



**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 2019 - December 2019

Prepared by:

National Focal Point

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

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every annual report features a front cover photo which captures, at least partially, the essence of the work done that year. The 2019 edition of the Annual Report features a photo from a signing ceremony; interestingly enough, it is for the second consecutive year that a cover photo like this had been used. In 2018, it was 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 that were signed. In 2019, Slovenia and the donor countries signed a Programme Agreement for the Programme Education – Enhancing Human Capital and for the Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation. Additionally, the Active Citizens Fund operator CNVOS concluded a Programme Implementation Agreement with the Financial Mechanism Office. And at the end of the year, donor countries approved the Description of the management and control systems prepared by Slovenian authorities.

Signing of these documents signals the wrap up of the programming phase; our focus will now shift to the programme implementation stage. The road to this stage was not always easy - in developing the necessary documents we had to respect the legal bases set out by the donors and the national legislation at all times.

The process of development of concept notes for both programmes, the process of consultation thereon and alignment of supplementary information for both programmes was an intense exercise carried out in cooperation between the Financial Mechanism Office, the Donor Programme Partners and the Programme Operators; it was successfully completed in 2019. Now, the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy is to sign an act replacing the programme implementation agreement concluded between the National Focal Point and the Programme Operators. In the scope of the Programme Education – Enhancing Human Capital activities included talks and coordination with the small grant scheme operator CMEPIUS; the Programme Operator is to sign a scheme implementation agreement with CMEPIUS soon.

CNVOS, Active Citizens Fund operator in Slovenia, held a launch event which was followed by the first public call for medium and large projects – as many as 163 project applications were received by the deadline.

In terms of the communication network, which was established to ensure that up-to-date and quality information about the activities, events and progress in implementing the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 in Slovenia is provided to the potential applicants and the general public, we would like to underline that 2019 was marked by joint work and strong cooperation between both Programme Operators, small grant scheme operator and Active Citizens Fund operator. Working together and undertaking the right communication measures helps improve the visibility of Grants in Slovenia.

Cooperation with our programme partners was taken to a new level last year; furthermore, we are happy to say that bilateral cooperation with partners has also been steadily strengthening through bilateral activities of the fund for bilateral relations whose activities are already underway.

In 2020, we will focus on the preparation and launch of the call for proposals for the Programme Education – Enhancing Human Capital and for the Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation as well as on the signing of the first contracts with the beneficiaries. While we regularly use social media to reach the potential beneficiaries and are available to respond to any queries, we also make sure that the signed documents are regularly published and made available to inform the general public of the areas of support, the funding available and the expected results of the programmes co-financed in the third funding round of the EEA and Norway Grants. We will also hold a launch event ahead of publishing the call for proposals to present in detail the programmes that will be implemented in Slovenia in the period 2014-2021.

B. PERFORMANCE

1. Programme context

Education Programme

Progress in programming

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

The programme Education – Enhancing Human Capital whose objective is to improve human capital and knowledge base aims at strengthening human capital, supporting the development of 21st century competences, improving the relevance of education and training to the real environment, and encouraging the development of supportive measures for inclusion in society and work of specific groups that are excluded or have limited access to support systems.

With a low rate of early school leaving (4.9% in 2016) and a high share of tertiary attainment (44.2% in 2016), Slovenia has a highly educated population and has already met its national targets under the Europe 2020 strategy.^a Despite these achievements, there is room for improving the relevance and quality of education.

While there is no definite answer to what skills are most essential for economic and social success in the future, it is likely that people will need to develop a portfolio of cognitive, socio-emotional and discipline-specific skills that equip them to learn throughout life, interact effectively with others, and solve complex problems.^b Slovenian Development Strategy 2030 promotes lifelong learning and training as values that improve creativity, innovativeness, critical thinking, responsibility and entrepreneurship in educational programmes at all levels, in developing knowledge for skills and work and promoting the concepts of sustainable development, active citizenship and ethicality as educational principles. Further, it aims at ensuring efficiency and quality at all levels of education, encouraging marginalised groups to participate in education and learning to facilitate transition to and survival in the labour market, reducing the risk of social exclusion, promoting the development of science and research, and linking the education system to economy.

In order to address these objectives, Slovenia needs to empower and equip teachers and trainers, non-teaching staff and policy makers at all levels of formal and informal education with competencies to apply teaching models and practices that will effectively support learners in developing 21st century skills. Motivating students to effectively engage in learning requires a creation of safe, open and innovative, creative and student-centred learning environment.

The programme Education covers three programme areas:

PA 3, Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeships and Youth Entrepreneurship,

PA 4 Work-Life Balance,

PA 16 Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency,

and comprises five outcomes:

^a Education and Training Monitor 2017 Slovenia, European Commission.

^b OECD Skills Strategy Diagnostic Report for Slovenia 2017.

Improved institutional cooperation at all levels of education (formal and informal) (Outcome 1),
Improved skills and competencies of students and staff involved in mobility and institutional cooperation between Slovenia and donor states (Outcome 2),
Education and social environment to support disadvantaged groups improved (Outcome 3),
Improved work-life balance (Outcome 4),
Improved skills for good governance and cooperation in the provision of child victim services (Outcome 5).

Outcome 1 is focused on improvement of institutional cooperation at all levels of formal and informal education and on enhancement of skills and competences of teaching and non-teaching staff to introduce effective teaching practices helping learners attain 21st century skills.

Outcome 2 is centred on improvement of skills and competences of the staff involved in mobility and institutional cooperation between Slovenia and donor states, and strongly supports Outcome 1. The main long-term goal is to empower Slovenian educational institutions to integrate the results of international engagement into regular practices and to strengthen institutional and professional development, improve quality of education and raise intercultural awareness. Activities facilitating the achievement of Outcome 2 will be implemented as small grants scheme and will be subcontracted to the Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Educational and Training Programmes - CMEPIUS.

Outcome 3 focuses on improvement of education and social environment to support disadvantaged groups, in particular persons excluded from any employment, education, training or social support, youth and precarious workers. The goal of the outcome is to improve the quality of support environment to address and activate potentials of specific disadvantaged groups, and to create more dynamic and connected communities. Our aim is to improve the competencies of the staff to better understand the needs of users and to develop pilot projects which will address NEET and precarious workers, and to provide relevant findings to the national institutions to be able to design appropriate systemic support measures and future policies.

Outcome 4 promotes improvement of work-life balance through development of local systems supporting work-life balance, primarily child care and elderly care, and creation of a culture that supports work-life balance and gender equality. Two types of activities will be supported in this context: those aiming to improve local services to support work-life balance and those helping develop organisational culture that supports work-life balance and gender equality policies.

Outcome 5 pursues improvement of governance and cooperation skills in provision of child victim services. The outcome relates to the implementation of a pre-defined project. It aims at improving institutional cooperation in the processes and procedures involving child victims and witnesses of crime. The best interest of the child is the focus of a multi-disciplinary and inter-ministerial/agency collaboration. Comprehensive services for child victims and witnesses of crime, and their family are to be provided under one child-friendly premise, avoiding further victimisation or re-traumatisation of the child.

Bilateral cooperation with the Donor States is an inherent component of the entire programme and will be addressed in projects contributing to all programme outcomes. Project partners in Donor States will cooperate in joint development of intellectual outputs, sharing of good practices, exchange visits, trainings, conferences and mobility activities.

Part of the programme financed from the EEA Grants will be implemented as small grants scheme and will be subcontracted to the Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Educational and Training Programmes - CMEPIUS. The purpose of the Scheme for Mobility and Small Partnerships is to promote bilateral exchange (mobility) of students and to strengthen institutional cooperation in the field of education and training by supporting the development of small partnerships projects.

After appraisal of the concept note for the Education Programme by the donor countries in May 2019, the PO started carrying out the activities to provide the FMO with supplementary information for draft Programme

Agreement. The FMO and Slovenian PO exchanged comments, proposed changes and sent to each other more versions of the Programme Agreement text. The final version of the Programme Agreement was sent to the donors by the FMO on 5 December. The Programme Agreement for Education Programme entered into force on 18 December.

Furthermore, the PO was preparing draft Descriptions of the management and control system of the Programme Operator by 14 August - the documents were submitted to the NFP and revised by the Audit Authority.

State of play

1. 16 April 2019: final version of the concept notes for the Education Programme submitted to the NFP,
2. 16 April 2019: concept note for the Education Programme submitted by the NFP to the donors,
3. 13 May 2019: concept note for the Education Programme appraised by the donors,
4. 21 June 2019: supplementary information for the Programme Agreement sent to the FMO,
5. 25 July 2019: additional supplementary information and clarifications regarding Programme Agreement sent to the FMO,
6. 28 August to 4 December 2019: drafting of and negotiation on the Programme Agreement texts,
7. 11 December 2019: Programme Agreement for the Education Programme signed by the FMC for the donors,
8. 18 December 2019: Programme Agreement for the Education Programme signed by the NFP for Slovenia.

Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Programme

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

The Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Programme 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 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 well-established renewable energy sources.

Characterised by geographical diversity and diversity of climate types, Slovenia has witnessed considerable changes in climate variables over the past decades, such as rising air temperatures, changes in precipitation patterns and more extreme weather events. According to Slovenian Environment Agency data, the average annual air temperature in Slovenia has increased by 1.7 degrees Celsius since 1961. Climate change scenarios for 2050 show that the air temperature in Slovenia will continue to rise, increasing on average by two degrees Celsius across the country.^c The consequences of climate change are already evident in forestry, agriculture, water management and deterioration of ecosystems.

^c http://www.mop.gov.si/fileadmin/mop.gov.si/pageuploads/podrocja/podnebne_spremembe/SOzP_ang.pdf

As climate change mitigation and adaptation is a long-term and very complex process that requires interdisciplinary action by various sectors and levels of society, the programme addresses several challenges recognized as implementation gaps in current national climate change-related policies, namely:

- high level of greenhouse gas emissions from transport;
- lag behind leading European countries in terms of use of renewable energy sources and low-carbon energy supply;
- transition towards a more “circular” economy to increase material productivity, build a low-carbon society and support green economic growth;
- preservation of ecosystems with an important function in mitigating climate change;
- insufficient multi-sector governance in addressing complex climate and environmental policies.

The programme covers three programme areas:

- PA 13: Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation,
- PA 12: Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency and Energy Security,
- PA 16: Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency.

The programme comprises four outcomes:

- Increased renewable energy production (Outcome 1),
- Enhanced sustainable mobility management (Outcome 2),
- Increased application of circular economy principles (Outcome 3),
- Improved management of ecosystems under climate change pressure (Outcome 4).

Outcome 1: increased use of geothermal energy and of other less utilised resources in Slovenia, such as biofuel, biogas, wind and solar energy. The goal is to contribute to improving the knowledge and competences, to building institutional capacities, to raising awareness and to creating a strong evidence-based foundation supporting geothermal energy development, increased and more efficient use of geothermal energy, as well as of other less utilised renewable energy sources. Additionally, the goal is to support innovative pilot or demonstration projects that will serve as good practices and help achieve a growth in the installed capacity for geothermal energy production and production of energy from other less utilised renewable energy sources.

Outcome 2: design and putting in place of new models of sustainable mobility management at regional level and at locations that generate large volumes of traffic to help reduce carbon footprint and emissions from transport. The goal is to support the design and development of a mobility management model that caters to the needs of the relevant municipalities or region, to test the model in at least three regions, to set up regional mobility centres at the NUTS 3 level, and last but not least, to draw up an integrated regional transport strategy on the basis of these preliminary actions. Outcome 2 also seeks to support pilot projects that will help implement national guidelines for the development of mobility plans for facilities generating large volumes of traffic (e.g. regional hospitals, technology parks, business zones, tourist attractions, sports, recreational and education centres etc.). Mobility management plans and concrete measures will be implemented to promote and facilitate the use of sustainable and active travel (public transport, walking, cycling) and help reduce car use.

Outcome 3 will support the transition to a low carbon circular economy in the area of processing activities, recognising the role and importance played not only by the processing sector but also by the consumers and organisations within the entire distribution and supply chain (design, production, processing, transport, sales, support services, consumption, waste collection and treatment) in realising the goals of low carbon circular economy. The goal of the sub-area of the call for proposals is primarily to support circular business models and associated chain values in processing activities through implementing eco design principles, using new materials, promoting materials traceability and fair trade principles, using secondary sources, advancing industrial symbiosis and energy efficiency, and promoting maintenance, repair and reuse throughout the product lifetime and recycling as the last stage.

Outcome 4 targets restoration of ecosystems in Natura 2000 areas whose adaptive capacity has been reduced or modified due to climate change and are considered endangered as such. The outcome also seeks to help integrate ecosystem services in management models of these very ecosystems. Funding will be made available for ecosystems that have been affected the most by the changing climate in the last decade (e.g. due to extreme weather events and other natural disasters – glaze, floods, drought, wildfires etc.) and which are known to contribute significantly to mitigation of climate change (e.g. through storage of CO₂). These ecosystems include particularly wetlands, marine or coastal ecosystems and mountain ecosystems with emphasis on forests. Attention will particularly be given to species and habitats types in Natura 2000 areas, i.e. to animal and plant species of Community interest and habitat types of Community interest with an unfavourable conservation status.

The pressure and impact of climate change on habitat types and species will only grow in the future; the goal of the sub-area is to strengthen the awareness about the importance of efforts to restore the ecosystems and to increase the capacity and competences of local community, experts and stakeholders in the areas where projects will be implemented for appropriate management of ecosystems and preservation of ecosystem services. To this end, partnerships should integrate organisations working in the fields of nature conservation, spatial planning, agriculture and forestry, water management, as well as research institutions, NGOs, municipalities and other stakeholders. The sub-area of the call for proposals also targets awareness raising, making the general public more aware of the role of biodiversity and ecosystems and the need to preserve them both, also by means of ecosystem restoration, to help us mitigate climate change and adapt to changing climate.

Progress in programming

After appraisal of the concept note for the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Programme by the donor countries in May 2019, the PO started carrying out the activities to provide the FMO with supplementary information for the programme agreement text. The FMO and Slovenian PO exchanged comments, proposed changes and sent to each other more versions of the Programme Agreement text. The final version was sent to donor countries by the FMO on 4 December. The Programme Agreement for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Programme entered into force on 18 December.

Furthermore, the PO prepared draft Descriptions of the management and control system of the Programme Operator by 14 August - the documents were submitted to the NFP and revised by the Audit Authority.

State of play

1. 26 March 2019: final version of the concept notes for the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Programme submitted to the NFP,
2. 28 March 2019: concept note for the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Programme submitted by the NFP to the donors,
3. 10 May 2019: concept note for the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Programme appraised by the donor countries,
4. 21 June 2019: supplementary information for the Programme Agreement for the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Programme sent to the FMO,
5. 25 July 2019: additional supplementary information and clarifications regarding the Programme Agreement for the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Programme sent to the FMO,
6. 28 August to 4 December 2019: drafting of and negotiation on the Programme Agreement texts,
7. 5 and 6 November 2019: study visit on circular economy organised by the NEA (DPP) in Oslo,
8. 11 December 2019: Programme Agreement signed by the FMC for the donors,
9. 18 December 2019: Programme Agreement signed by the NFP for Slovenia.

Active Citizens Fund

The Active Citizens Fund (hereinafter ACF) 2014-2021, part of the Civil Society programme of the Grants, is focused on long-term sustainable development and capacity building of the non-governmental sector. Headline EU-level objective of ACF is Civil society and active citizenship strengthened and vulnerable groups empowered. The programme aims at strengthening the role of non-governmental organisations (hereinafter NGO) in promotion of democracy, enhancing public participation in decision-making processes at national and local level and promoting human rights protection. The programme also helps strengthen bilateral cooperation between civil society organisations from Slovenia and from the three donor countries.

ACF priority areas of support are the following:

- 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.

The programme builds on common values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and the respect for human rights including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

Expected outcomes of the ACF in Slovenia are as follows:

- strengthened civil society watchdog/advocacy role,
- increased support for civic education and human rights,
- empowered vulnerable groups,
- enhanced capacity and sustainability of CSOs and the sector,
- strengthened bilateral cooperation between civil society organisations from Slovenia and organisations from donor countries,
- strengthened regional civil society cooperation.

To achieve the above set of outcomes and address the challenges identified in joint effort with Slovenian NGOs, the programme is to:

- financially support areas or activities which are under-financed or not financed at all in Slovenia, and organisations working in under-served areas as well as under-served target groups,
- strengthen financial stability of NGOs, especially those working in the field of democracy and human rights,
- encourage use of innovative methods to promote active participation of individuals, including vulnerable groups,
- empower vulnerable groups, including Roma and migrants,
- promote development of innovative methods to strengthen advocacy, fundraising, transparency and accountability of NGOs;
- promote youth inclusion.

Active Citizens Fund is managed by the Financial Mechanism Office – FMO. Following 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 operate the Active Citizens Fund in Slovenia.

Total ACF budget amounts to EUR 3,000,000, of which EUR 2.5 million is earmarked for project co-financing.

The funding available for project co-financing will be distributed through four public calls:

- Public call for medium and large projects with a budget of EUR 1,530,000, for presumably around 30 projects,
- Public call for small projects with a budget of EUR 327,000, for presumably around 20 projects,
- Public call for micro or ‘quick response’ projects with a budget of EUR 40,000 for presumably around 10 projects,
- Public call for institutional support with a budget of EUR 450,000, for presumably 5 organisations.

Indicative timeline of public calls:

- Public call for micro or ‘quick response’ projects: March 2020,
- Public call for institutional support: June 2020,
- Public call for small projects: February 2021.

Distribution of the ACF budget according to expected outcomes:

OUTCOME	Indicative budget in EUR in total
Strengthened civil society watchdog/advocacy role	902,000
Increased support for civic education and human rights	430,000
Empowered vulnerable groups	373,000
Enhanced capacity and sustainability of CSOs and sector	642,000

2. Results

As no projects have been conducted yet, we cannot report on the outcomes.

Bilateral outcome

Education programme

Education Programme will involve cooperation with two Donor Programme Partners (hereinafter DPP):

- 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. DPPs contributed to the development of the concept note and the programme agreement by providing expertise and advice.

In the implementation phase, the DPPs will support potential beneficiaries by providing advice on potential project partners and by organising joint events offering the opportunities for networking and sharing good practices with beneficiaries and other stakeholders. During the project selection phase, both DPPs will be invited to participate in the selection process.

A total of EUR 100,000 has been earmarked for bilateral activities of the Education Programme in the MoU on the implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 and the MoU on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021.

Several bilateral activities were already implemented in 2019:

- March 2019, Oslo, Norway: Launching Conference of the educational part of the EEA and Norway Grants and PO and DDP meeting;
- March 2019, Bergen, Norway: study visit to the Barnahus Bergen: two representatives of the Ministry of Justice (project promoter of the pre-defined project), representatives of PO, DIKU and representatives of Barnahus Bergen and Barnahus Bodo;
- October 2019, Reykjavik, Iceland: attendance at international conference: Gender Equality: A key for economic and social development in Europe and beyond;
- 4 -7 November 2019, Tromsø, Norway: attendance at the international conference Our Staff Week with focus on EEA and Norway Grants. Representatives of the PO participated in the conference by presenting the Education Programme.

Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation programme

The Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Programme will involve cooperation with one DPP, i.e. Norwegian Environment Agency. The roles and responsibilities of the DPP, the Norwegian Environment Agency, in the preparation and implementation phase are defined in the Rules of Procedures of the Cooperation Committee. In the implementation phase, the DPP will support potential beneficiaries by offering advice regarding potential project partners in donor states and by organising joint events offering the 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.

A total of EUR 100,000 has been earmarked for bilateral activities of the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Programme in the MoU on the implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 and the MoU on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021.

Several bilateral activities were already implemented in 2019:

- 4 and 5 November 2019, Oslo, Norway: the DPP (NEA) organised a study visit on circular economy where the PO received information about the state of play of the programming progress in Poland and Estonia and shared information about the programming of the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Programme in Slovenia. In addition, the POs from Estonia, Poland and Slovenia shared best practices in circular economy in their countries;
- Milijodirektoratet (DPP) invited certain private and state-owned organisations to share information about their activities and results of circular economy measures. The study visit ended with a site visit to the recycling plant for WEEE owned by Revac AS.

Active Citizens Fund

In terms of bilateral relations, the only activity involved the participation of three representatives of Slovenian NGOs in Active Citizens Days in Oslo held in September 2019.

Pre-defined projects

One pre-defined project (PDP) will be implemented under the Education Programme. The PDP relates to PA 16: Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency. The pre-defined project will, inspired by the 'Barnahus/Children's house' model, provide child-friendly justice in accordance with the European directives and improve inter-agency cooperation in processes and procedures concerning the treatment of child victims and witnesses of crime. The pre-defined project was included in the Programme Agreement with conditions for the implementation of the project.

3. Implementation

As Programme Agreements for Education Programme and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Programme entered into force in December 2019, it is still too early to assess any progress in programme implementation.

Active Citizens Fund

The official launch of the ACF programme took place on 10 October 2019 with its launching in Ljubljana (69 participants and 10 representatives of the FMO, the FO, the NFP). The event was followed by the launch of the first call for proposals on 11 October 2019. Two information sessions on the call were organised in Ljubljana (Kino Šiška, 21 October 2019; 80 participants) and Maribor (Hotel City, 24 October 2019; 30 participants), which was followed by five regional workshops to help potential applicants improve project ideas (6 November 2019 – Novo mesto; 8 November 2019 – Maribor; 11 November 2019 - Koper and Celje, 13 November 2019 - Ljubljana) and one thematic workshop focused on Outcome 1 – Increased advocacy/watchdog role of civil society (4 November 2019 - Ljubljana). A total of 131 participants attended project development workshops. Additional information sessions for remote areas and small organisations were organized in Martjanci (22 October 2019), Laško (21 October 2019), Črnomelj and Mežica (24 October 2019).

1st call – medium and large projects: statistics

Number of applications received:	163 (100 large projects, 63 medium)
Number of applications rejected at the 1 st stage:	30
Number of applications sent to independent evaluators for the 1 st stage appraisal:	133
Total amount of funding requested:	13,914.484 €

Financial status

FO received two prepayments to cover the costs related to management of the programme and reimbursement of travel costs incurred in relation with participation of representatives of Slovenian NGOs at Active Citizens Days in Oslo (September 2019) and of representative of the FO at the FO meeting in Oslo in October 2018.

Progress by the Joint Committee on Bilateral Funds

The Fund for Bilateral Relations is an instrument focused on strengthening cooperation and increasing mutual knowledge and understanding between the donor states and the beneficiary state. The purpose of the Fund for Bilateral Relations is to financially support a wide range of activities that have a clear bilateral profile and contribute to strengthening bilateral relations. The Bilateral Fund Agreement was signed on 13 September 2018.

A total of EUR 100,000 has been earmarked for bilateral activities of the Education Programme and EUR 100,000 for bilateral activities of the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Programme in the MoU on the implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism and the MoU on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism.

Part of the funding was made available for initiatives beyond the scope of the programmes. Several areas of potential cooperation with donor states and concrete events with bilateral component were identified and included in the Bilateral Fund Work Plan which was discussed and adopted at the first formal meeting of the Joint Committee on Bilateral Fund on 10 April 2019.

These initiatives include:

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),
2. organisation of a conference on adaptation to extreme weather and climate events,
3. consultations and expert events on modalities of funding for development,
4. research on equal opportunities in national diplomacies.

The NFP prepared implementation agreements with the project promoter of all approved bilateral activities (i.e. the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). The agreements concerning initiatives “Organisation of bi-annual consultations and expert events on the topic of women, peace and security (20 years of the UN SC Resolution 1325)”, “Consultations and expert events on modalities of funding for development” and “Research on equal opportunities in national diplomacies” were all signed. The agreement concerning the organisation of a conference on adaptation to extreme weather and climate events has been postponed since further detailed discussions with the Slovenian Environment Agency on the conference topics have not been concluded yet.

The initiative “Consultations and expert event on modalities of financing for development”, which was supposed to start in 2019, was slightly postponed since the bilateral initiative needed to be checked with proposed Norwegian partners.

The implementation of the initiative “Research on equal opportunities in national diplomacies” started earlier than foreseen. In July 2019, the deputy coordinator of equal opportunities for men and women at the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs had the first meeting 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 diplomacy and to compare and share good practices in this area.

All approved bilateral initiatives included in the Bilateral Fund Work Plan are to be carried out by 2022.

The Bilateral Fund Work Plan will be amended as needed to better address emerging bilateral initiatives. It is expected that in the future additional funding from the Fund for Bilateral Relations will be requested for the Education Programme and the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Programme.

Financial reporting

The first interim financial report for the reporting period from 17 April 2018 to 30 June 2019 was submitted in September 2019. The reported expenditure in total amount of EUR 16,274 relates to the cost of participation of ten Slovenian representatives from the education sector at the conference on vocational education “Competences for the 21st century” held from 4 to 8 November 2018 in Trondheim, and to the cost of the study visit of two representatives of the Ministry of Justice (the project promoter of the pre-defined project aiming to improve services for child victims of sexual abuse) held in March 2019 in Bergen. The purpose of this study visit was to transfer the know-how concerning Barnahus model.

Conformity with specific requirements

No specific requirements apply in this area.

Management and control system

The Certifying Authority, i.e. the Public Fund of the Republic of Slovenia for Regional Development and Development of Rural Areas, was replaced by the Ministry of Finance following the exchange of letters in June 2019 regarding amendments to Annex A of the MoUs.

In July 2019, the Audit Authority issued an opinion that the Description of the management and control systems on the national level complied with the requirements set out in Articles 5.1 to 5.5 of the Regulations on the implementation of the Norwegian and 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 it complied with the generally accepted accounting principles.

After coordination among the NFP and the FMO, the Description of the management and control systems was approved by the FMO in December 2019.

Active Citizens Fund

The Description of the management and control system was audited by independent certified auditors ACAM d.o.o. and submitted to the FMO on 11 October 2019.

C. LEARNING

Monitoring

Evaluation

Lessons learned

As we look back at the programming phase, we find that it was not always easy; the NFP and the POs often had to deal with excessive administrative burden especially due to requirements arising from the national legislation and demands of all institutions involved in the implementation process. All of the institutions involved should keep this in mind and strive to reduce administrative burden.

D. WORK PLAN

Education Programme

1st quarter of 2020:

- Signing of the programme implementation agreement with the NFP
- Preparation of the call for proposals text and documentation
- Cooperation Committee meeting
- Submission of the first interim financial report for the Education Programme
- Finalisation of the Description of the management and control system for the programme
- Preparation of State Aid schemes and submission of the schemes to the Ministry of Finance for notification under the GBER
- Publication of the call for independent external experts – project assessors
- Signing of the implementation agreement for the small grant scheme between the PO and CMEPIUS

2nd quarter of 2020:

- Preparation of the call for proposals text and documentation
- Informing the FMO of the call for proposals and submission of the English translation of the call for proposals to the FMO
- Launch event of the programmes in Slovenia
- Promotion of the call for proposals
- Publication of the call for proposals

3rd quarter of 2020:

- Promotion of the call for proposals
- Submission of the second interim financial report for the Education Programme
- Selection and signing of contracts with independent external experts – project assessors
- Start of the project assessment process for the project proposals submitted within the 1st deadline

4th quarter of 2020:

- Selection and signing of contracts for the projects submitted within the 1st deadline
- Submission of the list of selected projects within the 1st deadline to the FMO

Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation programme

1st quarter of 2020:

- Signing of the programme implementation agreement with the NFP
- Preparation of the call for proposals text and documentation
- Cooperation Committee meeting
- Submission of the first interim financial report for the programme
- Finalisation of the Description of the management and control system for the programme
- Preparation of State Aid schemes and submission of the schemes to the Ministry of Finance for notification under the GBER
- Publication of the call for independent external experts – project assessors

2nd quarter of 2020:

- Preparation of the call for proposals text and documentation
- Informing the FMO of the call for proposals and submission of the English translation of the call for proposals to the FMO
- Launch event of the programmes in Slovenia
- Promotion of the call for proposals
- Publication of the call for proposals

3rd quarter of 2020:

- Promotion of the call for proposals
- Submission of the second interim financial report for the programme
- Selection and signing of contracts with independent external experts – project assessors
- Start of the project assessment process for the project proposals submitted within the 1st deadline

4th quarter of 2020:

- Selection and signing of contracts for the projects submitted within the 1st deadline
- Submission of the list of projects selected within the 1st deadline to the FMO

Active Citizens Fund

1st quarter of 2020:

- Evaluation of the concept note for the 1st call
- Selection committee meeting and start of the 2nd phase – full applications for the 1st call
- Individual assistance to 2nd stage applicants
- Development of capacity building plans for 2nd stage applicants
- Launch of 2nd call “quick response” – micro grants (one step application)
- Launch of video tutorial for “quick response” call

2nd quarter of 2020:

- Info session for “quick response” call
- Appraisal of the applications
- Selection committee meeting
- Preparation of reporting documents for the 1st and 2nd call
- Signing of agreements with project promoters for the 1st call and micro grants
- Launch of 3rd call – institutional grants

3rd quarter of 2020:

- Submission of Bilateral Plan to the FMO
- Submission of Civil Society Initiatives Plan to the FMO
- Info session for institutional grants
- Video tutorial for institutional grants
- Info sessions on financial management and reporting for project promoters
- Organisation of monthly meetings for project promoters
- Monitoring of projects

4th quarter of 2020:

- Info session for project promoters of medium and large project on enhancing visibility of results and storytelling
- Results of the concept notes for institutional grants
- Individual support for 2nd stage applications
- Monitoring of projects

National Focal Point

1st quarter of 2020:

- Preparation of the relevant national documents for implementing the period 2014-2021
- Signing of the PIA with the PO for the Education Programme and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Programme
- Preparations for the launch event of the programmes carried out in Slovenia

2nd quarter of 2020:

- Launch event of the programmes carried out in Slovenia
- Preparation of the relevant national documents for implementing the period 2014-2021
- Annual meeting with the donors
- Promotion of the call for proposals

3rd quarter of 2020:

- monitoring of programme implementation

4th quarter of 2020:

- monitoring of programme implementation
- promotional activities

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

After the signing of both MoUs in April 2018, we continued to implement the EEA and Norway Grants in Slovenia.

The National Focal Point received comments on draft Communication Strategy (first submitted in October 2018) from the Donors in February 2019 and submitted the revised version in May 2019. The version was approved by the Donors in July 2019. The Communication Strategy was implemented according to the plan; since there were no important activities planned in 2019, the review of indicators on the achievement of communication objectives shows the same state as at the end of 2018:

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

Furthermore, among media articles collected every day through the media clipping system at the level of the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy, there were several covering projects from the previous period which managed to get other financial sources to continue with their activities and still achieve valuable impact and media recognition. Summaries of the news were also published on social media of the EEA and Norway Grants in Slovenia. Important news pieces collected through the media clipping system also covered the visit of the Slovenian president in Oslo in November 2019, where he met with the highest-level representatives of the Kingdom of Norway, including the King of Norway, and discussed successful bilateral cooperation, implemented also through the EEA and Norway Grants.

H.E. Mr. Olav Berstad, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway visited Slovenia for a working meeting in March 2019 with the representatives of the National Focal Point to get informed about ongoing activities in the framework of the implementation of the EEA and Norway Grants in Slovenia. The news piece about his visit was published on the website. Next meeting with his H. E. and other members of the Donors was at the meeting of the Joint Committee of Bilateral Fund held in April 2019. In May 2019, the National Focal Point organised the annual meeting to discuss implementation progress and achievements of the Grants in Slovenia. News pieces about both meetings were published on the website, social media and on the website of the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy.

In an observer capacity, the National Focal Point attended a launch event of the Active Citizens Fund in October 2019 and informed public about the event on the website and social media. That same month, the Slovenian project promoter of a project under the EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment organised an event to present the project. The National Focal Point attended the event and posted news about it on social media.

Programme level

Concept notes for the Education Programme) and the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Programme were appraised by the Donors in May 2019. News about the concept notes' appraisal was published on the website and social media. The Programme Operator prepared Communication Plans for both programmes and included them in the draft Programme Agreement.

The major milestone for both programmes was the signing of the Programme Agreements at the end of 2019 with news about it published on the website, social media and on the website of the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy.

Factsheets providing basic information on both programmes implemented in Slovenia were prepared and published on the website ([factsheet Education](#) and [factsheet Climate Change](#)).

Communication Plans for both programmes were implemented according to the 2019 plan. The following indicators were reviewed in evaluating the achievement of communication objectives:

Communication objective	Indicator	Unit of Measurement	Initial Value	Value at the end of 2019	Target value at the end of period	Source	Frequency of reporting	Methodology
Specific objective Inform beneficiaries / communicate the possibilities to use the EEA and Norway Grants and inform target audiences of the results, benefits and impact of the EEA and Norway Grants, its programme and projects	Number of factsheets	Number	0	1 ¹	3	PO	Annually	Cumulative number of created information leaflets
	Other information materials (e.g. brochures, etc.)	Number	0	0	1	PO	Annually	Cumulative number of created other information materials
	Events performed	Number	0	0	2	PO	Annually	Cumulative number of events performed

¹ Only one table is included, since values are the same for both programmes – 1 factsheet for the Education Programme and 1 factsheet for the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Programme.

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 based in Slovenia.

First meetings with the National Focal Point, the Programme Operators of both programmes, the Fund Operator of the Active Citizens Fund and the Small Grants Scheme Operator were held in January 2019.

The Fund Operator of the Social Dialogue – Decent Work programme was also invited to share information on the implementation of the programme, projects and activities to be communicated on the website and social media. Contact was made several times via e-mail.

Communication among Communication Network members runs mostly via e-mail.

c. Website and social media

In the past year, the website of the EEA and Norway Grants in Slovenia was updated with fresh information, documents and links. Relevant open calls were also published on the website (e.g. open call for the Active Citizens Fund).

We continued to publish various articles, news pieces and notifications on website, Facebook and Instagram. Web and social media statistics until the end of 2019 was as follows:

	Indicator	Baseline ¹	End of 2019 ²	Aim at the end of period	Frequency of monitoring	Source/ methodology
Website	Total traffic	2.400 (2018)	6827	+10%	annually	Google Analytics
	Referrals to the website from all social media channels	125 (2018)	372	+5%	annually	Google Analytics
Facebook	Number of page likes	1137 (2017)	2.439	+5%	annually	Facebook Insights Facebook Analytics
	Number of post engagements (total number of clicks, likes, comments and shares)	4547 (2017)	2.510	+5%	annually	Facebook Insights Facebook Analytics
	Number of referrals to the web	125 (2018)	362	+10%	annually	Google Analytics
Instagram	Number of followers	96 (2018)	162	+10%	annually	Instagram Insights

¹ Most of the statistics has been tracked since 2018.

² Including values from 2018 and 2019 together.

d. Best practice examples

Since the Programme Agreements were signed as late as December 2019, there are no examples of interesting projects yet to be relevant for communication purposes.

e. Multimedia

A short video was made to mark the first meeting of the Joint Committee for Bilateral Fund. The video was published on Facebook.

Link: [Video on Facebook](#)

Annex 3: Overview of contracted projects

	Projects	#	# of donor project partners	Amount contracted^d (in €)	% of outcome budget contracted
Outcome 1	Pre-defined				
	Contracted through open calls				
	Contracted through small grant schemes				
	Total outcome 1				
Outcome 2	Pre-defined				
	Contracted through open calls				
	Contracted through small grant schemes				
	Total outcome 2				
Programme	Total				

^d The total maximum amount committed to projects

Annex 4: Risk management

<u>Programme risks</u>									
Risk description	Risk related to	<u>Likelihood</u>	<u>Consequence</u>	Risk score	Response type	Description of planned response	Description of actual response	Comments	Risk N/A?
									delete
									delete
									delete
+									
+									
<u>Operational risks</u>									
Risk description	Risk related to	<u>Likelihood</u>	<u>Consequence</u>	Risk score	Response type	Description of planned response	Description of actual response	Comments	Risk N/A?
									delete
									delete
									delete
+									
+									
OVERALL RISK OF THE PROGRAMME									
		<u>Likelihood</u>	<u>Consequence</u>	Risk score					

Annex 5: Technical assistance report

Overview of main activities

Technical Assistance is operated by the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy. Slovenia is eligible to Technical Assistance funds for the implementation of Grants at national level. The purpose of the Technical Assistance programme is to contribute to covering the management costs of the National Focal Point, the Certifying Authority, the Audit Authority and the Irregularities Authority incurred in relation to the implementation of the EEA and Norway Grants.

National Focal Point

In 2019, the following activities were performed and covered by Technical Assistance funds:

- participation at the communication workshop for National Focal Point (Krakow, 21-23 October 2019),
- participation at the NFP workshop (Malbun, 14-16 October 2019),
- costs for the webpage www.norwaygrants.si / www.eeagrants.si,
- labour costs,
- organisation of the Annual meeting with the donors (Ljubljana, 28 May 2019),
- organisation of JCBF (Ljubljana, 10 April 2019).

Audit Authority

In 2019, the following activities were performed and covered by Technical Assistance funds:

- labour costs,
- 2nd Annual Audit Report with Opinion for 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 national entities for the Norwegian and the EEA Financial mechanism for the period 2014-2021,
- Audit of declared expenditures for Technical Assistance and Bilateral Fund activities.

Certifying Authority – from June 2019 (Ministry of finance)

In 2019, the following activities were performed but not yet covered by Technical Assistance funds

- certification of all requests submitted to the Certifying Authority,
- labour costs.

Certifying Authority – until June 2019 (Public Fund of the Republic of Slovenia for Regional Development and Development of Rural Areas)

In 2019, the following activities were performed and covered by Technical Assistance funds:

- administrative costs,
- labour costs.

Irregularities Authority

In 2019, the following activities were performed but not yet covered by Technical Assistance funds:

- labour costs.

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
TOTAL	591.000	231.000	19.000	250.000	40.000	1.131.000
*Ministry of finance, CA from 18 June 2019						
*Public Fund for Regional Development and development of rural areas, CA until 17 June 2019						

ANNUAL BUDGET (in euro)						
						Beneficiary State: Slovenia
						Calendar year: 2019
Description	National Focal Point	Certifying Authority (MF*)	Certifying Authority (SRDF*)	Audit Authority	Irregularity Authority	TOTAL
I. Additional management systems (Article 8.11.2 (a))	40.000	10.085			2.200	52.285
II. Annual and other meetings with the Donor States (Article 8.11.2 (b))	15.000	800		1.582	800	18.182
III. Meetings and conferences to share experience (Article 8.11.2 (c))	0			1.055		1.055
IV. Promotional and information activities (Article 8.11.2 (d))	10.000					10.000
V. Audits (Article 8.11.2 (e))				30.500		30.500
VI. On-the-spot verifications (Article 8.11.2 (f))						0
VII. Reviews and evaluations (Article 8.11.2 (g))						0
VIII. Implementation of the FM 2009-2014 (Article 8.11.2 (h))						0
IX. Preparation of the implementation of the FM 2014-2021 (Article 8.11.2 (i))	55.000					55.000
TOTAL	120.000	10.885	19.000	33.137	3.000	186.022
*Ministry of finance, CA from 18 June 2019						
*Public Fund for Regional Development and development of rural areas, CA until 17 June 2019						

By July 2019, the incurred expenditures amounted to **EUR 82,358** (already certified). By December 2019, the incurred expenditures amounted to **EUR 57,849** (not yet certified).

Procurement

No public procurements procedures were conducted in 2019.

Staffing

The following staff members were involved in the implementation of the Grants (2019):

Name of National Focal Point				
Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy				
Name of staff	Official position	Main tasks	Level of effort (% of working time)	Funded through the Grants (Y/N)
Nataša Babuder Rumpret	Head of Financial Mechanisms Division	Head of PO, National Focal Point	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	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	100%	N
Maja Vodopivec Crkvenjaš	Senior Adviser within Financial Mechanisms Division	PO, Communication Officer and 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

Name of Certifying Authority				
Ministry of Finance				
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

Name of Audit Authority				
Budget Supervision Office				
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 Management	AA Coordinator	10%	N
Jure Mekinc	Sector for Auditing other Funds under Shared Management	Auditor	90%	Y

Name of Irregularities Authority				
Ministry of Finance				
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