

## CITIZENS' SUMMARY: REVIEW OF DECENT WORK AND TRIPARTITE DIALOGUE UNDER THE NORWAY GRANTS 2009-2014

### BACKGROUND

Under the Agreement between Norway and the European Union on a Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014, one per cent of the allocation was to be set aside for a global fund for promotion of Decent Work and Tripartite Dialogue (DWTD). This amounts to a total of € 8.1 million in 13 beneficiary countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

This summary draws on an independent external review conducted by the Nordic Consulting Group A/S on the support to support decent work and tripartite dialogue.

### KEY FINDINGS

The review finds that the programme has improved practices and social dialogue structure. While the Nordic Model is not directly transferable, more than 90% of project promoters considered that sub-elements of the model could be applied in their work. The programme has likewise increased understanding of Decent Work principles – with many of the project promoters having actively pursued elements of the Decent Work agenda in their projects. However, it has not been possible for the Review to fully judge the results and achievements of the programme against its three original outcomes as there was no defined baseline or a set of concrete indicators at the start of the programme.

The programme has strengthened bilateral relations at institutional level on a scale linked to the size of the programme. Innovation Norway's efficient management of the programme has had a positive effect in this regard.

### EFFICIENCY

- The DWTD programme has done remarkably well and achieved as much as one could expect of such a fragmented and ambitious programme with a limited budget. This is largely due to the effective management by Innovation Norway and the commitment and zest of the project promoters.
- The use of a Norwegian Programme Operator, Innovation Norway, was acceptable to the beneficiary countries. However the degree of involvement by the national authorities, e.g. National Focal Points, varied from country to country, and there is a need to involve them more.
- Almost all respondents i.e. beneficiaries, embassies and Norwegian partners expressed a high degree of satisfaction with Innovation Norway's performance as programme operator.
- A major bottleneck in operating the programme has been the weak links between the overall reporting against the general programme framework, and the activity-based reporting by the project promoters to Innovation Norway. Important achievements have been left out of the reporting, which has made it difficult to document results.

### EFFECTIVENESS

- The programme has done very well and achieved good results at project level. In some cases (e.g. in Poland, Slovakia and Bulgaria) some indirect positive effects on overall policies could be observed.
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- The DWTD programme has improved practices and social dialogue structures. Project promoters have succeeded in using elements of the Nordic Model of Social Dialogue and applying these in their own context.
- 84-97% of promoters consider that the projects had profound effects on their organisations, their relationships to authorities, social partners and their own members.
- Overall, a higher level of trust, inspired by the Nordic Model, has been created between bipartite partners. In addition, concrete practices of improved social dialogue have been demonstrated, and the project promoters have reported that the quality of certain Collective Bargaining Agreements has improved.
- The design of the programme is considered loose with rather general, undefined indicators, with which it is rather difficult to measure whether the DWTD interventions have contributed to the very ambitious outcomes and the overall objectives.
- Several respondents reported that, due to the DWTD programme, they had been able to address issues central to the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Decent Work agenda like occupational health and safety, local working place benefits and working times.
- Pension and social protection issues have been raised to national levels in several countries.
- Gender equality has been addressed successfully in a few cases, but otherwise, this subject was treated in a superficial manner or not at all.

## BILATERAL RELATIONS

- The Review found that the programme has strengthened bilateral relations between Norway and the 13 beneficiary countries. However, because the nature of the interventions is small and geographically spread (52 projects in 13 countries) the degree of strengthening has been accordingly small and scattered.
- The Review concluded that strengthening bilateral relations is a large and ambitious task requiring large and more focussed contributions. It is perhaps too much to expect to achieve this in a small, fragmented DWTD programme.
- Few of the project promoters envisaged that strengthening bilateral relations was a major objective of the programme.
- Innovation Norway is a major Norwegian institution charged with promoting bilateral relations. Its efficient management of the programme and the goodwill this generated throughout the beneficiary countries certainly strengthened bilateral relations, where that was possible.

## RELEVANCE

- Overall, the objectives of the programme are quite ambitious and would be better described as long-term intended effects.
  - The limited size of the programme – especially in comparison to the European Social Fund (ESF), which is more than 200 times larger – affects its comparative relevance.
  - The programme was regarded as being highly relevant by the project promoters and their Norwegian partners. Most project promoters considered that sub-elements of the Nordic Model were relevant to their situation and could inspire partners to new ways of working and cooperating. However, it is difficult to transfer the model as a whole.
  - Some national authorities in the beneficiary countries did not consider it very relevant, partly due to the fund's small size and the limited knowledge and involvement in the programme by the National Focal Points.
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- The political and social context in the beneficiary countries influenced the stakeholders and beneficiaries' perceptions of the programme's relevance.

## SUSTAINABILITY

- Provided that the beneficiary organisations are strong enough, some of the DWTD interventions would be sustainable. Some of the more costly activities such as surveys, specific training, consultants for surveys or studies, publications, and design of websites, would not in themselves be sustainable.
- Overall the DWTD can be said to be partly sustainable, but on a limited scale, in line with its small size and dispersed interventions.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- The projects reviewed under DWTD have in general achieved much more than what the project promoters have reported. Some of the best cases and good results are not picked up by the reporting system
- At least parts of the Nordic Model on Social Dialogue can be adapted to specific local conditions, despite the very different socio-economic and political situation in the 13 beneficiary countries. Support and advice from Norwegian partners have been instrumental in this.
- Experiencing the Nordic Model in practice during study visits to Norway has been an important lesson for many project promoters.
- It is difficult to match the broad objectives and outcomes in a programme with dispersed implementation mainly at local level (€ 80-100.000 should be a minimum threshold for future projects).
- Norwegian trade unions and employers' organisations have extensive international cooperation experience and are an asset in promoting bilateral relations.
- A weak and unsystematic activity-based reporting against an ambitious overall framework with unspecific indicators at outcome and output level can make it difficult to document achievements.
- Employing a Norwegian programme operator can create considerable goodwill and interest with project promoters in beneficiary countries, and has during the course of the programme been accepted by the recipient governments.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The review recommends that for any future programmes:

- Ambitions be scaled down and the programme have fewer and more focused projects. This would avoid spreading the resources too thinly, reduce administrative costs and increase and concentrate the effects of the programme as a whole;
  - The number of thematic areas be reduced from seven to three, where they are likely to have the largest consolidated effects. The minimum grant size be raised to € 80-100.000. This would help focus the programme and increase its effects;
  - The Calls for Proposals be adapted better to the situation in each country through a closer dialogue with social partners. Consideration should also be given to limited, closed calls to social partners to avoid too many calls;
  - National authorities e.g. National Focal Points be more involved in the preparatory process so as to achieve greater policy coherence and complementarity with European Social Fund programmes;
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- The selected programme operator should undertake a baseline study in key beneficiary countries during the first two months of the programme;
- Joint applications for projects (including Norwegian partners) be encouraged as this gives better transfer of experience, higher efficiency and better results;
- More effort be made to engage Norwegian partner organisations, although there may be resource constraints on the Norwegian side. This is likely to lead to improved project and programme results, and strengthen bilateral relations further;
- The proposed draft Results Framework for a second phase be further developed by FMO and the selected Programme Operator.

**The report contains many more findings, lessons learned and recommendations that will be followed up and inform the development of future programmes.**

Download the complete report [here](#).

## **EVALUATION OVERVIEW**

The evaluation was commissioned by the Financial Mechanism Office – the secretariat of the EEA and Norway Grants. It was conducted by the Nordic Consulting Group A/S during April- October 2015.

### **Purpose of the evaluation**

- Assess to what extent the programme has contributed to the two expected outcomes selected for this programme area
- Assess the achievements towards strengthening bilateral relations
- Assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the programme and their activities
- Identify facilitating factors, bottlenecks and challenges in implementation of the programme, assess what has contributed to success, as well as any unintended effects;
- Assess the institutional factors, including the administrative model of the Fund and the operational and management aspects of the implementation of the programme;
- Make recommendations for improving the programme in the next financial mechanism and identify key lessons learned.

### **Methodology**

- Desk reviews were undertaken in all 13 beneficiary countries and an online-survey was sent to 52 project promoters
  - Interviews with key stakeholders in Norway and Belgium.
  - In-depth interviews were conducted with relevant stakeholders in the six countries visited: Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Romania, as well as follow-up telephone interviews with key informants.
  - In the other review countries i.e. Latvia, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary, secondary data (country context analysis) was used in addition to the online survey.
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