre-defined project “Barnahus/Children’s House”
- Organisation a Selection Committee meeting
- Organisation a Cooperation Committee meeting
- Publishing the list of selected projects
- Face - to face meetings with the selected projects promoters
- Signing of contracts with the selected project promoters
- Promotional activities related to the signing of contracts and to the start of projects implementation

## Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

### 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2021:

- Finalising the Call for Proposal text and supporting documentation in line with FMO and DPP comments on the texts
- Signing of the Programme Implementation Agreement with NFP
- Organising a Selection committee meeting
- Organising a Cooperation Committee meeting
- Submitting the third Interim Financial Report for the Programme
- Submitting the State Aid schemes and de-minimis scheme to the Ministry of Finance to notification under the GBER
- Approval of the State Aid schemes and de-minimis scheme by the Ministry of Finance
- Implementing promotional activities related to the publication of the Call for Proposals
- Publishing the Call for Proposals

2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2021:

- Promoting the Call for Proposals
- Supporting matchmaking of project promoters and Donor project partners
- Cooperation at the Lunch event of the Programmes in Slovenia
- Organization of the on-line Workshop for applicants
- Implementing promotional activities related to the publication of the Call for Proposals
- Implementing activities, related to the support to project applicants (i.e. preparing answers to frequently asked questions, meeting related to the project development support ...)
- Supporting activities, relating to matchmaking of Slovene project promoters and Donor project partners
- Preparation of the list of quality evaluation experts

3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2021:

- Promoting the Call for Proposals
- Submitting the fourth Interim Financial Report for the Programme
- Administrative and eligibility check of the projects submitted within the 1st deadline of the Call for Proposals
- Preparation of the list of projects for quality evaluation procedure

4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2021:

- Organisation a Selection Committee meeting
- Organisation a Cooperation Committee meeting
- Publishing the list of selected projects
- Face – to face meetings with the selected projects promoters
- Signing of contracts with the selected project promoters
- Promotional activities related to the signing of contracts and to the start of projects implementation

## Active Citizens Fund

1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2021:

- Organisational development workshop for project promoters of medium and large projects
- Launch of the 3rd call for proposals – Institutional grants
- Info session for institutional grants
- Video tutorial for institutional grants
- Info sessions on financial management and reporting for project promoters of institutional grants
- Launch of the 3rd call for proposals – small projects
- Monitoring of projects

2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2021:

- Appraisal of the applications for the call for proposals for institutional grants
- Selection committee meeting for the call for proposals for institutional grants
- Info session for call for proposals for small projects
- Preparation of reporting documents for institutional grant

- Signing agreements with project promoters for institutional call for proposals
- Reporting workshop for institutional grant
- Organisation of monthly meetings of project promoters
- Monitoring of projects

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2021:

- Appraisal of the applications for the call for proposals for small projects
- Selection committee meeting for the call for proposals for small projects
- Preparation of reporting documents for small projects
- Organization of monthly meetings of project promoters
- Monitoring of projects

#### 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2021:

- Signing agreements with project promoters for small projects
- Reporting workshop for small projects
- Monitoring of projects

### National Focal Point

#### 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2021

- Participation at the Cooperation Committee meetings (as observers)
- Submitting the fourth Interim Financial Report for Technical Assistance and Bilateral Fund
- Promoting the Call for Proposals (publishing on the webpage [www.eeagrants/norwaygrants.si](http://www.eeagrants/norwaygrants.si), posting on social media: Facebook, IG, on FMO social media, on social media of relevant Slovene ministries ...)
- Changes of the MoUs (allocation of the reserve, Small Grant Scheme, new pre-defined project) and changes of DMCS at national level (the resignation of the Small Grant Scheme and staff changes at the NFP and the POs)
- Organisation of the Joint Committee of Bilateral Fund meeting
- Participation at the bi-monthly communication meeting organized by FMO

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2021:

- Organisation of the Launch event of the Programmes carried out in Slovenia
- Organisation of the Annual meeting with the donors
- Promoting the Call for Proposals (publishing on the webpage [www.eeagrants/norwaygrants.si](http://www.eeagrants/norwaygrants.si), posting on social media: Facebook, IG, on FMO social media, on social media of relevant Slovene ministries,..)
- Monitoring of the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship and of the Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation implementation (regular meetings with the POs, also using eMS for monitoring ...)
- Submitting amended Communication Strategy
- Participation at the bi-monthly communication meeting organized by FMO

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2021:

- Monitoring of the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship and of the Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation implementation (regular meetings with the POs, also using eMS for monitoring ...)

- Submitting the fifth Interim Financial Report for Technical Assistance and Bilateral Fund
- Promotional activities (publishing on the webpage [www.eeagrants/norwaygrants.si](http://www.eeagrants/norwaygrants.si), posting on social media; Facebook, IG)
- Participation at the »Bi-annual Consultations and Expert Event on Women, Peace and Security (20 years of the UN SC Resolution 1325)« (bilateral initiative within the Bilateral Fund)
- Participation at the bi-monthly communication meeting organized by FMO

#### 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2021:

- Monitoring of the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship and of the Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation implementation (regular meetings with the POs, using eMS for monitoring ...)
- Promotional activities related to the start of projects implementation (if possible organisation of events – ceremonial signing of contracts, if possible, publishing at the webpage [www.eeagrants/norwaygrants.si](http://www.eeagrants/norwaygrants.si), posting on social media Facebook, IG,)
- Participation at the bi-monthly communication meeting organized by FMO

#### **Annexes**

1. Updated results (indicator achievements)
2. Communication
3. Overview of contracted projects
4. Risk management
5. Monitoring plan
6. Evaluation plan
7. Evaluation report
8. Technical assistance report

**Annex 1: Updated results (indicator achievements)**

	Expected Programme results	Indicators	Baseline values	Achievements previously reported	Achievements until end December 20xx	Target values
	Programme objective					
Outcome 1						
Output 1.1						
Output 1.x						
Outcome 2						
Output 2.1						
Output 2.x						
Outcome N						
Bilateral outcome						
Bilateral output 1						
Bilateral output x						

## Annex 2: Communication summary

### a. Visibility of the Grants and the Donors

#### National level

The circumstances related to the Covid-19 epidemic had a significant impact on the implementation of the Communication Strategy in 2020 regarding the planned events and achieved indicators.

Namely, the opening event, planned for 2020 should coincide with the publication of the Calls for Proposals for the Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation and the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship. Given the state of play of both Calls for Proposals and preventive measures in place, the organisation of the opening event shall be adapted to the new situation (on-line/virtual activities) and organised in the second quarter of 2021.

As to the indicators of the specific communication objective set in the Communication Strategy, achieving the third indicator (“Events performed”) was planned for 2020 and postponed to 2021. Thus, the review of indicators on the achievement of communication objectives in cumulative values is as follows:

Communication objective	Indicator	Unit of Measurement	Initial Value	Cumulative value at the end 2020 of			Target value at the end of period	Source	Frequency of reporting	Methodology
				2018	2019	2020				
Specific objective	Inform (potential) beneficiaries / communicate the possibilities to use the EEA and Norway Grants	Number of factsheets	0	1	1	1	3	NFP	Annually	Cumulative number of created information leaflets
	and inform target audiences of the results, benefits and impact of the EEA and Norway Grants, its programmes and projects	Other information materials (e.g. brochures, etc.)	0	0	0	0	1	NFP	Annually	Cumulative number of created other information materials
		Events performed	0	1	1	1	3	NFP	Annually	Cumulative number of events performed

In 2020 several news articles related to the EEA and Norway Grants in Slovenia were published by the [Slovenian Press Agency](#), [MMC RTV Slovenia](#) and national newspapers such as [Delo](#). They mostly touched on the pre-defined project “Barnahus/Children’s House”, which will be implemented under the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship and on projects implemented under the EEA and Norway Grants horizontal funds.

News also covered the conversation between the Slovene Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Anže Logar, with his Norwegian counterpart Ms Ine Eriksen Søreide discussing bilateral cooperation and confirming that the two countries cooperate successfully within the EEA and Norway Grants. The news about the talks was shared on our [Facebook page](#).

Furthermore, H.E. Ms Trine Skymoen, the newly appointed Ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway, visited Slovenia to present her credentials to the President of the Republic of Slovenia in December 2020 and also met with the representative of the NFP to inquire about the ongoing activities in the framework of the implementation of the EEA and Norway Grants in Slovenia. The news about her visit was shared on our [Facebook page](#).

In October 2020, the NFP organised an online Annual Meeting to discuss implementation progress and achievements of the Grants in Slovenia. As to the communication, NFP suggested the FMO to organise an online communication workshop on the transformation of communication in light of the COVID-19 situation or that the FMO includes this issue in the upcoming annual communication workshop in order to give communication officers guidance on new ways of communication, new ideas, possibilities and opportunities. Furthermore, a need to update and amend the Communication Strategy in light of the new circumstances was discussed as well. Submission of the amended Communication Strategy is planned at the beginning of the second quarter of 2021. A news piece about the meeting was published on the [website](#) and [social media](#).

NFP also participated in a 2-day digital Annual Communication Workshop on the 12 and 13 November 2020, organized by the FMO. Participants discussed the challenges and opportunities that come with the accelerating digital transformation and how that affects the way we communicate nowadays. The news about the Annual Communication Workshop was shared on the [website](#) and [social media](#).

## Programme level

The Covid-19 epidemic had a significant impact also on the implementation of the Communication Plan in 2020 regarding the planned events, activities and achieved indicators.

Certain limitations and delays have occurred as a result of working in exceptional conditions. Unfortunately, the delays affected also the publication of the Calls for Proposals of the Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation and the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship. Consequently, the launch event did not take place and is planned to coincide with the opening event, planned on national level. The event shall take place in the second quarter of 2021.

Nevertheless, the activities for the implementation of the EEA and Norway grants in Slovenia continued as effectively and efficiently as possible in 2020.

Within the preparation of the Calls for Proposals for both programmes special focus was given to the Guide for beneficiaries, Part 6 on information and communication activities to be implemented by project promoters and their partners.

As to the indicators of the specific communication objective set in the Communication Plan, achieving the first indicator ("Number of factsheets" in relation to the Calls for Proposals) was planned for 2020 and postponed to 2021. Thus, the review of indicators on the achievement of communication objectives in cumulative values is as follows:

Communication objective	Indicator	Unit of Measurement	Initial Value	Cumulative value at the end of		Target value at the end of period	Source	Frequency of reporting	Methodology	
				2019	2020					
Specific objective	Inform beneficiaries / communicate the possibilities to use the EEA	Number of factsheets	Number	0	1	1 <sup>1</sup>	3	PO	Annually	Cumulative number of created information leaflets

and Norway Grants and inform target audiences of the results, benefits and impact of the EEA and Norway Grants, its programme and projects	Other information materials (e.g. brochures, etc.)	Number	0	0	0	1	PO	Annually	Cumulative number of created other information materials
	Events performed	Number	0	0	0	2	PO	Annually	Cumulative number of events performed

<sup>1</sup> Only one table is included, since values are the same for both Programmes.

## b. Communication with others (Communication Network)

The Communication Network was established at the beginning of 2019. The Communication Network includes all Programme Operators and Fund Operators in Slovenia. CMEPIUS is no longer a member of the Communication Network, since it resigned as the Fund Operator for the Small Grant Scheme under the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship in May 2020.

Communication among Communication Network members takes place via e-mail, mostly between the NFP and ACF FO with regard to the publication of ACF's Calls for Proposals.

## c. Website and social media

In the past year, the website of the EEA and Norway Grants in Slovenia was reviewed and modified in order to be compliant with the Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications Act. The [Accessibility Statement](#) was published on the websites [www.norwaygrants.si/](http://www.norwaygrants.si/) [www.eeagrants.si/](http://www.eeagrants.si/) to inform visitors about the compliance of these websites with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and its exceptions.

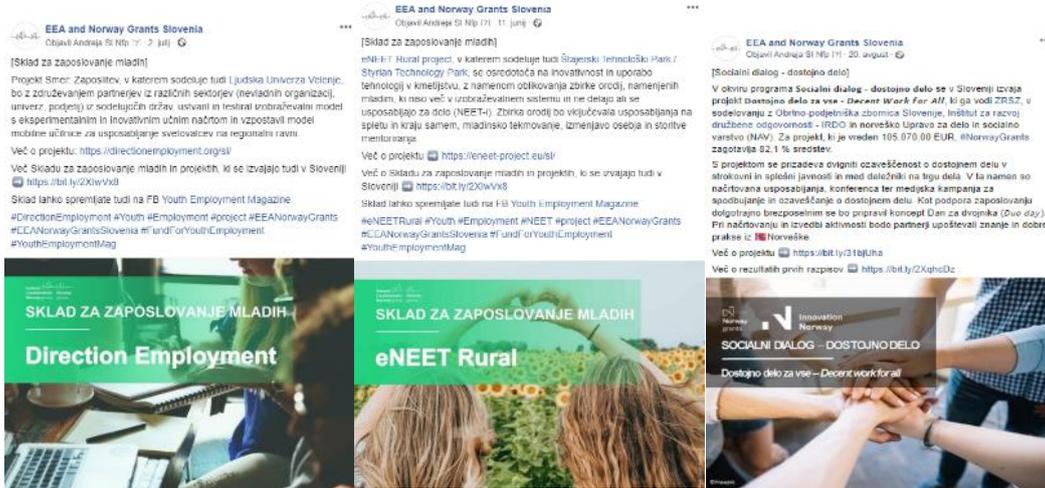
Amid COVID-19 epidemic developments all of information and communication activities in 2020 took place online.

Namely, the Slovene public was up-to-date informed on the relevant Calls for Proposals through the websites [www.norwaygrants.si/](http://www.norwaygrants.si/) / [www.eeagrants.si/](http://www.eeagrants.si/), (i. e. open Calls for Proposals for the Active Citizens Fund, Fund for Youth Employment and Social Dialog – Decent Work Programme).

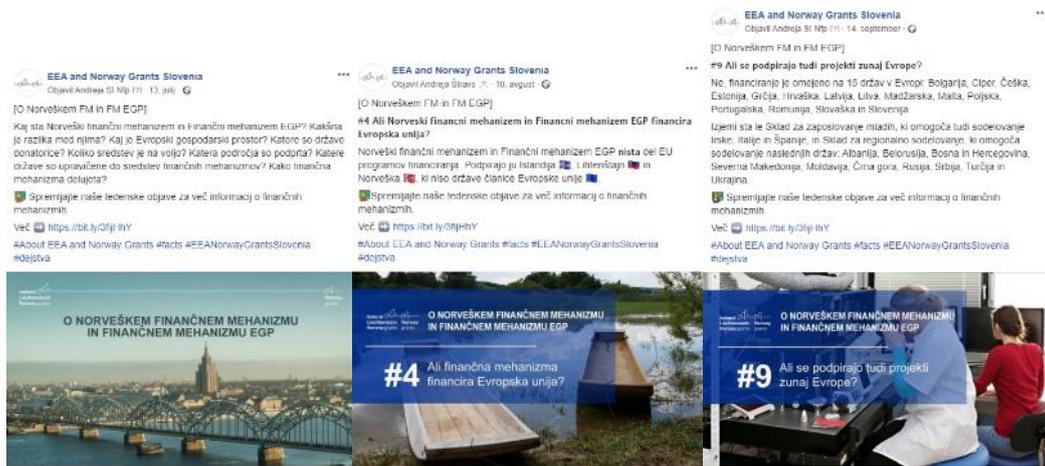
Also, the publication of various articles, news pieces and notifications was ensured through the website media, Facebook and Instagram. Also, the information and notifications from the Financial Mechanism Office, Active Citizens Fund – Slovenia, Innovation Norway (Social Dialogue – Decent Work Programme) and Fund Operator of the Fund for Youth Employment and Fund for Regional Cooperation were shared with the public via a set of communication channels.

Two social media campaigns were carried out:

- **“Project highlights”** (May/August): the aim of the campaign was to publish on a weekly basis posts to highlight five projects involving a Slovenian project promoter or project partner implemented under the EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment and a project that is implemented under the Social Dialogue – Decent Work Programme.



- “About the EEA and Norway Grants” (July 2020/January 2021): the aim was to provide basic information about the Grants in weekly posts.



To sum up, by the end of 2020, more than 19 news pieces were published on the website, 115 posts on Facebook and 54 posts on Instagram. The statistical data reveal 1283 Facebook page likes, 1370 followers on Facebook and 190 followers on Instagram. Web and social media statistics for the 2020 was as follows:

	Indicator	Baseline <sup>1</sup>	End of 2019	End of 2020	Aim at the end of period	Frequency of monitoring	Source/ methodology
Website	Total traffic	2.400 (2018)	3.113	2.628	+10%	annually	Google Analytics
	Referrals to the website from all social media channels	125 (2018)	99	65	+5%	annually	Google Analytics
Facebook	Number of page likes	1137 (2017)	1233	1283	+5%	annually	Facebook Insights Facebook Analytics

	Number of post engagements (total number of clicks, likes, comments and shares)	4547 (2017)	1.075	970	+5%	annually	Facebook Insights Facebook Analytics
	Number of referrals to the web	125 (2018)	93	61	+10%	annually	Google Analytics
<b>Instagram</b>	Number of followers	96 (2018)	162	190	+10%	annually	Instagram Insights

<sup>1</sup> Most of the statistics has been tracked since 2018.

In 2020 the number of Facebook page likes and Instagram followers increased. As mentioned below, the reason for this trend is interest in the funding opportunities.

The lower traffic on the website in 2020 compared to 2019 was influenced by the smaller number of published news in 2020 (19 news) compared to previous year (30 news), as well as the reduced referrals to the website from all social media channels. The latter is due to the nature of most engaging posts on social media, which were linked to Calls for Proposals of the ACF, Social Dialog – Decent Work Programme and horizontal funds in 2020.

Although the number of Facebook and Instagram posts was higher in 2020 than the year before, for 30% and 15% respectively, the number of post engagement declined. This is because the higher reach and engagement received those Facebook posts related to Calls for Proposal announcements and results, which were only around 10% of all posts. The lower post engagement was also influenced by the share of Facebook posts that were shared and not uniquely created (around 30% of all posts). However, well accepted content was also Annual Meeting, information about projects under the Fund for Youth Employment and several posts of the “About the EEA and Norway Grants” campaign,

As to the interest of social media followers in funding opportunities expressed in 2020, it is expected the web and social media indicator values will rise in 2021 following to the publication of Calls for Proposals for both Programmes on the website [www.norwaygrants.si/www.eeagrants.si](http://www.norwaygrants.si/www.eeagrants.si), social media and other channels. A series of social media posts is planned during the open Calls for Proposals to present the content of the Calls for Proposals for both Programmes and to encourage applicants to apply. Since the camping “Project Highlights” was well accepted and promotion of horizontal projects was welcomed by the donors at the annual meeting, a similar campaign is planned for projects implemented under the Fund for Regional Cooperation and Active Citizens Fund in the third quarter of 2021.

#### d. Best practice examples

Since the Programme Agreements were signed in December 2019 and documentation for the Call for Proposals for both Programmes was drafted in 2020 no project was contracted; therefore, there were no examples of interesting projects relevant for communication purposes in 2020.

#### e. Multimedia

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic most of major activities had to be postponed and therefore no relevant multimedia was produced.

### Annex 3: Overview of contracted projects

In 2020 no project contracts have been signed yet.

	Projects	#	# of donor project partners	Amount contracted <sup>a</sup> (in €)	% of outcome budget contracted
<b>Outcome 1</b>	Pre-defined	0			
	Contracted through open calls for proposals	0			
	Contracted through small grant schemes	0			
	Total outcome 1	0			
<b>Outcome 2</b>	Pre-defined	0			
	Contracted through open calls for proposals	0			
	Contracted through small grant schemes	0			
	Total outcome 2	0			
<b>Programme</b>	Total	0			

<sup>a</sup> The total maximum amount committed to projects

## Annex 4: Risk management

### Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship

Programmatic risks						
Risk description	Risk related to	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk score	Response to risk	Description of response
Late publication of the Call for Proposal due to Covid-19 epidemic	Lack of time for project implementation	3	2	2,45	Mitigate	<p>Promotion of the Call for Proposals (publishing on the webpage <a href="http://www.eeagrants/norwaygrants.si">www.eeagrants/norwaygrants.si</a>, posting a notification on social media, i.e. Facebook, IG, on FMO social media, on social media of relevant Slovenian ministries, etc.).</p> <p>Organisation of structural workshops and other substantial help to potential PP in order to prepare high-quality projects the implementation of which could thus start immediately after the contract signature.</p> <p>The individual meetings among the POs staff and the selected PPs to identify all potential projects risks that could result in project delay and outline the mitigation measures.</p>
Lack of interest, capacity or willingness of project partners from donor countries to participate in projects with Slovenian partners	Strengthening bilateral relations	2	2	2	Mitigate	<p>Informing potential project promoters as soon as possible about the programme content, the Call for Proposals and the possibilities of finding project partners in donor countries.</p> <p>Providing support from DPPs in establishing contact.</p> <p>Organisation of matchmaking seminar.</p>

Operational risks						
Risk description	Risk related to	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk score	Response to risk	Description of response
Shortage of staff, unforeseen institutional changes	Successful programme implementation	2	2	2	Mitigate	Flexibility in assuring adequate human resources in terms of quantity and skills according to actual needs. Training of staff involved in the implementation of the programme.
Overall risk of the programme						
		Likelihood	Consequence	Risk score		
OVERALL RISK OF THE PROGRAMME		1	1	1.00		

Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

Programmatic risks						
Risk description	Risk related to	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk score	Response to risk	Description of response
Late publication of the Call for Proposal due to Covid -19 epidemic	Lack of time for project implementation	3	2	2,45	Mitigate	<p>Promotion of the Call for Proposals (publishing on the webpage <a href="http://www.eeagrants/norwaygrants.si">www.eeagrants/norwaygrants.si</a>, posting a notification on social media, i.e. Facebook, IG, on FMO social media, on social media of relevant Slovenian ministries, etc.).</p> <p>Organisation of structural workshops and other substantial help to potential PP in order to prepare high-quality projects the implementation of which could thus start immediately after the contract signature.</p> <p>The individual meetings among the POs staff and the selected PPs to identify all potential projects risks that could result in project delay and outline the mitigation measures.</p>
Lack of interest, capacity or willingness of project partners from donor countries to participate in projects with Slovenian partners	Strengthening bilateral relations	2	2	2	Mitigate	<p>Informing potential project promoters as soon as possible about the programme content, the Call for Proposals and the possibilities of finding project partners in donor countries.</p> <p>Providing support from DPP in establishing contact.</p> <p>Organisation of matchmaking seminar.</p>

Operational risks						
Risk description	Risk related to	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk score	Response to risk	Description of response
Shortage of staff, unforeseen institutional changes	Successful programme implementation	2	2	2	Mitigate	Flexibility in assuring adequate human resources in terms of quantity and skills according to actual needs. Training of staff involved in the implementation of the programme.
Overall risk of the programme						
		Likelihood	Consequence	Risk score		
OVERALL RISK OF THE PROGRAMME		1	1	1.00		

## Annex 5: Monitoring plan

### Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship

Project #	Project name	Monitoring action	Planned timing: Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4	Criteria Monitoring for	Risk issue with the project (if applicable)	Comments	Contact details
/	Predefined project "Barnahus/Children's House"	Administrative verification of the project report.  Regular communication with PP (meetings, emails, telephone communication).	Q3  Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4	Project with significant impact on the overall objective of the Programme.	/	/	Ministry of Justice

Projects selected in the Call for Proposal: it is expected that PO will be able to use its foreseen monitoring tools in 2022: administrative monitoring and verifications of projects (interim projects reports, using IT system eMS), on-the-spot verifications of projects, on-site monitoring visits and regular monitoring of projects implementation (regular meetings between the PO - the project contract manager and the PP).

Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

Project #	Project name	Monitoring action	Planned timing: Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4	Criteria Monitoring for	Risk issue with the project applicable (if)	Comments	Contact details
/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/

Projects selected in the Call for Proposal: it is expected that PO will be able to use its foreseen monitoring tools in 2022: administrative monitoring and verifications of projects (interim projects reports, using IT system eMS), on-the-spot verifications of projects, on-site monitoring visits and regular monitoring of projects implementation (regular meetings between the PO - the project contract manager and the PP).

## Annex 6: Technical assistance report

Slovenia is eligible to Technical Assistance funds for the implementation of Grants in Slovenia at national level, that are coordinated by the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy. The purpose of the Technical Assistance Programme is to contribute to covering the management costs of the National Focal Point, Certifying Authority, Audit Authority and Irregularities Authority incurred in relation to the implementation of the EEA and Norway Grants. Distribution of funds is defined in Annex 7 to the Agreement for the financing of Technical Assistance.

In line with the mentioned Agreement National Focal Point shall ensure that the Certifying Authority, the Audit Authority and the Irregularities Authority properly perform the tasks assigned to them.

Due to the current health situation and declared epidemic in spring and in autumn 2020 in Slovenia and all the limitations regarding the measures to combat the spread of Covid-19, the absorption of TA funds was lower than expected. For example, there were no possibilities to organise public events or carried out other planned promotional activities. All workshops, trainings were organised as video conferences.

## Overview of the main activities covered by the Technical Assistance funds

### National Focal Point

In 2020, the following activities were performed:

- Submission of Interim Financial report,
- Preparation and submission of the Combined Strategic and Annual programme Report for 2019,
- Preparation and submission of the Update of the Combined Strategic and Annual programme Report (until October 2020),
- Organisation of the Annual Meeting with the donors,
- Implementing promotional activities (publishing news on the webpage [www.norwaygrants.si](http://www.norwaygrants.si) /[www.eeagrants.si](http://www.eeagrants.si) and on social media; Facebook, IG, preparing fact sheets for the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship and Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation ...),
- JCBF written procedure implementation.

### Audit Authority

In 2020, the following activities were performed:

- 3rd Annual Audit Report with Opinion for the implementation of the Programmes of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism and EEA Financial Mechanism for the period 2014-2021,
- Compliance assessment of the management and control system of the Programme Operator for the Programme Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship and for the Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation,
- Audit of declared expenditures for Technical Assistance and Bilateral Fund activities.

### Certifying Authority

In 2020, the following activities were performed (no cost were claimed so far):

- certification of all requests submitted to the Certifying Authority.

## Irregularities Authority

In 2020, the following activities were performed (no cost were claimed so far):

- Submission of irregularities reports to the FMO.

## Budget overview

Annex 7 Technical Assistance EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2014-2021						
BUDGET FOR THE WHOLE IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD (in euro)						
						Beneficiary State: Slovenia
Description	National Focal Point	Certifying Authority (MF*)	Certifying Authority (SRDF*)	Audit Authority	Irregularity Authority	TOTAL
I. Additional management systems (Article 8.11.2 (a))	180.000	225.400			30.000	435.400
II. Annual and other meetings with the Donor States (Article 8.11.2 (b))	50.000	5.600		30.000	5.000	90.600
III. Meetings and conferences to share experience (Article 8.11.2 (c))	50.000			20.000	5.000	75.000
IV. Promotional and information activities (Article 8.11.2 (d))	100.000					100.000
V. Audits (Article 8.11.2 (e))				194.500		194.500
VI. On-the-spot verifications (Article 8.11.2 (f))	6.000					6.000
VII. Reviews and evaluations (Article 8.11.2 (g))	150.000					150.000
VIII. Implementation of the FM 2009-2014 (Article 8.11.2 (h))				5.500		5.500
IX. Preparation of the implementation of the FM 2014-2021 (Article 8.11.2 (i))	55.000					55.000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>591.000</b>	<b>231.000</b>	<b>19.000</b>	<b>250.000</b>	<b>40.000</b>	<b>1.131.000</b>
*Ministry of finance, CA from 18 June 2019						
*Public Fund for Regional Development and development of rural areas, CA until 17 June 2019						

## Budget breakdown for 2020

The incurred expenditures in the period from 1 January to 30 June 2020 were in amount of EUR 27,534:

- EUR 6,556 incurred by the National Focal Point,
- EUR 20,978 incurred by the Audit Authority.

The incurred expenditures in the period from 1 July to 31 December 2020 were in amount EUR 25,428:

- EUR 5,419 incurred by the National Focal Point,
- EUR 20,009 incurred by the Audit Authority.

The expenditures are not certified yet.

In 2020 The Certifying and the Irregularities Authority did not report of any expenditures.

## Procurement

No public procurements were implemented in 2020. All planned activities at NFP which would include public procurement procedures were due to the spread of Covid-19 postponed to 2021. Other entities using TA did not plan any public procurements.

## Staffing

In 2020 there have been certain staff changes, namely the change of the Head of NFP in March, when Dimitrij Pur was replaced by Nina Seljak. There was also a change at the Head of POs and the Head of Financial Mechanisms Division, where in October 2020 Špela Dragar replaced Nataša Babuder Rumpret. Two of the colleagues Ksenija Fak and Maja Humar no longer work at the Financial Mechanisms Division.

All changes have not been yet included in DMCS at national level. DMCS will be modified and submitted to the FMO in 2021. Audit Authority was informed about these changes by letter.

The following staff members were involved in the implementation of the Grants (2020):

<b>National Focal Point</b>				
<b>Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy</b>				
Name of staff	Official position	Main tasks	Level of effort (% of working time)	Funded through the Grants (Y/N)
Dimitrij Pur	Head of NFP	Head of NFP (until March 2020)	20%	N
Nina Seljak	Head of NFP	Head of NFP (since March 2020)	20%	N
Nataša Babuder Rumpret	Head of Financial Mechanisms Division	Head of POs (until October 2020), National Focal Point	100%	N
Špela Dragar	Head of Financial Mechanisms Division	Head of POs, National Focal Point (since October 2020)	100%	N
Petra Hiršel Horvat	Undersecretary within Financial Mechanisms Division	Contact person of National Focal Point	100%	N
Maja Humar	Undersecretary within Financial Mechanisms Division	NFP Results and Evaluation Officer (until April 2020)	100%	N
Silvija Jakopovič	Undersecretary within Financial Mechanisms Division	PO Coordinator	100%	Y
Jože Petkovšek	Undersecretary within Financial Mechanisms Division	PO Coordinator	100%	Y

Ksenija Fak	Senior Adviser within Financial Mechanisms Division	PO, Contract Manager (until November 2020)	100%	N
Maja Vodopivec Crkvenjaš	Senior Adviser within Financial Mechanisms Division	PO, Contract Manager	100%	Y
Andreja Štravs	Adviser within Financial Mechanisms Division	NFP Communication Officer	75%	Y
Several employees in Control Division (in total 1.4 FTE)	Controllers within Control Division			Y

<b>Certifying Authority</b>				
<b>Ministry of Finance</b>				
Name of staff	Official position	Main tasks	Level of effort (% of working time)	Funded through the Grants (Y/N)
Evelyn Filip	Head of Department for management of EU funds	Head of CA	10%	N
Robert Šircelj	Department for management of EU funds	CA Coordinator	50%	Y
Maks Pajek	Department for management of EU funds	CA Finance Officer	40%	Y

<b>Audit Authority</b>				
<b>Budget Supervision Office</b>				
Name of staff	Official position	Main tasks	Level of effort (% of working time)	Funded through the Grants (Y/N)
Mirjam Novakovič	Head of Sector for Auditing other Funds under Shared	AA Coordinator	10%	N

	Management			
Jure Mekinc	Sector for Auditing other Funds under Shared Management	Auditor	90%	Y

<b>Irregularities Authority</b>				
<b>Ministry of Finance</b>				
Name of staff	Official position	Main tasks	Level of effort (% of working time)	Funded through the Grants (Y/N)
Evelyn Filip	Head of Department for management of EU funds	Head of IA	10%	N
Maks Pajek	Department for management of EU funds	IA Coordinator	10%	Y