



ANNUAL REPORT NO 3
on the Implementation
of
NORWAY FINANCIAL MECHANISM IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Implementation period:

Dated:

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February 2007 – March 2008

March 28, 2008

National Focal Point

Centre for Foreign Assistance

Ministry of Finance

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GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

BG	Block Grant
CFA	Centre for Foreign Assistance
CP	Contact Point
CFCU	Central Financial and Contracting Unit
EEA	European Economic Area
FM	Financial Mechanism
FMC	Financial Mechanism Committee
FMO	Financial Mechanism Office
GA	Grant Agreement
IP	Individual Project
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NFP	National Focal Point
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NF	National Fund
NMFA	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoC	Monitoring Committee
PRG	Programme
TA	Technical Assistance
NVF	National Training Fund
NAEP	National Agency of European Programme
NROS	Civil Society Development Foundation

PREFACE

The purpose of the **Annual Report No 3** on the implementation of the Norway Financial Mechanism in the Czech Republic is to give comprehensive information on the implementation during the period under review. The Annual Report should provide an overview of the implementation of the mechanism and compile the information the National Focal Point has received from all interested bodies throughout the implementation period February 2007 – March 2008.

The presented Annual Report is in compliance with the Beneficiary State monitoring and reporting guidelines on the Norway Financial Mechanism.

The reported period covers:

- i) the implementation of the approved applications under the 1st Open Call,
- ii) the evaluation and approval process of applications submitted under the 2nd Open Call and grants awarded by the FM Committee and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
- iii) the present status of the 3rd Open Call and the following process on the selection of applications by the check of formal criteria and eligibility assessment,
- iv) following process and information of present situation on the Block Grants implementation status.

The horizontal issues were considered when all applications were being assessed and selected for the submission to the FMO. However, their real effect can be evaluated when the projects are finished. More information to the cross-cutting issues within the 1st Open Call is to be found in the section 5 Cross-cutting issues.

1. Implementation Status
2. Open Call
3. Block Grants
4. Monitoring
5. Cross Cutting Issues
6. Publicity
7. Work plan 2007/2008
8. Summary and Recommendations
9. Annexes

The National Focal Point confirms that the data included in the Annual Report on implementation of the Norway Financial Mechanism are comprehensive, complete and correct.

1. IMPLEMENTATION STATUS

The National Focal Point (NFP) has submitted 104 Applications on grant in total; 5 of them are Block Grants, 38 complete applications on Individual projects and Programmes under the 1st Open Call and 61 complete applications under the 2nd Open Call and remaining 7 Applications will be sent by the end of April 2008.

1.1. 1ST OPEN CALL

Under the 1st Open Call the Czech Republic submitted in total 38 complete applications for a grant, which included 34 applications for Individual projects, 4 for Programmes.

To the 31st January 2008, the EEA FM Committee / Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs awarded a grant to 38 applications (IP/PRG).

1.2. 2ND OPEN CALL

Under the 2nd Open Call the NFP received 81 applications selected by the evaluation committees at the Contact points - sectoral Ministries.

The 4th and 5th Monitoring Committees recommended 68 Applications in total for submission to the FMO.

1.3. 3RD OPEN CALL

The 3rd Open Call was launched on the 26th November 2007 and the deadline for submission of applications was the 29th February 2008. Within the 3rd Open Call 246 applications were submitted to the Contact points in the Regions and the total amount of the requested grant is **152,935 MEUR**.

1.4. BLOCK GRANTS

The NFP submitted 5 applications for Block grant to the FMO for approval. To the date of March 25th 2008 there were **all 5 Block Grants approved**.

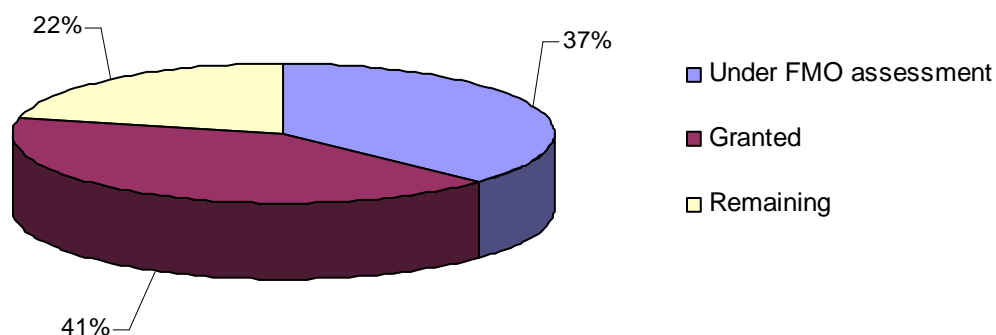
1.5. FINANCIAL STATUS

The Czech Republic – FM EEA/ Norway - Preset State of Allocation *					
	Allocation		Under FMO assessment	Granted	Remaining
	MEUR	%			
1 st Call	22,980 000	21,71		23,895 039	
2 nd Call	41,730 000	39,42	39,336 940		
3 rd Call	19,439 900	18,37			
Block Grants	21,700 000	20,50		19,624 955	
Total allocation**	105,849 900	100,00	39,336 940	43,519 994	22,992 966

on March 25,2008 ** without administrative costs

The approved applications received grant in total **43,520 MEUR** which represented **41,12 % of the total allocation** for the Czech Republic.

Present State of Allocation



2. OPEN CALLS

2.1. 1ST OPEN CALL

Under the 1st Open Call **38** Applications were approved by the donors in the total amount of **23,895 039 MEUR**. From the approved allocations in total **2,726 241 MEUR** has already been disbursed to Promoters / Intermediaries.

From the beginning the implementation started more slowly than expected according to the Project Implementation Plans, but now projects are running smoothly.

In some projects the unsuccessful tenders slowed down the disbursements or the respective payments were shifted to the next reporting periods.

The **Implementation status** and the **Financial Status** are described in detail in the **Annex 1**.

2.2. 2ND OPEN CALL

Assessment and Evaluation process within the 2nd Open Call

After the discussion at the 2nd Annual Meeting the donors approved **increasing of the total allocation for the 2nd Open Call from 25,71 MEUR up to 41,73 MEUR**.

Priority area		Indicative Allocation 2 nd Open Call		Increased Allocation		Approved Final Allocation	
		%	MEUR	%	MEUR	%	MEUR
1	Cultural heritage	30,0	8,253	51,3	7,295	37,26	15,548
2	Protection of the environment	20,0	5,502	8,3	1,180	16,01	6,682
3	Human resource development	20,0	5,502	26,6	3,783	22,25	9,285
4	Health and childcare	23,0	6,327	11,8	1,678	19,18	8,005
5	Promotion of sustainable development	5,0	1,376	1,5	0,213	3,81	1,589
7	Implementation of Schengen acquis,	2,0	0,550	0,5	0,071	1,49	0,621
		100	27,51	100,0	14,220	100,00	41,730

There were **81** applications submitted from the relevant line ministries to the National Focal Point. Together **68** applications have been recommended by the members of the 4th and 5th Monitoring Committee for submission to the FMO for approval.

In the 2nd quarter 2007 ran the process of quality evaluation of each application at the line ministries. Two independent experts nominated by the responsible Ministry provided a quality evaluation of each project application. On the base of quality evaluation the Selection committees, led by the Ministries, set up the Priority List of recommended applications which was submitted to the NFP for further assessment.

The NFP assessment of applications

Subsequently the NFP initiated an assessment of all submitted applications ensured by the external Technical Assistance team (TA) represented by an international consulting company SBP Consult, Ltd. The TA was selected under an open tender procedure and its activities started in May 2007

The role of the Technical Assistance is to provide an independent assessment of all applications submitted to the NFP. The outputs of the TA assessment serve as one of the basis for the NFP appraisal process on the selection of the most suitable applications which will be submitted to the Monitoring Committee for the recommendation before their submission to the FMO for final decision.

The independence of the TA is ensured by a condition in the ToR stipulating that the TA team is not allowed to be involved in the preparation of any application submitted under FM EEA/Norway open calls.

The whole appraisal process of the NFP was divided in two phases:

1st phase:

The TA provided an assessment of all applications (Czech version) submitted to the NFP.

On each application the TA elaborated a Reasoned Opinion in Czech which was distributed to all MoC members before the MoC meeting as a basis for a discussion and final decision of the relevant MoC.

The structure of a Czech Reasoned Opinion was prepared on the basis of the FMO Appraisal Guide. The RO on each application identified gaps, missing elements and/or additional requirements which were to be eliminated, corrected and completed in the English version of an application. Following the MoC meeting results the applicants were asked by the NFP to submit an English application to the NFP within the set up deadline.

In some problematic and urgent cases the TA together with the NFP made an on-site visit to clarify identified problematic issues of projects before the MoC meetings. The TA provides as well a detailed assessment of the status of applicant, financial reliability, property owner, permission etc. The main problems were as follows:

- i) Needs analysis: was insufficient. Rather than developing an analysis of the project's necessity, applicants prepared justification for the purchase of equipment.
- ii) Activities: were insufficiently described, relations among activities, schedule and budget of a project were unclear or misleading.
- iii) Budgets: were insufficiently or too generally substantiated without unit costs, it was therefore not possible to assess them properly.
- iv) Project documentation: comprised an insufficiently elaborated Simplified feasibility study, hence the TA carried out an independent expertise to identify weak points and to propose their reduction/elimination.

2nd phase:

All English applications had been checked by the TA team and if the identified problems maintained or were insufficiently clarified the applicants were asked to provide additional information or missing annexes/documents. On the basis of this additional checking process, the TA elaborated a draft Reasoned opinion in English which served as a basis for the NFP decision on sending the applications to the FMO. Since November 2007 final applications have been submitted to the FMO.

Following a discussion with the FMO staff in November 2007 the NFP asked the TA to elaborate an Appraisal Report in English (AR) for each application. The structure of the AR reflects the FMO appraisal format. Each AR comprises findings of a Czech Reasoned opinion (1st phase) and it is

supplemented by results of an English Reasoned opinion (2nd phase) as well as the observations from an on-site visit.

Until March 2008 on-site visits were held to 22 projects, which are mainly focused on works and supplies, with the aims to:

- i) verify the requested needs,
- ii) check project preparedness for implementation,
- iii) check project sustainability,
- iv) check eligibility of VAT, if requested.

The findings from on-site visits were incorporated to the relevant Appraisal Reports in order to provide to the FMO the most complete and comprehensive independent opinion on the recommended projects.

The 4th Monitoring Committee

The Monitoring Committee was held on **31st July 2007**. In total there were **37 projects** submitted for approval. From these projects 4 applications were of poor quality and were rejected by the members of the MoC (3 within the priority area no. 2 and 1 within the priority area no. 1).

The 5th Monitoring Committee

The Monitoring Committee was held on **17th October 2007**. In total there were **44 projects** submitted for approval. From these projects 6 applications were of poor quality and were rejected by the members of MoC. (2 within the priority area no. 2, 2 within the priority area no. 4, 2 within the priority area no. 5)

Result from the 4 th and 5 th Monitoring Committees meeting					
Priority area		Recommended	Rejected	Special Regime	Total
1	Cultural heritage	26	1	0	27
2	Protection of the environment	10	5	0	15
3	Human resource development	17	0	1	18
4	Health and childcare	7	2	6	15
5	Promotion of sustainable development	2	2	0	4
7	Implementation of Schengen acquis,	2	0	0	2
Total		64	10	7	81

Submission of Applications to the FMO – status as of 28/3/2008

The NFP sent **61** applications submitted under the 2nd Open Call and recommended them by the 4th and 5th Monitoring Committee meetings to the FMO for approval. These projects are in the total amount of **35,347 605 MEUR**. Three applicants took decision not to prepare the applications for submission to the FMO.

By the end of April 2008 **remaining 7 projects** will be sent to the FMO for approval. In total 68 applications are submitted for the final decision of the FM SC in the total amount of **39,336 940 MEUR**.

Seven remaining projects to be sent to the FMO for approval are:

5 projects submitted by the **Ministry of Health** (EC 173, 174, 175 181, 183)

1 project submitted by the **Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs** (EC 150)

1 project submitted by the **Ministry of the Environment** (EC 158)

The reasons for the delay in submission to the FMO are as follows:

- i) Six applications for the projects EC 150, 173, 174, 175, 181, 183 were insufficiently prepared, however their main objectives were in the public interest. Given that the NFP recommended to the 5th Monitoring Committee to decide that the applicants will revise the Czech applications and re-submit them to the NFP for further appraisal.
- ii) One application EC 158 was not recommended by the 4th Monitoring Committee due to numerous mistakes and confusions in the application. The applicant sent an appeal to the NFP against the decision of the MoC, in the appeal the applicant explained confusing issues and requested the application to be submitted to the FMO. The NFP had requested a clarification from the Ministry of Agriculture (since the project relates to the agriculture sector) and based on that, the NFP had agreed that the applicant submitted a revised English application to the NFP on the basis of which the NFP proceeded with its appraisal process.

Conflict of interests under the 2nd Open Call

Following the FMO discussion about possible conflict of interests and to clarify some of the circumstances regarding the quality evaluation process of the applications submitted within the 2nd Open Call under the priority area "Cultural heritage", the NFP asked all applicants concerned for the confirmation of the institution/company which had elaborated the application and relevant documentation for them.

In case of the application "*Dusan Samo Jurkovic Centre in Brno*", the elaboration of the application was based on the documentation prepared by the company Cultureplus Ltd. This documentation was prepared between the 2nd October and the 14th November 2006. The same company (Cultureplus Ltd. – represented by former employees working as a Contact Point at the Ministry of Culture at the time of the 2nd Open Call, 24 July – 26 October 2006) had however the contract with the Ministry of Culture (dated from 1 November 2006) to assure the administration of the quality evaluation of the applications submitted for the quality evaluation to the Ministry of Culture.

Therefore the request for further examination was submitted to the FMO which considered that the situation presented had raised issues of conflict of interest. In light of this, the FMO suggested that this application should not be forwarded to the FMO in the framework of the 2nd Open Call. Consequently the NFP has recommended that this application may be re-submitted under the 3rd Open Call as it is assumed that this above mentioned applicant was not sufficiently informed by the company Cultureplus Ltd. and arranged the elaboration of the application in good faith.

2.3. 3RD OPEN CALL

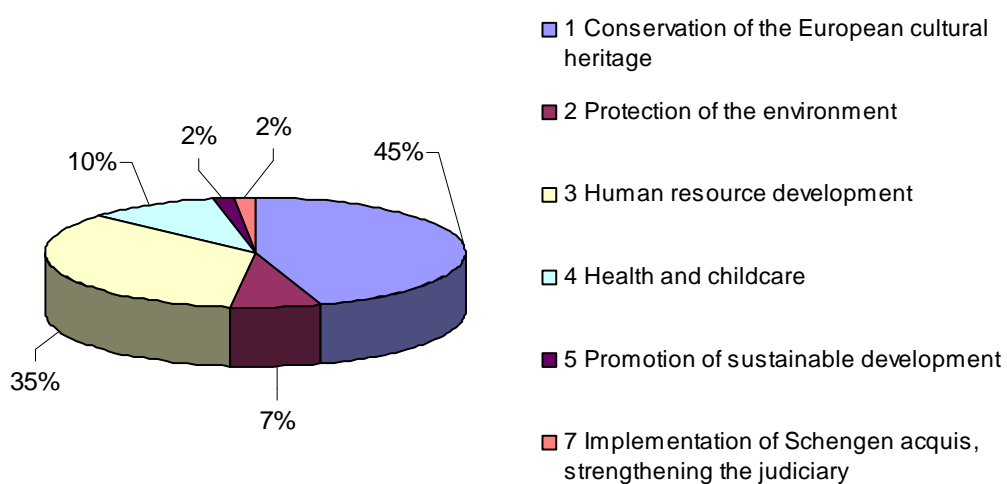
The 3rd Open Call was launched on the 26th November 2007 and the deadline for submission of applications was the 29th February 2008.

Within this Open Call **246** applications were submitted, most of them are related to the priority area Conservation of the European cultural heritage (111 applications), followed by the priority area Human resource development (85 applications). The grant requested for all submitted applications is **152,935 MEUR**.

At present the process of the assessment of the quality of applications is proceeding. The NFP is planning to submit the recommended applications to the FMO by September 2008.

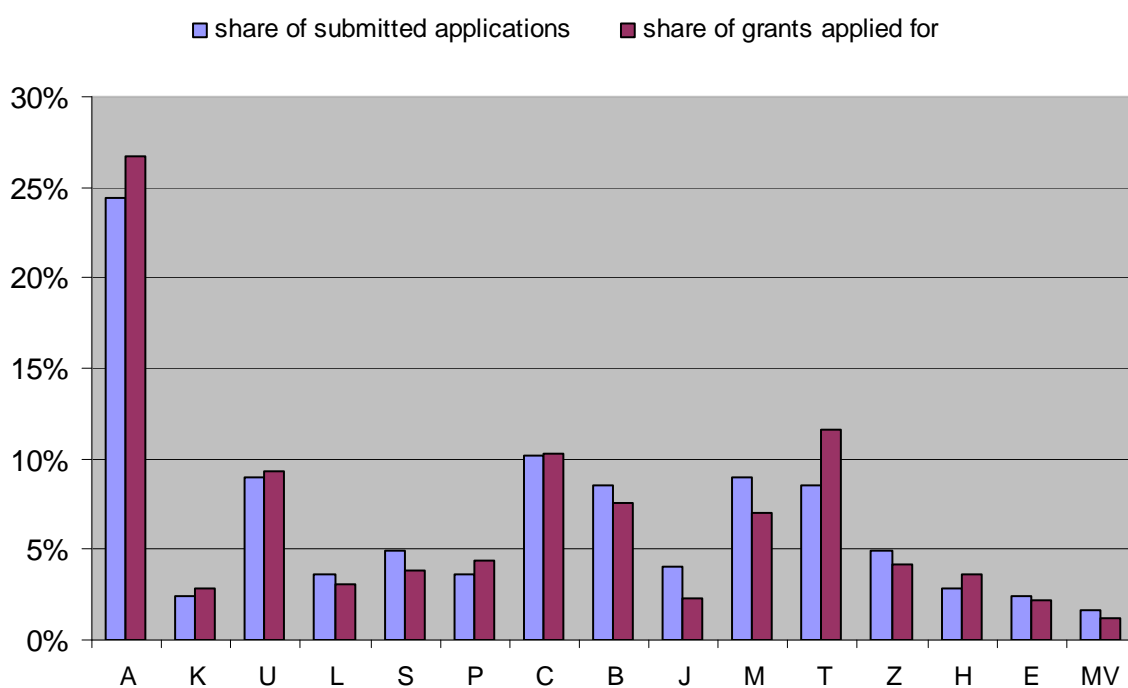
Applications for grant under 3 rd Open Call					
Priority Areas		Submitted Applications		Required grant	
		%	Number	MEUR	%
1	Conservation of the European cultural heritage	45 %	111	85,20	56 %
2	Protection of the environment	7 %	17	6,90	4 %
3	Human resource development	35 %	85	45,40	30 %
4	Health and childcare	10 %	25	12,20	8 %
5	Promotion of sustainable development	2 %	4	1,40	1 %
7	Implementation of Schengen acquis, strengthening the judiciary	2 %	4	1,80	1 %
Total		100 %	246	152,90	100%

Shares of Submitted Applications by Priority Area



Submitted Applications in the Region Contact points					
Contact Points in the Regions		Submitted Applications		Required grant	
		%	Number	MEUR	%
A	Capital Prague	24 %	60	40,839	27 %
K	Karlovarsky	2 %	6	4,326	3 %
U	Ustecky	9 %	22	14,305	9 %
L	Liberecky	4 %	9	4,683	3 %
S	Stredocesky	5 %	12	5,828	4 %
P	Plzensky	4 %	9	6,742	4 %
C	Jihocesky	10 %	25	15,796	10 %
B	Jihomoravsky	9 %	21	11,513	8 %
J	Vysocina	4 %	10	3,453	2 %
M	Olomoucky	9 %	22	10,685	7 %
T	Moravskoslezsky	9 %	21	17,775	12 %
Z	Zlinsky	5 %	12	6,431	4 %
H	Hradecky	3 %	7	5,490	4 %
E	Pardubicky	2 %	6	3,291	2 %
MV	Interior Ministry	2 %	4	1,777	1 %
Total		100 %	246	152,935	100%

Shares of Submitted Projects by Region



3. BLOCK GRANTS

The NFP submitted to the FMO 5 Block Grants. To the 31st March 2008, the EEA FM Committee / Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs awarded a grant to all 5 Block Grants.

Due to advance payments the disbursements related to Block grants (26 % from commitment) are more significant than disbursements for the 1st Open Call.

3.1. NGO FUND

By the cut-off date of this report, two Calls for proposals within the Block Grant for NGOs – Life Improvement in Communities through NGO Activities and Services were launched.

The 1st Call for proposals was launched on December 27, 2006. A Detailed report related to this Call is attached to this note (see ANNEX 3).

1st Call for Proposals (CfP)

In the 1st Call for Proposals total number of **79** projects was supported; Distributed **99,8 %** of allocation, i.e. **3 091 386 EUR**;

Distribution according to the priority areas:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| • 1 st priority | supported 23 projects | 913 095 €; |
| • 2 nd priority | supported 23 projects | 930 027 €; |
| • 3 rd priority | supported 33 projects | 1 248 264 €; |

Project implementation period: **14.6.2007 – 13.6.2008**

All projects are monitored on-the-spot by NROS representatives. Monitoring reports are available at the Civil Society Development Foundation premises; the whole monitoring process should be completed by the end of March 2008.

Plans of outcoming activities are regularly prepared by the beneficiaries and reviewed by the Intermediary. Assistance to the beneficiaries is provided on daily basis and without significant problems.

2nd Call for Proposals (CfP)

Preparation - Fund set-up changes

Analysis and evaluation of the 1st CfP showed very high absorption capacity of the Czech NGO sector under the 1st CfP priorities. Nevertheless, the level of human rights protection, building-up the multi-cultural society, support of children with specific needs and environment protection in the Czech Republic could not yet achieve the desired level and democratic standards and so far there is still a room for their improvement.

For the 2nd CfP it was recommended continuation of same priorities from the 1st CfP, together with increase of the total allocation which should be distributed equally between priorities. Aiming to ensure better sustainability of the project activities, some adjustments in the setting of the grant scheme suggested as well: an extension of the project duration and an adequate increase of the individual grant amount.

This change was considered as a necessary condition for implementation of long-term projects which will make more tangible impact to the target groups. Sustainability of the expected results related to future activities should be also more visible, both on institutional as well as policy level.

More precisely, the division of allocation for the 2nd Call for Proposals is indicative and evenly distributed among **all three priority areas**:

1. **a) Multicultural Environment in Communities**
 b) Strengthening of Human Rights and Fight against Discrimination and Racism
2. **Support to Children and Young People with Specific Problems**
3. **Environmental Protection**

The project duration is **12, 18 or 24** months. The total amount available for the 2nd Call for Proposals is **4,5 MEUR**. The **maximum** financial contribution from the Financial Mechanisms is **90 %**. Co-financing of the projects must be **at least 10 %**.

The amount of grant applied cannot be less than **20 000 €**
The amount of grant applied cannot be more than **100 000 €**.

Time schedule

On 17th December 2007 Civil Society Development Foundation launched the 2nd Call for Proposals in the Block Grant for NGOs – Life Improvement in Communities through NGO Activities and Services.

Launch of the Call for Proposals	17.12.2007
Deadline for receipt of applications	3.3.2008
Publicizing the awards of grants	30.6.2008
Contract signature	30.6.2008
Start of project implementation	1.7.2008
Transfer of advance payment	18.7.2008
End of project implementation	30.6.2009, 30.12.2009, 30.6.2010

Selection process should be completed within 28 weeks since announcement of the 2nd Call for Proposals. By the cut-off date of this report 434 applications were received, and activities related to the evaluation process started. Further information related to selection process will be published by the end of June, after contract signature with the Block Grant beneficiaries.

Cross-cutting issues

The NrOS management team has analyzed all the projects according to what extent the cross cutting issues are reflected. Score 1 is assigned when the issue is a significant objective, score 2 is attributed when the issue is a main and principal objective.

Environmental issues are covered by 33 projects, 9 of them are scored 1 and 24 are scored 2. Priority concerning environmental protection was highly recommended to be sustained for the 2nd Cfp. The expert group slightly amended the eligible activities according to analyses of the target group needs.

Economic issues are covered by 16 projects, 14 of them are scored 1 and 2 are scored 2.

Social issues are covered by 78 projects, 18 of them are scored 1 and 60 are scored 2.

Equal opportunities are dealt with by 46 projects, 41 of them are scored 1 and 5 are scored 2. It was decided to continue the BG priority 1 Strengthening Human Rights and Multicultural Environment from the 1st Cfp, eligible activities were partly revised according to the existing experience from the 1st Cfp.

Good Governance is covered by 43 projects, 20 of them are scored 1 and 23 are scored 2.

Within the 1st Cfp there is no official partner from donor countries involved. However, 3 projects are scored 1. Within one of them the cooperation has already been started with a Norwegian institution which could not be involved as an official partner, as far as the institution is not an NGO.

3.2. FUND FOR SUPPORT OF CO-OPERATION AMONG SCHOOLS / SCHOLARSHIPS

Fund for Support of Cooperation among Schools/ Scholarships is a block grant of the EEA/ Norwegian Financial Mechanism in the field of education. National Agency for European Educational Programmes (NAEP) in the Czech Republic has been authorized to administer the fund. The scholarship fund will make 2,5 million Euros available over the period 2006-2010.

The main aim of the fund is to decrease the social and economic disparities in the European Economic Area by

- Initiating and fostering cooperation between Czech Republic, Iceland, Norway, and Liechtenstein in the field of education
- Facilitating the exchange of experience and know-how through pupil, student and teacher exchange
- Encouraging project cooperation between Iceland, Norway and Czech Republic in both higher and secondary education

There are **three measures** within the fund:

1. **Individual mobility:** mobility of Czech students/teachers/administrative staff to Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway
2. **Learning partnership:** cooperation projects aimed at organizing of joint seminars/workshops/conferences, joint projects, joint publications, joint course delivery and other joint activities
3. **Institutional development:** cooperation projects towards curriculum development, human resource development and management of specific activities such as life-long learning, information centre, student centre etc.

Call for Proposals

Four Calls of proposals have been launched so far: June 2006, September 2006, March 2007 and February 2008.

Statistics:

Since the fund's start NAEP has awarded 148 individual scholarships (128 out of them to students, 20 to teachers and lecturers) and supported 21 school cooperation projects within Learning Partnership and Institutional development. From June 2006 until December 2007 the total of 1 039 470 EUR (964 748 EUR for sub measures and 74 722 for the block grant management) has been distributed.

Publicity

NAEP arranges annually about 50 different publicity events such as information's seminars for potential applicants organized with region authorities in different parts of the Czech Republic. The fund is annually presented at national education fairs such as Education and Craft (Ceske Budejovice), Expolingua (Praha) and Gaudeamus (Brno) and international education fairs such as EAIE conference.

Conclusion

The block grant runs according to the plan both in terms of finances and sub-measures' implementation.

All supported sub-measures have been met by high interest from the side of Czech end recipients. Bilateral relations between Czech Republic and the donor states are fundamental aim of the block grant scheme; both individual mobility and school cooperation projects strongly contribute to strengthening of these relations.

Cross-cutting issues

Social and economic: All sub-measures within the fund lead to human resource development and contribute to economic and social dimension of the sustainable development. Participation of

applicants with special needs is encouraged. In 2007 the Steering Committee awarded scholarship to a first physically handicapped student.

Gender equality: The end users of the outputs are teachers and students without any prejudice to their sex. Gender equality principle is taken into account during the selection process. All projects take into account equal rights for participation.

Bilateral relations: Bilateral relations between Czech Republic and the donor states are fundamental part of the block grant scheme. All individual applicants (students and teachers) apply for a scholarship to study/work in one of the donor states. All supported cooperation projects within sub-measure 2 and 3 must have at least one foreign partner from the donor states. Development and strengthening of bilateral relations in the field of education is the block grant main objective.

3.3. RESEARCH SUPPORT FUND

The Grant Agreements between donors and the Czech Ministry of Finance for the project CZ 0046 - Research Support Fund - were signed at December 31st, 2007.

The Ministry of Finance – National Contact Point signed afterwards (January 11th, 2008) the **Contract on project implementation** with the National Training Fund (NVF) as Intermediary of this block grant. By its decision from January 31st, 2008 the Ministry of Finance awarded NVF a grant for implementation of the Fund.

The Intermediary has established the Expert Panel of the Fund in December 2007. By this occasion a meeting of the Norwegian ambassador and the director of the NVF with editors of expert journals and magazines was held.

A procurement procedure was organized for supply of the new Fund's webpage in December 2007. The company Netservis was selected and the contract was signed. Fund's webpage was launched officially at Feb. 4th, 2008.

Newly established Steering Committee held its session in January. Its chairperson and vice-chair were elected – prof. Josef Syka and Mr. Marek Blažka respectively.

The Steering Committee approved the selection of focus areas of the Fund's priorities for the first Call for proposal within **the measure A**:

2. **Protection of the environment:**
 - 2.4 waste management
 - 2.6 measures for decrees of green-house gases
 - 2.7 biodiversity losses reduction & preservation of untouched natural habitats

4. **Healthcare:**
 - 4.2 prevention of communicable diseases
 - 4.3 safety & quality of food
 - 4.4 specific health problems of children

5. **Promotion of sustainable development:**
 - 5.1. designing, enforcing and implementation on Strategies of Sustainable Development

6. **Children's living conditions:**
 - 6.1 general, selective and indicated prevention of drug abuse in childhood and in adolescence
 - 6.2 specific economic & social problems influencing children's living conditions.

The press conference was organized on March 4th, 2008. The Norwegian ambassador and the director of NVF announced the official start of the Fund and both call pro proposals – **within the measures A**

and B. Afterwards the director of NVF was interviewed by the Czech broadcasting, station Radiojournal. The advertisement attracting stakeholders to the new Fund and its calls was published in daily nation-wide press (Lidové noviny).

The main Fund's publicity campaign is using its webpage and direct mailing to the R&D departments of the Czech universities (those schools close to the themes of the Call). Information about calls was also sent to embassies of the donor states, to the Research Council of Norway and to the Icelandic Centre for Research.

Applications within the Measure A (R&D) can be submitted between **March 10th and May 12th, 2008.**

Applications within the Measure B (expert exchange grants) can be submitted between March 17th, 2008 and May 19th, 2008.

The texts of both calls and of the Fund's Implementation Manual were agreed with the Ministry of Finance – National Contact Point.

3.4. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FUND (TAF)

The grant was awarded on **26th November 2007**. The Intermediary of this fund is **Ministry of Finance** (National Focal Point - NFP), Centre for Foreign Assistance. The total allocation of the fund is **€ 2,075,275**.

The Intermediary plans at least two open calls within the fund.

The **1st Open Call** for submission of applications was **announced on 25th February 2008** and was aimed at following **focus areas**:

1. Strengthening capacity of the Czech Republic to provide development aid to the third countries
2. Co-operation in adoption and implementation of the acquis
3. Exchange of experience and co-operation between institutions from EEA/ EFTA states and the Czech Republic

The final date for submission of applications is **25th April 2008**. The financial allocation for the 1st Open Call is € 1,325,000.

The announcement of the open call was published in 2 nation-wide periodicals (Hospodářské noviny a MF Dnes) and all information needed on conditions regarding submission of applications within the Fund is published on the web page: www.eegrants.cz.

The seminar for potential applicants was held on **26th March 2008** at the **Ministry of Finance**.

The representatives from **DIFI** - The Agency for Public Management and eGovernment participated in the seminar, as well as the representative from the Norwegian Embassy in the Czech Republic.

Launching of the 2nd Open Call is planned in October 2008 and financial allocation for this call is € 800,000.

3.5. SEED MONEY FUND (SMF)

The grant was awarded on **20th September 2006**. The Intermediary of this fund is **Ministry of Finance** (National Focal Point - NFP), Centre for Foreign Assistance. The total allocation of the fund was **€ 600,000**.

The Open Call for submission of applications was announced on **25th March 2007**. The deadline for submission of applications was on **25th May 2007**.

The announcement of the open call was published in 2 nation-wide periodicals (Hospodářské noviny and MF Dnes) and all information needed on conditions regarding submission of applications within the SMF was published on the web page: www.eeagrants.cz.

The NFP received **a total of 592 grant applications** making up a total requested amount of **€ 8,160,000**. From the whole amount of applications **44 projects** were recommended for funding at a total amount of **€ 558,930**.

The List of recommended and reserve projects prepared by the Assessment Committee was submitted to the Deputy Minister of Finance for approval. The Deputy Minister of Finance approved the list on 20th July 2007. Subsequently the applicants were informed about the result by a letter dated 25th July 2007.

The List of approved projects was published on the website: www.eeagrants.cz on 26th July 2007. Almost all Grant award decisions were concluded by the end of September. All sub-projects were successfully completed. The sub-project completion reports are under approval. Detailed information are provided in the Final report – Seed Money Fund in the ANNEX 5.

The objective of the project has been fulfilled. From 44 applicants, which were awarded a grant within the SMF, 35 submitted an application under the 3rd Open Call. This shows a high demand for this kind of assistance and this demand had been expected by the NFP since the beginning and it was one of the reasons why the application for the SMF was submitted to the FMO as one of the first applications.

4. MONITORING

4.1. MONITORING PLAN

National Focal Point ensures on the spot monitoring of the projects, programmes and block grants financed from FM EEA/Norway in cooperation with external monitoring agency. National Focal Point prepares tender documentation. The tendering procedure shall start in May 2008 and it is presumed that the selected contractor shall start its activities in September 2008. The contract shall be financed from the FM EEA/Norway resources.

The methodology for selection of sample of the individual projects, programmes or block grants is prepared. The sample will be selected on the basis of risk analysis. The risk factors are: grant amount/grant rate, Project Promoter/Intermediary (status of the promoter and its experience with grants), character of specific conditions stated in Grant Agreement, previous mistakes/irregularities identified, previous audits carried out; number of changes in budgets of project/ programme/ block grant, number of partnerships and relations between partners and Project Promoter/Intermediary, quality of project management, reporting of management costs, provision and utilisation of advance payments in the project/programme/block grant.

Besides the selected sample, which will form a core of the annual monitoring plan, the NFP may consider to include any additional projects or programmes in the course of the given monitoring period.

The monitoring plan shall also take into account all monitoring activities of the FMO.

5. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

5.1. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – ENVIRONMENTAL

The projects and sub-projects of the programme/block grant financed from FM EEA/Norway have no negative impact on environment. Within the construction projects, the NFP strictly enforces the environmentally sound disposal of waste or any other extracted material.

The waste from construction works and other relevant project activities is disposed in accordance with Czech legislation (Act No. 185/2001 Coll., on waste disposal), which is in line with the requirements of the EU legislation. Documentation specifying the type of waste produced, its quantity and method of its disposal is annexed to each PIR and can be subject to any on-the-spot checks from the side of NFP and other control authorities. Some project are, from their nature and focus, even contributing to better quality of certain environmental issues – such as the protection of ambient air quality or protection of biodiversity.

5.2. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – ECONOMIC

The economic aspects of the projects/programmes/block grants are related mainly to the implementation phase. They concern the economic stability of the project /programme /block grant implementation, financial flows in the project/ programme/ block grant in line with the time schedule and revenues generation.

The projects selected within the 1st Call for proposals or sub-projects of the programme/block grant financed from FM EEA/Norway are in general non-profit generating. Minimum revenues shall be dedicated to the maintenance and operational costs of the project outcomes, ensuring thus partially economic sustainability of project results. Furthermore, all Promoters are committed to invest sufficient funds to further development and even enhancement of project results. The financial stability of implemented projects/programmes/block grants is influenced by changes of exchange rates CZK/EUR. The additional costs caused by exchange rate differences have to be financed from own resources of Project Promoters/Intermediaries.

5.3. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – SOCIAL

Sustainable development in social sphere of the project /programme /block grant is reflected in most of the projects or sub-projects of programmes/block grants financed from FM EEA/Norway.

The sustainable social development is focused predominantly on contribution to tourist attractiveness of the region or creation of new jobs in the region. Many aspects are related to health and childcare in terms of enhancing its quality (development of healthcare programmes specifically for children or disabled) as well as variety (new possibilities for spending leisure time for children and youth, out of school activities, sports etc). Research activities form substantial part of FM EEA/Norway financed measures and they range from scientific research in all FM focus areas to specific support to researches by means of archiving digital data, enhancing specific research methods or exchange of experience between professionals.

The exchange of experience approach proved to be very valued for its expert as well as social dimension.

5.4. GOOD GOVERNANCE

The implemented projects/programmes/ block grants respect relevant Czech legislation and EU regulations. Implementation of the project proceeds according to planned schedules of activities; financial means are drawn according to the financial plan. The projects are managed by qualified staff and publicity of the projects is ensured in accordance with Publicity guides. Contractors of construction works/services/supply of equipment are selected transparently in line with Czech legislation.

Good administration principles of the programmes/block grants are ensured by approved documents: Call for Proposals, Guide for Applicants and Manual for implementation of the Programme/Block grant. Intermediaries apply transparent rules to the administration of respective programmes. Transparency in selection procedure is strictly enforced by the NFP.

Following the Article 4.3 of the Terms and Conditions the National Focal Point ensures that procurement principles and procedures are applied in compliance with national and Community legislation - the national legislation, Act No. 137/2006 Coll., on Public Procurement is fully in line with the Community legislation, Directive 2004/18/EC and Directive 2004/17/EC especially.

5.5. GENDER EQUALITY

The gender equality aspects are observed in all relevant projects or sub-projects of programme/ block grant financed from FM EEA/Norway. The selection of suppliers and creation of the project teams for administration of the project/ programme/ block grant proceed in compliance with equal opportunities.

All stakeholders of the projects/programmes/ block grants are viewed without any prejudice to their sex/nationality/race/religion and they have equal rights for participation on the activities and utilization of outputs.

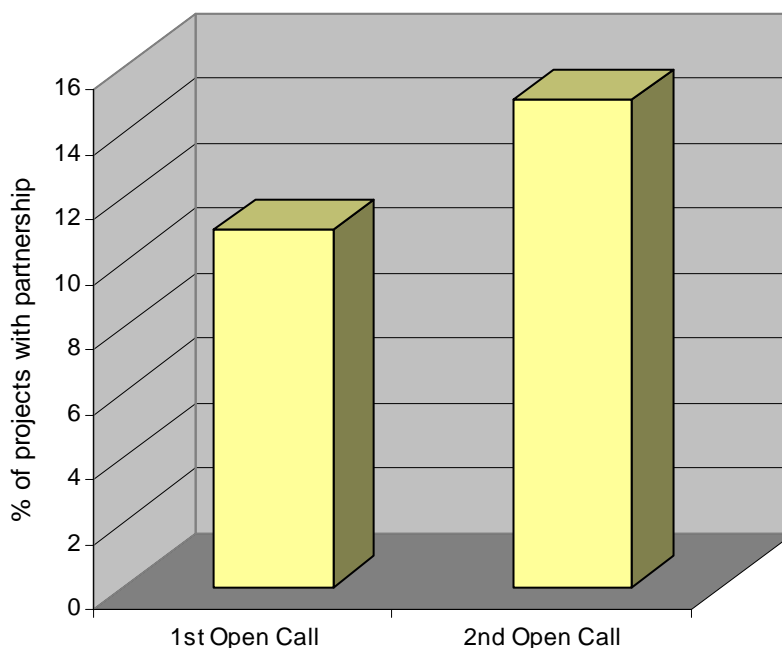
The construction projects or sub-projects take into account needs of immobile people (an access to buildings for people with lower ability of orientation and movement).

5.6. BILATERAL RELATIONS

Bilateral co-operation with partners from Iceland/Lichtenstein/Norway in the projects or sub-projects financed from FM EEA/Norway is at a very good level. The partnership with some Czech institutions in project/sub-projects implementation has a long tradition dating back to the period before the grant application was submitted. Within the 1st Open Call there were 4 projects financed from FM EEA/Norway with a partner from Norway. Within the 2nd Open Call this number has risen to 10 projects financed from FM EEA/Norway with a partner from Norway.

Within the block grants the bilateral relations between Czech Republic and the donor states are one of the fundamental parts of the block grant scheme. Development and strengthening of bilateral relations in the field of education, NGO cooperation, research, state and regional institution cooperation are one of the block grant's main aim.

**Development of partnerships with Norway/ Liechtenstein/ Island
in the 1st and the 2nd Open Calls**



6. PUBLICITY

In the period 02/2007 – 03/2008 the National Focal Point provided information and publicity of Financial Mechanisms in compliance with the Publicity Guidelines and the Communication Action Plan both approved by the FMO.

6.1. PRESS CONFERENCE

The NTF as an Intermediary of the Research Support Fund held the press conference on 4th March 2008 where the 1st Call for proposals under Research Support Fund was announced. The press conference was attended by the Ambassador of Kingdom of Norway Mr Peter Nicolay Raeder.

6.2. ANNOUNCEMENT OF OPEN CALLS

- The NFP announced the open call for proposals within the SMF on **25th March 2007**. The announcement was published on the web page: www.eeagrants.cz, and in 2 nationwide newspapers - *MF DNES* and *Hospodářské noviny*.
- The NFP announced the **3rd Open Call for proposals on 26th November 2007**. The announcement was published on the web page: www.eeagrants.cz, and in 2 nationwide newspapers - *MF DNES* and *Hospodářské noviny*.
- The Intermediary of NGO BG (NROS) announced the 2nd Open Call for proposals on **17th December 2007**. The announcement was published on the web page: www.eeagrants.cz, and in nationwide newspapers.
- The Intermediary of Scholarship Fund (NAEP) announced the 3rd Open Call for proposals in March 2007, and the 4th Open Call in February 2008. The announcement was published on the web page of NAEP.
- The NFP announced the Open Call for proposals under the TAF on **25th February 2008**. The announcement was published on the web page: www.eeagrants.cz, and in 2 nationwide newspapers - *MF DNES* and *Hospodářské noviny*.
- The Intermediary of the Research Support Fund (NTF) announced the Open Call for proposals in March 2008. The open call for Measure A was launched on 10th March 2008. The open call for Measure B was launched on 17th March 2008.

6.3. SEMINARS FOR POTENTIAL APPLICANTS

- In a view of the announcement of the 3rd Open Call, the NFP organized a **seminar for applicants divided in two days**. This seminar was held on 8/1/2008 (attended by **194** persons) and 9/1/2008 (attended by **120** persons).

The aim of the seminar was to inform the potential applicants about the rules within the 3rd Open Call. Various potential applicants (public and private sector, representatives of region and town municipalities, representatives of NGOs, universities and higher schools in the region, companies operating in research and development area, social partners etc.) attended these seminars. The information on the seminars was publicly available on the web www.eeagrants.cz.

- NFP organized **seminar for potential applicants for Block Grant Technical Assistance Fund**. This seminar was held on 26th March 2008. The information on the seminars was publicly available on the web www.eeagrants.cz. Representatives of DIFI and Norwegian Embassy participated at this seminar

- All BG intermediaries are responsible for ensuring of overall publicity for potential applicants. They arrange annually different publicity events such as information's seminars for potential applicants organized in regions. All information about this activities are available at the web pages:

Scholarship Fund: www.naep.cz

NGO Fund: www.nros.cz

Research Support Fund: www.eea-researchfund.cz

Technical Assistance Fund: www.eeagrants.cz

Seed Money Fund: www.eeagrants.cz

6.4. SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS FOR CONTACT POINTS

During the reporting period the NFP organised 3 information seminars for the Contact Points in regions and line ministries:

17. - 18. September 2007	Information Seminar for Contact Points – Preparation for the 3 rd open call
5. – 7. November 2007	Detailed procedure of implementation FM EEA/Norway
3. – 4. March 2008	Seminar for Contact Points – assessment process in the 3rd Open Call

6.5. WEB PAGE

National Focal Point in the Czech Republic – (CFA - Preparation and Coordination Unit) is managing a web page on EEA/Norway Financial Mechanisms www.eeagrants.cz. This web page is regularly updated. Important seminars, workshops and conferences are mentioned in the section *News*.

6.6. PUBLICATIONS

The National Focal Point is going to be published in April 2008 the **Information Brochure** (on 1st Open Call implemented projects) and **Information Brochure of Technical Assistance Fund**.

6.7. MANUALS AND GUIDELINES

The CFA regularly updates and publishes **all manuals** issued by the NFP:

1. *Guide for applicants – 3rd Call (updated 25 November 2007)*
2. *Manual for Implementation - 3rd Call (updated 25 November 2007)*
3. *Methodology of Financial Flows (updated 20 February 2008)*
4. *Guidelines for Recipients of a Grant from the Financial mechanisms EEA/Norway*
5. *Guideline for the Recipients of the Grant from the EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanisms (updated 6 June 2007)*

The NFP prepared the *Guideline for the Recipients of the Seed Money Grant* in February 2007.

The *Guideline for the Technical Assistance Fund* was prepared in January 2008.

The CFCU updated on 13th December 2007 the Instruction of the NFP no. 1 – *Eligibility of personnel expenses on employees and external experts*. The updated version was published on www.eeagrants.cz.

Revision of implementation manuals

Currently the National Focal Point (CFCU in cooperation with CFA 2) and other departments of the National Focal Point is preparing the revision of the implementation manuals for the EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanisms:

- Guidelines for the recipients of the grants from the EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanisms;
- Manual for the implementation of EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanisms (internal manual of the NFP).

The changes in the manuals will reflect the recent changes issued by the FMO/donors:

- modification of Standard Grant Agreement and related procedures;
- modification of reporting system (APR replaced by “extended PIR”);
- clarifications to maintenance clause and sustainability;

and other internal modifications and up-dates:

- more precise internal procedures related to preparation of Grant Agreements, public procurement, examination of project changes, control of monitoring reports and payment requests, accounting procedures for Fund PIR and retention money;
- up-date of standard implementation contracts based on the above-described changes;
- up-date or modification of annexes of the manuals based on the above-described changes.

It is expected that the new manuals and new implementation contracts templates will come into force during April 2008.

7. WORK PLAN 02/2008 – 03/2009

The NFP intends to send recommended applications for a grant under the 3rd Open Call to the FMO till the end of 10//2008.

Activity	Target group	Date
Monitoring Committee		
Preparation of the 6 th Monitoring Committee	Members of MoC	May - June 2008
Monitoring Committee meeting	Members of MoC	June - July 2008
2nd Open Call process		
All remaining 7 applications sent for the FM SC decision	the NFP	March – April 2008
3rd Open Call process		
Quality assessment at line ministries	Line ministries	Deadline: 30 th May 2008
NFP assessment – TA team	NFP – TA team	May – July 2008
6 th Monitoring Committee – recommendation of applications from 3 rd Open Call	Members of MoC	June - July 2008
Preparation of the applications in English	Successful applicants	July 2008
Preparation of Assessment Reports	NFP, FMO	July – September 2008
Sending recommended applications for grants to the FMO	FMO	Deadline: October 2008
Block Grants - TAF		
Launching of Open Call	Applicants, general	25 th February 2008
Deadline for submission of applications	Applicants, general	25 th April 2008
Info seminar on TAF	CPs, potential applicants	26 th March 2008
Publicity brochure TAF	Applicants, general	April 2008
Information on approved sub-projects	Successful applicants	July 2008
Preparation of 2 nd Open Call	NFP	August - July 2008
Launching of the 2 nd Open Call	Applicants, general	autumn 2008
Publicity		
General information brochure on FMs	Applicants, general	April 2008
TAF brochure	Applicants, general	April 2008
Publication of approved projects within the 3 rd Open Call	Successful applicants, general	July 2008
Publication of 2 nd Open Call for TAF	Applicants, general	autumn 2008
Publication of other open calls within BGs and PRGMs	Applicants, general	continuously / ad hoc

8. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Assessment process

- Simplifying the whole approval process, using the assessment results of the TA for both the NFP and the FMO.
- Clear division of all steps within the appraisal process between the FMO and the NFP is necessary so that all involved parties (FMO / NFP / Applicants) would avoid some misunderstanding.
- Open discussion with the FMO on any issues with the main intention to speed up the start of the projects implementation phase and to reduce/eliminate any potential risks for applicants.

2. De-commitment and use of unspent funds:

- The NFP will set up a Reserved List of projects which would be sent for the FMO assessment. The remaining funds would be allocated into some of this projects
- The NFP proposes to introduce the possibility to use savings for financing of additional activities of approved projects on the Reserved List

3. Final eligibility

- The applications that are submitted within the 3rd Open Call include time schedules of the project with maximum duration 24 months. The Final eligibility date for FM EEA/Norway is 30 April 2011.
- The NFP proposes to extend the final eligibility period due to the presumed period for project assessment and approval process of the applications and unexpected project changes and delays within the implementation phase.

4. Maintenance clause

The current wording of this condition is as follows:

“The Focal Point shall ensure that the Project Promoter properly maintains the property and establishes a separate account dedicated to the maintenance of the results of the Project into which an appropriate sum shall be paid which shall be annually not less than 1 % of the total project costs.”

Last exchange of letters clarified that this condition shall start to be applicable only after the approval of Project Completion Report and shall last until the end of legal duration of the Grant Agreement (sustainability period). The percentage of funds to be set aside shall be calculated from the actual total project costs.

From the NFP point of view it is rather problematic to ensure this obligation in case of programmes for the following reasons:

1. the condition is applicable to all sub-projects not taking into account their individual purpose, i.e. under one programme both soft and reconstruction sub-projects may be supported;
2. the sustainability of sub-projects is not defined in any of the legal documents of EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanisms – only sustainability of the whole programme is stated;
3. for sub-projects, 1 % of the total project costs to be set aside for maintenance is too high. This is mainly due to the fact that end recipients of sub-projects opted to participate in the programme due to the lower financial burden (lower minimum thresholds of sub-project’s budget as compared to the one for IP etc.). As we were informed by Intermediaries end recipients are usually non-profit organizations, church organizations or small municipalities, for which the condition of setting aside 1 % of the total costs annually might constitute the reason of finally deciding not to submit the sub-project.

The NFP suggests following:

- maintenance clause is, in case of programmes involving a mix of soft and investment measures, explicitly limited only for sub-projects involving more than 80 % investment;
- the annual instalment for maintenance purposes is maximum 0,5 % of the total sub-project costs.

5. Sustainability

As the maintenance clause is closely related to the sustainability of projects, we would appreciate further clarification of Article 7.3 of the Rules and Procedures that says:

“Beneficiary States shall ensure that projects that involve investment in real estate and/or land (including renovation) are operational at least 10 years after they have been completed, unless otherwise stipulated in the grant agreements. The period of minimum post-completion obligation for other projects shall be determined in the grant agreement referred to in Article 4.8.”

Unfortunately, almost all Grant Agreements have the period of validity 10 years regardless the type of the project (reconstruction, trainings, digitalisation, programmes, block grants etc.).

From FMO correspondence the NFP is aware that the legal duration of the Grant Agreement is not the same as sustainability requirements.

Based on this statement, the NFP is not sure how long sustainability period shall apply for different types of projects, especially for soft projects (if any). The sustainability period shall be according to our opinion clearly stated in the Grant Agreement.

Furthermore, in case of programmes and block grants the sustainability is related to the programme or block grant as such, but how long sustainability shall be ensured for sub-projects? The whole 10 years from the PCR approval is too long for them because:

- sub-projects are always finished before the end of the programme/block grant, if the period of sustainability of sub-project would be counted from the end of PRG/BG, this would imply that certain sub-project will have to demonstrate sustainability for 15 years;
- some sub-projects are of such a nature that no or only short sustainability period can be guaranteed.

According to the NFP interpretation, sub-projects shall be sustainable (if permitted by the nature of sub-project) for 10 years after individual sub-project's completion.

6. Confirmation of conformity with Community legislation, public procurement mainly

Following the Article 4.3 of the Terms and Conditions the National Focal Point ensures that procurement principles and procedures are applied in compliance with national and Community legislation by the following means:

- the national legislation, Act No. 137/2006 Coll., on Public Procurement is fully in line with the Community legislation, Directive 2004/18/EC and Directive 2004/17/EC especially;
- Promoters / Intermediaries are obliged through the standard implementation contract to follow the national public procurement legislation; not fulfilling this obligation could lead to the full recovery of the grant; fulfilment of this condition is controlled in detail by the Office for the Protection of Economic Competition as well as on general level through the PIRs by the National Focal Point;
- the requirement to follow the national legislation is valid also for that Promoters / Intermediaries which are not obliged to follow the Act based on the definition of the Contracting Authority, i.e. all Promoters / Intermediaries do public procurement as Public Contracting Authorities;
- Intermediaries are obliged to transfer the requirement to follow the national public procurement legislation to the legal acts by which the funds are awarded to the end recipients of the grant, i.e. also end recipients are obliged to follow the national public procurement legislation;
- National Focal Point prepared minimum guidelines to be respected in case the procurement falls below the thresholds / outside the scope of the national legislation – in this case the basic principles of transparency, non-discrimination and equal treatment must be applied for procurement in any case and there are further obligations requested for the contracts signed based on such procedures. Requirements are in detail described in the Guidelines for the recipients of the grant from the EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanisms;
- Promoters / Intermediaries and end recipients are obliged to archive all the tender and contract documentation for 10 years following the end of the respective project.

9. ANNEXES

Annex 1	1st Open Call
	Implementation Status – 1 st Open Call
	Financial Status of the FM EEA / Norway – Block Grants
	Financial Status of the FM EEA / Norway – 1 st Open Call
Annex 2	2nd Open Call – Indicative Allocation
Annex 3	NGO Fund
	Block Grant for NGOs - 1 st Call for Proposals
	List of Supported Projects in 1 st Call for Proposals
	Block Grant for NGOs - 2 nd Call for Proposals
Annex 4	Fund for support of Cooperation among Schools/ Scholarships
Annex 5	Block Grant – the Seed Money Fund - Open Call and Assessment process Report
Annex 6	Evaluation of the Control/Audit Activities 2007
	EEA and Norwegian FM Control/Audit Plan of the Czech Republic 2008