

**Summary of results –
consultation on the draft 'Blue
Book' for the EEA and Norway
Grants 2014-2021**

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Executive summary

On 27 May 2016 Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway – the three donor countries – launched a broad public consultation on the draft ‘Blue Book’, the policy document describing the five priority sectors and twenty-three programme areas agreed between the donor countries and the European Union for the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021.

The consultation consisted of a web-based public consultation open to all potential partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries of the Grants, and a consultation directly with the main partners of the Grants in each of the beneficiary countries – the National Focal Points, the public entities with overall responsibility for reaching the objectives of the Grants.

In total 1,455 respondents participated in the consultation, of whom 746 submitted completed responses. Only the completed responses have been included in the appraisal of comments.

In general responses show overwhelming support for the assumptions and priorities set out in the draft ‘Blue Book’. Respondents indicated that the objectives and the areas eligible for support formulated for the Grants 2014-2021 allow them to address relevant development challenges and opportunities. They also suggested clarifications and in some cases relevant changes. Following analysis of all comments the donor countries have made 69 changes to the draft text of the programme areas and a number of clarifying changes to the draft introduction to the ‘Blue Book’.

This summary report sets out the background, process and results of the consultation on the draft ‘Blue Book’. It also provides insight into the donor countries’ appraisal of comments received during the consultation and explains the changes that were made to the draft text as a result.

This consultation summary of results is published together with the final version of the ‘Blue Book’. They are available on the website of the EEA and Norway Grants at www.eeagrants.org.

Introduction

This summary provides information about the result of the consultation on the draft ‘Blue Book’ and the process of determining the policy outline for the EEA and Norway Grants in the period 2014-2021. It reports on the process of collection of the 1,455 responses, and the analysis of the 746 completed responses that have resulted in the donor countries making 69 changes to the draft text of the programme areas and a number of clarifying changes to the draft introduction of the ‘Blue Book’.

The consultation summary of results is published together with the final version of the ‘Blue Book’.

The donor countries are pleased with the number of responses received and their quality. They also appreciate that so many people, from across Europe, took time to share their views.

The consultation took place in a period when Europe encountered significant challenges in various areas. Migration, youth unemployment, increased hate speech, the growing danger of extremism dominated the media throughout the consultation period. At the same time there was – and still is – intense debate on the form and aims of European cooperation. The fact that nearly 1,500 people from all the donor and beneficiary countries and a number of international organisations participated in the consultation is significant. It shows that there is high interest in the EEA and Norway Grants and

their objectives. It is reassuring to experience that so many people have come together to assess what the Grants can mean for addressing social and economic disparities in Europe.

The number of responses is in large part due to the efforts of the EEA and Norway Grants' stakeholders in sharing information about the public consultation with others who might otherwise not have known about the opportunities offered by the Grants. The donor countries would like to thank all who took the time to participate.

A public consultation not only results in the provision of answers to specific questions. It also allows the authors of a text to see from the responses where the intentions of a text are subject to misunderstanding or where text is unclear. The responses made to the draft 'Blue Book' have allowed for adjustments to be made not only to the wording in respect of each programme area, but also to the introduction of the 'Blue Book'. It has been changed in response to specific questions raised and comments made.

The changes to the introduction are not detailed in this 'Summary of results'. We invite readers who wish to understand how the EEA and Norway Grants will operate over the period 2014-2021 to read this introductory text in the 'Blue Book'.

The Financial Mechanism Office – the donor countries' Secretariat for the EEA and Norway Grants – as well as the partner institutions in the beneficiary countries (the National Focal Points and the operators of the individual programmes) will be working to ensure that information regarding the availability of funding is communicated in a timely fashion.

The website of the EEA and Norway Grants at www.eeagrants.org and the social media presence of the Grants are among the entry points for keeping up to date on developments.

The consultation process

The consultation was carried out in two parallel processes: the first involved a web-based public consultation; the second was addressed to the National Focal Points, public entities with the overall responsibility for the implementation of the EEA and Norway Grants in each of the beneficiary countries. The National Focal Points were encouraged to involve stakeholders in their consultation.

The public consultation was open to all potential stakeholders of the Grants. It was carried out through a structured web-based survey using an online survey tool. An invitation to participate in the public consultation was published online, in the EEA and Norway Grants newsletter (which has 5,000 subscribers) and on social media (Twitter and Facebook). A dedicated webpage on the EEA and Norway Grants website – www.eeagrants.org/bluebook – served as the information page for the consultation. This webpage contains guiding information on the web-based survey. It now also makes the final version of the 'Blue Book' available.

Furthermore, NGOs in Poland and Romania took the initiative of organising structured consultations aimed at civil society which resulted in 466 responses.

Each submitted response has been individually reviewed. Each suggestion in these responses was assessed by policy experts. This has influenced the donor countries' decision on the final text of the 'Blue Book'.

The purpose of the consultation

The draft 'Blue Book' was developed by policy experts in the donor countries. Its content is primarily based on experience from previous funding periods. In addition the priorities reflect the 'Europe 2020' strategy, EU cohesion policy, and the results of reviews and evaluations of current and previous funding periods.

The consultation took account of issues which are important in all the programme areas, such as core European values, strengthened bilateral relations between donor and beneficiary countries, and increased cooperation with international partner organisations. Information gathered through the consultation allows mapping of the interests and concerns in each of the beneficiary and donor countries.

The consultation offered the opportunity for donors to assess stakeholders' views of current opportunities and challenges. In this regard the donor countries' aim has been to gather as much input as possible in a transparent and systematic way in order to finalise the 'Blue Book'.

The consultation of the National Focal Points was required given the considerable experience built up throughout previous funding periods of the Grants, in particular in funding period 2009-2014. Close contact with the main partners of the Grants in each of the beneficiary countries also provides the donor countries with feedback throughout funding periods, and this informed the drafting of the 'Blue Book'. The EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 aim to build on these experiences by reinforcing what has worked well and changing what did not.

The consultation of the draft 'Blue Book' helped to achieve three aims:

- it allowed stakeholders to provide input to the 'Blue Book';
- it contributed to greater transparency and raised awareness about priorities and interests for the funding period 2014-2021 to as many potential stakeholders as possible;
- it set a standard for two-way communication and cooperation on the EEA and Norway Grants.

Participation

In total 1,455 respondents participated in the consultation, both the consultation with the National Focal Points and the public consultation. Out of these 746 respondents completed and submitted their responses, meaning that the completion rate is 51%. Only the 746 completed and submitted responses are included in the appraisal of comments.

Eleven of the fifteen National Focal Points responded to the consultation. The National Focal Points of the Czech Republic, Latvia and Lithuania collected comments from stakeholders through invitations on their websites. The donor countries appreciate this open approach. All in all the National Focal Points submitted comments from 32 individual respondents, meaning that the total number of responses received through the National Focal Points is 43.

The number of respondents who participated in the public consultation through the web-based survey was 946. Out of these 237 respondents completed and submitted their responses (the remaining 709 responses were started but not submitted in the online survey tool). In addition to the 237 completed and submitted responses, 466 responses were completed and submitted through two initiatives by NGOs in Poland and Romania that reached out for the views of civil society in their countries.

Participation in the public consultation is high. While the non-submitted responses have not been taken into account in the summary and analysis, it should be noted that since respondents had access to the draft 'Blue Book' via the dedicated webpage without having to enter the survey itself, the number of respondents who chose to enter the survey, albeit without completing it, tells us something about the level of interest. The total number of respondents participating in the web-based public consultation should be seen in light of the design of the consultation, and more specifically the questions in the survey. The survey was demanding in that it asked respondents to read, understand and analyse the system of the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 before they proceeded to comment. This consultation was intentionally aimed more at the quality than the quantity of the responses. The text on the webpage focused on expectation management in this regard, with respondents knowing the set-up of the survey before they chose to enter it.

The webpage dedicated to the public consultation on the draft 'Blue Book' was the most visited webpage on www.eeagrants.org in the six week period of the consultation, with 4,891 clicks and 3,870 unique clicks in total. These visitors have, on average, spent three minutes on the webpage. This is a considerable amount of time and indicates, generally, that visitors have read the information on the webpage before accessing the survey itself. It is assumed that visitors generally read or downloaded the draft 'Blue Book' in parts or as a whole before deciding whether to enter the survey.

Statistical analysis of the responses

Responses to the public consultation have come from each of the donor and beneficiary countries, as well as from a number of international or Europe-wide organisations. Respondents mainly commented on behalf of various types of organisations. Comments were received on each of the twenty-three programme areas.

Participation in numbers

- **Participation in total: 1,455**
- **Completed responses in total: 746**

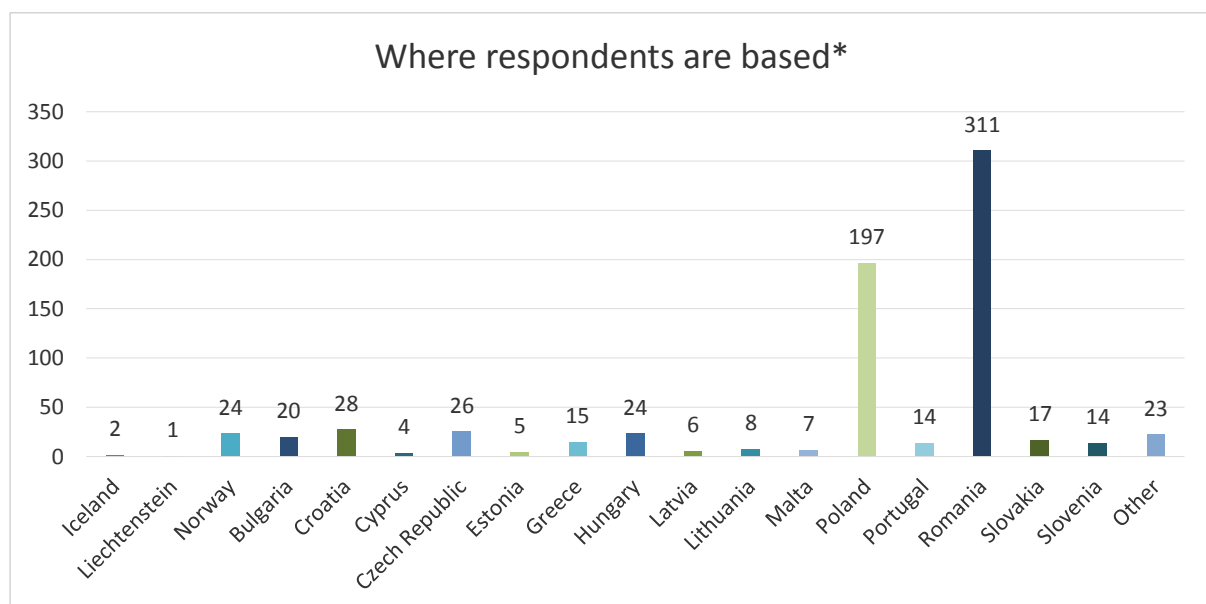
- National Focal Points consultation: 43 completed responses
 - 11 from National Focal Points
 - 32 from stakeholders via National Focal Points
- Participation in public consultation (web-based): 946 responses
- Completed responses in public consultation (web-based): 237
- NGO initiatives in Poland and Romania: 466 completed responses

- Webpage: 4,891 visits, 3,870 unique visitors

The comments from the National Focal Points and the NGO-led responses from Poland and Romania were provided in a more open format than that used for the web-based survey. The input could be integrated into the statistical analysis in a more limited manner than is the case for what was submitted through the more structured web-based survey. The web-based survey asked 15 identical questions for each of the 23 programme areas. Eight of the questions included the options of answering ‘yes’, ‘no’ or ‘no opinion’, with the opportunity to explain in writing, while the remaining seven questions requested answers in writing. Some of the respondents provided comments to several programme areas, and in general many respondents provided free text responses to most of the 15 questions. The total number of individual comments can therefore be estimated as more than 2,400 from the 237 completed responses submitted through the web-based survey.

Geographical spread

Responses were received from each of the donor and beneficiary countries of the Grants. The highest number of respondents come from Romania, followed by Poland, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Norway.



* N=746 All completed responses

The high numbers of respondents from Poland and Romania are attributed both to the fact that these are the two largest beneficiary countries of the Grants and to the outreach initiatives by the Polish and Romanian NGOs for this consultation.

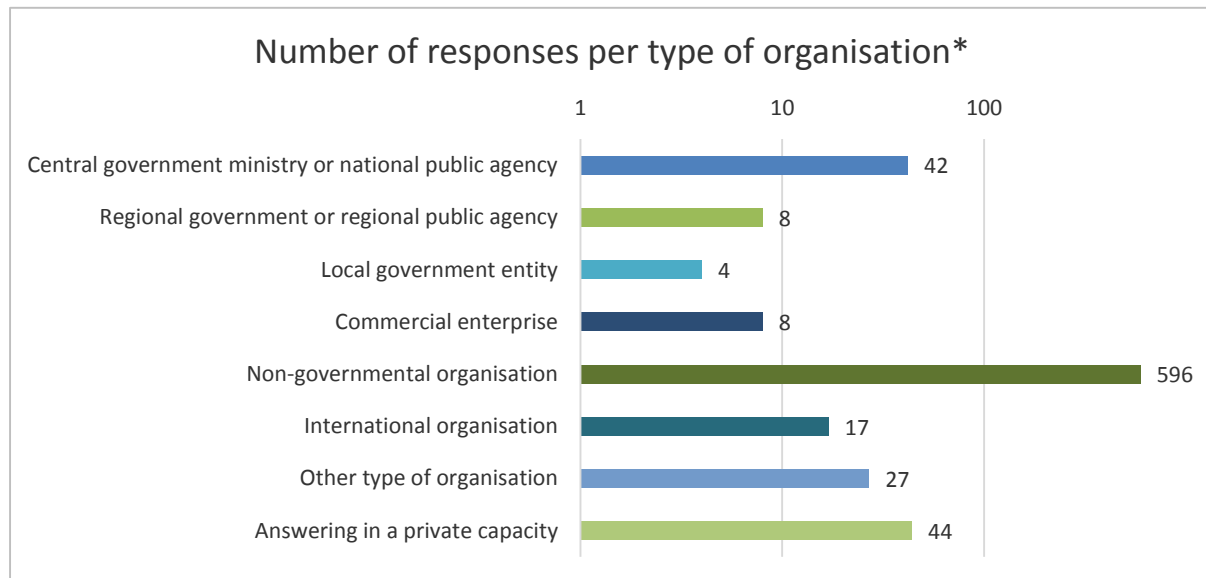
Many of the 23 respondents based in ‘other countries’ are international or Europe-wide organisations based in other EU countries.

Out of the 746 completed responses a total of 27 were received from the three donor countries. These include 24 from Norway, two from Iceland and one from Liechtenstein.

Respondents

The consultation was open to participants responding on behalf of an organisation as well as in a private capacity. Out of the 746 completed responses 702 were submitted on behalf of organisations (94%) and 44 were made in a private capacity (6%). Among the 702 organisations, 596 are NGOs (85%),

54 are public entities (8%), eight are commercial enterprises (1%) and seventeen are international organisations (2%), while the remaining 27 (4%) report as 'other'. Around 25% of the organisations report that they have played a role in one or both of the previous funding periods, mainly as Programme Operators, project promoters or project partners from donor countries.



* N=746 All completed responses

The high proportion of NGO respondents can be seen in light of the fact that NGOs were project promoters in more than half of the approximately 6,600 projects which have been supported in the 2009-2014 funding period. The high proportion is also due to the NGO initiatives in Poland and Romania, which gathered 466 responses from NGOs.

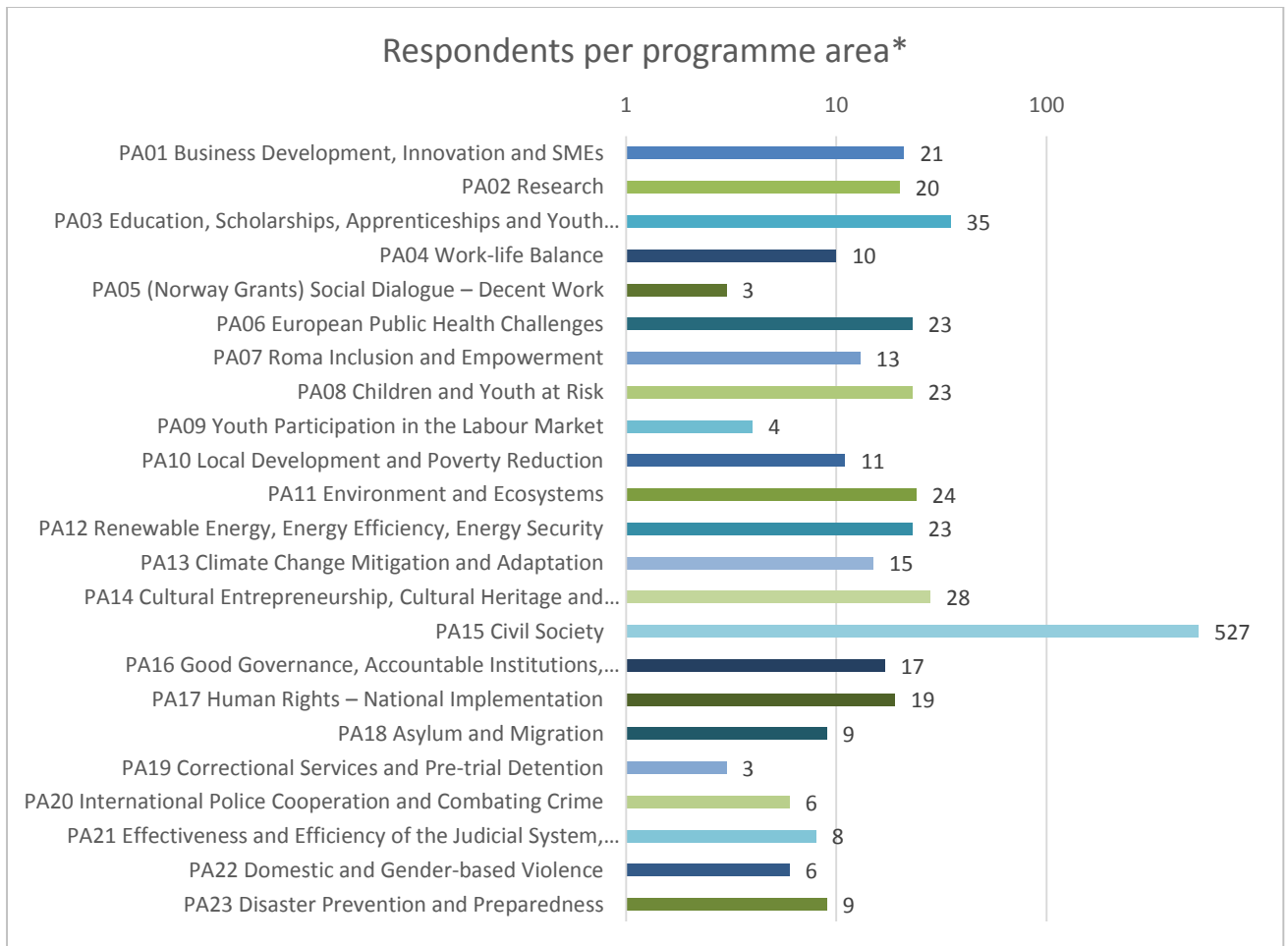
Eleven of the organisations that have responded as 'other' are universities or other types of research institutions, while the remainder are bodies such as religious or civil society organisations that do not identify themselves as NGOs.

The types of organisations responding through the National Focal Points are ministries and state agencies in their respective countries or NGOs that have been involved as Programme Operators in the funding period 2009-2014.

Most of the 27 respondents from the donor countries reported they had played a role in one or both of the previous funding periods, principally as Donor Programme Partners and project partners.

Thematic spread

The responses to each of the 23 programme areas in the draft 'Blue Book' vary in terms of the number of comments submitted. The 746 completed responses to the consultation include 857 comments to the programme areas. On the one hand respondents commented on more than one programme area. On the other hand 13 respondents did not comment on any specific programme area but rather on the draft 'Blue Book' as a whole.



*N=857 All completed responses on the programme areas. Some respondents commented on several programme areas, while a few commented on none.

The programme area with the highest number of comments is programme area n° 15 ‘Civil Society’, which accounts for 527 of the 746 respondents. This is not unexpected as 596 of the 746 respondents to the consultation were NGOs (85%). The 527 respondents to programme area n° 15 ‘Civil Society’ include 466 responses received through Romanian and Polish NGO-led initiatives which targeted NGOs and were specific to this programme area.

Besides the Romanian and Polish initiatives the spread in the number of responses to the various programme areas is even in terms of both territory (where the respondents are based) and type of respondent (private capacity or type of organisation).

Summary view of the responses

This section of the Summary report sets out to indicate the changes made as a result of the consultation. All the completed and submitted responses were reviewed by the Financial Mechanism Office (FMO). The review of each response took into account the overall context of the Grants (as set out in the introduction to the draft ‘Blue Book’) and the intentions of the donor countries for the funding period 2014-2021. The resulting changes to the text of the ‘Blue Book’ are outlined in the section on the programme areas below.

The overwhelming majority of the responses not only agree that the focus and aims proposed in the draft 'Blue Book' are relevant and necessary, but also note the important contribution the Grants make in addressing challenges and providing opportunities in the beneficiary countries. Responses are generally positive both about the Grants as a whole and about the draft content of the programme areas.

Several of the responses note that the priorities in each of the programme areas are broad enough to cover relevant interest and needs, and that for that reason they suggested no changes. Others, despite being generally positive, did have suggestions for changes, relevant either for the Grants in general or for the programme area which they were addressing.

Understanding the set-up

The public consultation was structured principally to solicit responses to substantive issues related to the 23 programme areas of the Grants 2014-2021. The analysis of direct questions received in the consultation highlighted certain elements of the draft 'Blue Book' where clarifications were necessary. The clarifications are given in the introduction to the 'Blue Book', which has been revised to include a more detailed description of how the Grants' system works.

Respondents have noted overlap between programme areas, or suggested that elements already included in one programme area be added to another. Many of these concerns or suggestions can be met with the new funding period permitting programmes that are not limited to one programme area. The opportunity to combine programme areas provides flexibility and makes it easier to tailor programmes to the needs in the beneficiary country. The aim is also to have fewer but larger programmes. The expectation is that this might lead to less administration for Programme Operators and to programmes having larger impact overall. The programme areas have been drafted to allow for them to be combined and combinations are made easier since outcomes are defined in the programme development process rather than in the 'Blue Book'.

The suggestions not leading to changes

The most frequent reason why a suggestion made by respondents has not been acted upon is related to the finding that what is being suggested is already possible, even if it is not mentioned explicitly. Many of the specific elements proposed are covered by the areas of support, for example.

A careful balance has had to be struck as to the level of detail in the descriptions of the 'Blue Book' – it is a document that will apply to fifteen beneficiary countries facing different challenges, needs and circumstances. The areas of support are therefore formulated in broad terms.

In those cases where comments or suggestions for changes to the programme areas have not been taken into account in the 'Blue Book', they might be relevant in subsequent stages of defining the Grants in each country – starting with the negotiations on the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the donor countries and each of the beneficiary countries, and then in programme development.

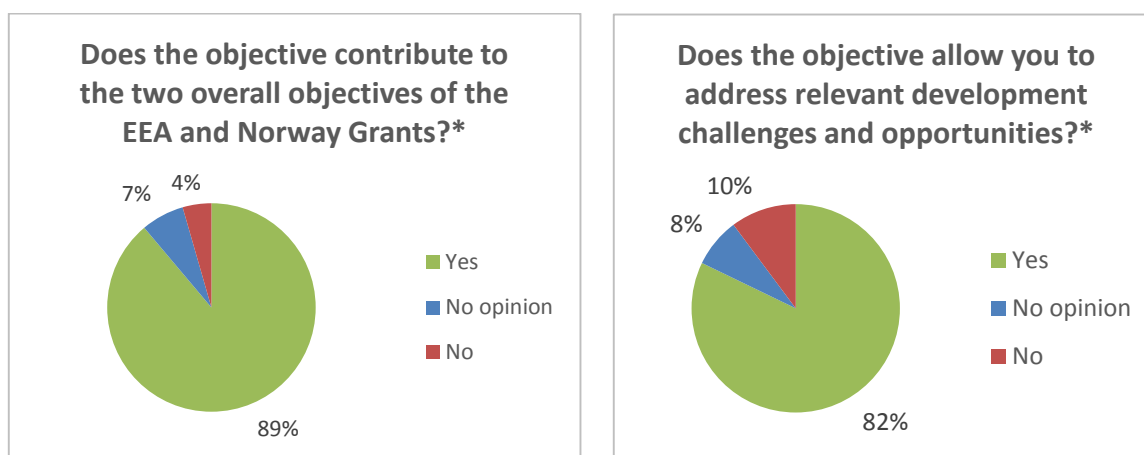
This subsequent process is particularly relevant as regards the eligibility of applicants, an issue raised by many respondents. The donor countries do not wish to limit the eligibility of applicants through the 'Blue Book'. The fact that a programme area does not explicitly mention NGOs, private organisations or local government as eligible, therefore, does not imply that they are excluded.

The Regulations on the implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism and on the Norwegian Financial Mechanism (the Regulations) state that “Any entity, public or private, commercial or non-commercial and non-governmental organisations, established as a legal person in the respective Beneficiary State are considered eligible project promoters.” (Article 72). In addition natural persons who are legal residents of the donor countries or of the respective beneficiary country may be eligible applicants where explicitly stated in the Regulations, i.e. in programme area n° 3 ‘Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeships and Youth Entrepreneurship’, programme area n° 14 ‘Cultural Heritage, Cultural Heritage and Cultural Cooperation’ and in scholarship components under any programme. Agreements in the MoU, or in a programme’s concept note might further define eligibility.

Programme area objectives

Each programme area has one objective, to which all the programmes under that programme area, and any projects funded through them, have to contribute. The survey included two mandatory questions on the programme area objectives: whether the objective contributes to the two overall objectives of the EEA and Norway Grants, and then whether the wording of the objective allows the respondent to address relevant development challenges and opportunities in their country/-ies of interest. In addition, the respondents were asked if they had suggestions for elements to be included.

The results indicate that the objectives are well received. Across all programme areas, 89% of the 314 responses agreed that the programme area objectives contribute to the overall objectives of the EEA and Norway Grants, while 82% say that the objective of the programme areas allows them to address relevant development challenges and opportunities in their country/-ies of interest.



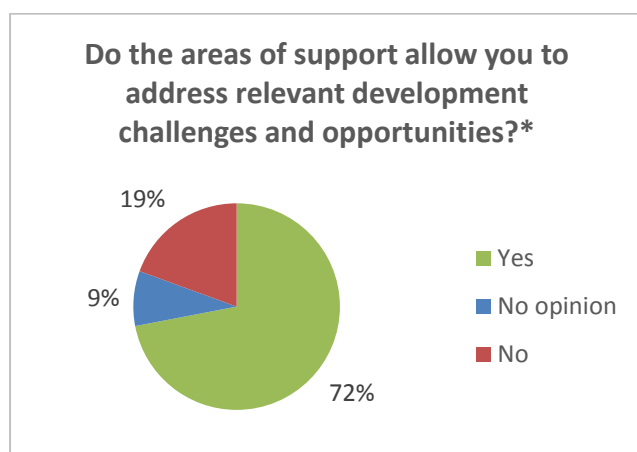
* N=314

Among the 32 respondents who say that the objective does not allow them to address relevant development challenges and opportunities, around half explain that they miss a mention of a specific activity. Changes have been made to the wording of two programme area objectives – programme area n° 11 ‘Environment and Ecosystems’ and programme area n° 13 ‘Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation’. In most cases, however, the activity proposed is found to be already eligible and no change is therefore needed to the wording of the objective. Other responses treated the questions on the objective more generally, replying with comments on the programme area as a whole. These comments have been dealt with as input to the elements of the programme areas where they are more relevant – the areas of support or the suggested measures.

Areas of support

The areas of support define the framework of the programme area by outlining the areas of activities which are eligible for support. The web-based survey included two mandatory questions on the areas of support: whether the areas of support allow the respondent to address relevant development challenges or opportunities in their country/-ies of interest, and whether there are challenges or opportunities in their country/-ies of interest not covered by the current wording.

Out of the 314 responses, 72% answered that the areas of support allow them to address relevant development challenges and opportunities in their country/-ies of interest, while 19% answered that they do not.

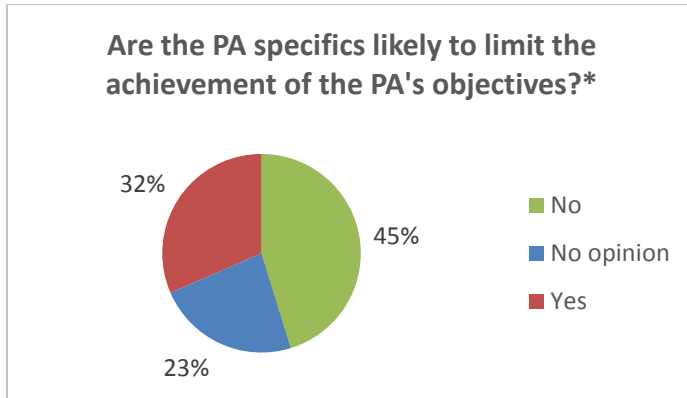


* N=314

Almost all the respondents who answered 'no' suggest changes. As a result of these suggestions the areas of support have been changed or new areas of support have been added in nine instances. More than a third of the proposals call for the explicit mention of activities that are already covered under the programme area, meaning that they are already eligible and no change is needed to the wording of the areas of support. The areas of support are formulated in broad terms in order for programmes to be tailored to the needs in each beneficiary country and for the focus of programmes to be defined in the programme development process. Proposals for changes to the areas of support have instead, in many cases, led to changes in the suggested measures. These proposals were best dealt with in the suggested measures since they elaborate on the areas of support by giving examples of the types of eligible activities and serve to emphasise important elements in the programme area. Fifteen suggested measures have been added to those already in the draft 'Blue Book', and a further twenty-seven have been changed.

Programme area specifics

The programme area specifics are mainly mandatory conditions to be adhered to within the programme area. The survey included a question on whether the specifics are likely to limit the achievement of the programme area's objective. Out of 314 responses 45% did not find the specifics to be limiting while 32% did.

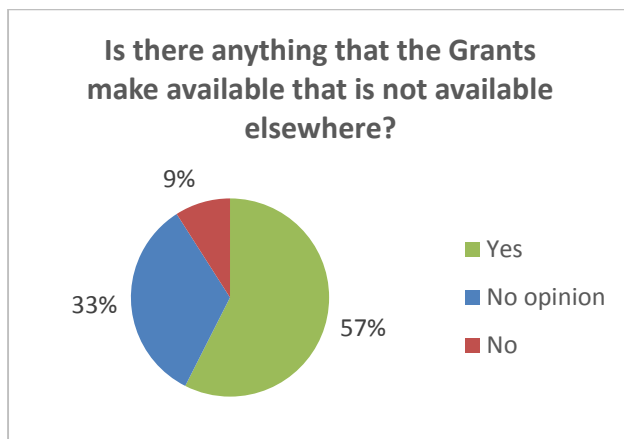


* N=314

A quarter of those who agreed with the specifics explained that the specifics will help to focus the programmes on the areas where they are most needed. 80% of those who did not support the specifics provided an explanation, stating that they aimed to clarify the specifics through their comment, or wished to see specifics mandatory in a fewer number of cases, or suggesting a tightening of the conditions. There were no particular programme area specifics that stood out as receiving a greater number of comments. The comments on the specifics have led to changes of seven programme area specifics.

Added value of the Grants

The survey included a non-mandatory question regarding the added value of the Grants. It asked whether the EEA and Norway Grants make available something that is not available elsewhere. Out of the 221 responses to this question 57% reply 'yes', while 9% reply 'no'.

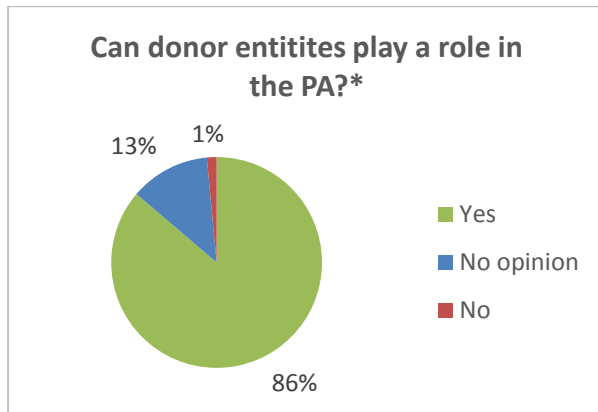


* N=221 (this question was not mandatory)

Out of the respondents who reply 'yes' to the question, 88% explain what the added value is. The most frequent added value mentioned is the Grants' support to NGOs and in particular to capacity building of civil society, which is highlighted in response to several programme areas. Bilateral cooperation with the donor countries is also highlighted by many of the respondents. Others see the Grants as more accessible than other sources of support and appreciate the opportunity for small-scale projects.

Strengthening bilateral relations

The 237 respondents in the web-based survey provided 269 responses to the non-mandatory question on whether donor entities can play a role in the relevant programme area. Out of these 86% stated that entities from donor countries can play a role in the programme area, whilst 1% stated that they cannot.



* N=269

The feedback on bilateral relations has been overwhelmingly positive. Interest in the bilateral aspects of the Grants continues to be high and the experience with partnerships is generally good. Respondents from the beneficiary countries highlight in particular the expertise provided by partners from the donor countries and the exchange of best practice.

This feedback makes clear that the bilateral aspect of the Grants is important for entities in both donor and beneficiary countries and that it has so far been successful. In terms of extent of cooperation, the previous funding period had Donor Programme Partners in 87 of the 150 programmes and approximately 30 per cent of the projects have been carried out in cooperation with one or more donor partners. Feedback also shows that the Grants have brought a significant number of people and institutions from the donor and beneficiary countries together. In total the respondents made reference to 93 positive experiences from bilateral partnerships in one of the previous funding periods. The feedback indicates that the demand for project partners is even higher. Eight of the respondents from the beneficiary countries note the lack of capacity among donor country partners to respond to partnership requests.

There was a limited number of comments pointing to challenges when involving partners from the donor countries. From the point of view of those in the beneficiary countries this concerns the relative cost of partners from the donor countries as well as the limited availability of partners. The donor countries are aware of these challenges and will continue to address them in cooperation with relevant entities in the beneficiary countries.

As regards respondents from the donor countries, a number of these noted disproportionately high reporting and documentation requirements of the beneficiary countries. Donor country partners also regret the fact that they have generally been invited to participate in a project late, usually when the project's design is advanced. In response to concerns raised by donor country entities, the programme development process has been modified to ensure that there is strengthened DPP involvement in that process. The aim is that the development of future programmes shall build on the open process in

which the final version of the 'Blue Book' has been developed. The concept note for each programme shall be drafted by the Programme Operator in cooperation with the FMO and in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including – where relevant – Donor Programme Partners and International Partner Organisations.

Partnerships with international organisations

The consultation sought to assess views in respect of the involvement of international organisations, with specific mention made in the draft 'Blue Book' of the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the EU Fundamental Rights Agency. Although this was not a mandatory question, 120 respondents addressed how one or more of the organisations listed could play a role in the respective programme areas. Positive responses dominated (90%), and even where concerns were raised, these tended to conclude that the participation of such organisations should not be excluded, but that they should continue to be limited to an advisory role. Positive views were particularly strong among NGO respondents.

In addition to the three organisations listed, respondents also proposed EU executive agencies and other international public organisations that could be relevant for particular programme areas – for example the European Institute for Gender Equality for gender-related issues, the European Research Area for research, the World Health Organisation as regards health, the UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration as regards asylum and migration, and UNESCO for cultural heritage. The relevance of including such organisations will be assessed during the negotiations of the Memoranda of Understanding and/or programming.

Some respondents also mentioned trans-national NGOs (e.g. Open Society Foundation, WWF, EU-wide NGO networks), although such entities do not fit with the definition of an international partner organisation for the EEA and Norway Grants.

Core principles and values

The principles and values underlying the EEA and Norway Grants – exemplified through several of the programme areas and outlined specifically in the introduction to the draft 'Blue Book' – were endorsed by many of the responses to the public consultation.

There was no specific question in respect of these fundamental values, which are explicitly listed in the introduction to the 'Blue Book':

- the principles of good governance, sustainable development, gender equality and non-discrimination;
- core European values, such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and; the respect for human rights for all people, regardless of their racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or gender identity.

Based on an analysis of the responses, it is clear that respondents expect the donor countries and those operating the Grants in the beneficiary countries adhere to these values and – in many cases – explicitly expected the Grants to promote them.

Given the particular emphasis made by many respondents regarding fundamental values, the introduction to the 'Blue Book' has been adjusted slightly to make the importance of the fundamental

values clear. The donor countries will work with their partners across the beneficiary countries to ensure that the implementation of the EEA and Norway Grants is based on these values.

Changes to the programme areas

The final 'Blue Book' is being published in parallel to this report. In order to highlight the changes made to the publication, they are described below, programme area by programme area.

Any changes made to the programme area objective, the areas of support and the programme area specifics – the elements of the 'Blue Book' that are reflected in Annex 1 to the Regulations on the EEA Financial Mechanism and on the Norwegian Financial Mechanism – are considered to be significant, even if the change is minor or simply the result of the correction of an error. The changes to suggested measures, the relevance of support text and the text of the introduction are not reflected in the Regulations. They provide an important indication of the intentions of the donor countries.

Changes to the text are presented as follows: original text, **added text**, ~~deleted text~~.

Programme area n° 1 – Business Development, Innovation and SMEs

A total of twenty-one respondents from around Europe provided comments to this programme area. They generally expressed appreciation that funding is being made available to support businesses. The suggestions received mainly did not lead to changes to the draft 'Blue Book' since the existing text already makes it possible to do what was proposed by the respondents. Two adjustments are made to the suggested measures to clarify the intentions of the donor countries in respect of potential marine and shipping projects:

Suggested measures

- ~~'Supporting 'Blue growth' projects, maritime projects~~ **such as technology development, maritime safety, inland water and marine projects, including port development operations, energy efficiency in ships, and new control systems'**;
- ~~'Supporting processes aimed at Liquid Natural Gas (LNG)'~~ is replaced by: **'Environmentally friendly shipping solutions, including energy efficiency measures, LNG hybrid solutions, and zero emission solutions such as electric operation'**.

Programme area n° 2 – Research

Twenty respondents addressed this programme area. Most of the comments made could already be accommodated within the existing wording of the draft 'Blue Book'. The Norwegian Research Council gathered opinions from the Programme Operators of the research programmes in the 2009-2014 funding period in respect of the future Guideline defining their operation. Where the comments have needed to be reflected in the 'Blue Book', these have been considered. Slight adjustments are made to the wording of two suggested measures:

Suggested measures

- ~~'Measures Support~~ **reinforcing the links between innovation, research and education ("the knowledge triangle")**;

- ‘Strengthening beneficiary countries’ participation in Horizon 2020, e.g. in the **European Research Council (ERC)**, through capacity building activities, such as support in developing project applications, training, and building networks that include donor countries’.

Programme area n° 3 – Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeships and Youth

Entrepreneurship

Thirty-five respondents provided positive comments to this programme area. The level of interest in this programme area reflects the important contribution made by the EEA and Norway Grants in both the beneficiary and donor countries through support to scholarships and exchanges. One adjustment is made to a suggested measure:

Suggested measures

- ‘Joint projects with national and regional partners **as well as** ~~and~~ donor countries ~~and other~~ ~~EEA countries~~’.

The adjustment is made in order to align the suggested measure with the areas of support in this programme area, with the Regulations on the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 and with the intentions of the donor countries. With this adjustment the donor countries reiterate that the provision of support in this programme area is aimed at benefitting entities and individuals from the beneficiary country and at increasing cooperation between entities and individuals in the donor and beneficiary countries to strengthen bilateral relations.

Programme area n° 4 – Work-life Balance

Ten respondents provided comments to this programme area. The responses were often addressing broader gender equality aspects, not just issues of work-life balance. However the donor countries maintain the focus of the programme area on work-life balance. This is in line with the priority sector agreed with the European Union. One suggested measure has been converted into an area of support and a further seven adjustments are made in respect of suggested measures to emphasise the application of the principle of gender equality:

Areas of support

- the suggested measure on ~~Development of~~ **National strategies, systems and policies to promote work-life balance and gender equality** is made into an area of support

The intention of this amendment is to emphasise the application of the principle of gender equality, and the importance of national incentives to promote work-life balance and gender equality. The amendment also serves to underline that disincentives to work for second earners (such as higher taxes on second earners) is an example of a policy obstacle to work-life balance.

Suggested measures

- a suggested measure is added in respect of more gender-balanced uptake of unpaid work: **‘Measures to decrease gender inequality in unpaid work’**. This includes care for children as well as adult people in need of care;

- two suggested measures – ‘Introducing flexible working arrangements **for women and men**’ and ‘Measures to increase ~~flexible working arrangements~~ and the take-up of care leave among men’ – are adjusted to emphasise the role of men in care work;
- the suggested measure: ‘~~Development of~~ **Cooperation between the social partners and cooperation across sectors**’ is expanded to propose cooperation not only between employers’ and employees’ organisations, but also cooperation between public entities and non-governmental organisations;
- a suggested measure is added: ‘**Measures to decrease the gender pay gap**’, highlighting one of the major barriers to gender equality and to implementing work-life balance;
- a suggested measure is added: ‘**Gender mainstreaming in education and vocational training**’ in order to emphasise the importance of challenging gender-based stereotypes in education and training and to link the programme area to the issue of youth employment;
- the suggested measure ‘~~Pilot projects~~’ is deleted as such projects are eligible under all programme areas, and not specifically to this one.

The donor countries re-iterate that gender equality principles – together with the principles of sustainable development and of good governance – must be integrated into the design of all programmes funded by the EEA and Norway Grants. This is not a matter that can be limited to this programme area. Moreover gender issues are specifically highlighted in ten of the other programme areas in the ‘Blue Book’, including measures aimed at addressing gender imbalances in science and research, education and training, access to justice and participation in government.

Programme area n° 5 – Social Dialogue - Decent Work

Three respondents addressed this programme area, and while no changes have been made to the content of the ‘Blue Book’, relevant comments might be taken into account during the programming stage.

Programme area n° 6 – European Public Health Challenges

Twenty-three respondents (ministries of health in the beneficiary countries, NGOs at both national and European levels, private and public organisations in the donor countries) addressed this programme area. One significant change is made to clarify the wording of a programme area specific:

Programme area specifics

- ‘At least 10% of the total programme allocation shall address improved access to health for vulnerable groups/**people and** deprived or rural areas’.

It is worth noting two topics that were mentioned by four respondents. They align with the priorities and intentions of the donor countries. First, three NGOs pointed to the need for specific reference to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. As a result, the Convention is explicitly mentioned in the text on the relevance of support. The second topic raised by a respondent regards access to health services by migrants. As a result the following five changes are made to the suggested measures:

Suggested measures

- ‘Preparedness, alert and response to communicable diseases, including antimicrobial resistance **and zoonotic diseases**’ – additional wording used in this suggested measure to highlight another threat to human health;
- ‘Population-based **health promotion and** prevention programmes and/or programmes targeted at specific risk groups, including tobacco, alcohol and drugs users **and in addition to those with the suicidal behaviour**’ – the possible health promotion aspects under this programme area are highlighted through this addition to the suggested measure;
- **‘Strengthening health care access for migrants and asylum seekers** – a suggested measure added seeing that this is an area requiring increased attention;
- **‘De-institutionalisation/transition from inpatient to outpatient care, including in mental health**’ – a minor addition to highlight that while the word ‘de-institutionalisation’ was not used in the draft ‘Blue Book’, it was certainly an area that was intended to be covered. Given the level of comment on the desirability of de-institutionalisation, the term is introduced into the suggested measure;
- ‘Promote health through a life-course approach, including nutrition, **and physical activities, awareness-raising and educational** programmes’ – the wording of this suggested measure is altered to include a broader view of preventing non-communicable diseases.

Other comments to this programme area have led to no change in the ‘Blue Book’ because the issues raised can already be accommodated.

Programme area n° 7 – Roma Inclusion and Empowerment

Thirteen respondents addressed this programme area. Comments received related to the sharing of expertise on this issue between countries. These have led to the following addition of a suggested measure:

Suggested measures

- **‘Facilitating regional cooperation on issues of Roma inclusion and empowerment’.**

This aligns with the areas of support in that it allows for cooperation across neighbouring beneficiary countries as well as between regions within beneficiary countries.

Following the focus provided on Roma issues in the preceding funding period of the EEA and Norway Grants, the Grants are recognised as a source of support to address issues concerning the Roma minority in Europe. Issues related to this population group were raised by respondents with respect to a number of other programme areas: n° 3 – Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeships and Youth Entrepreneurship; n° 6 – European Public Health Challenges; n° 8 – Children and Youth at Risk; n° 10 – Local Development and Poverty Reduction; n° 15 – Civil Society; n° 17 – Human Rights - National Implementation; and n° 22 – Domestic and Gender-based Violence.

Programme area n° 8 – Children and Youth at Risk

Twenty-three respondents addressed this programme area leading to one significant change to the text of an area of support:

Areas of support

- **‘De-institutionalisation/alternatives to institutional care’** – this reflects responses noting the importance of focussing on providing quality care outside of institutions.

Considerable effort was made by health and social care professionals as well as NGOs specialising in youth and social inclusion issues to comment on this programme area. Many of the comments addressed matters that could be accommodated in the existing text, whether under this or related programme areas. The comments received were frequently related to two issues: the need to ensure de-institutionalisation of child care, and the needs of disabled persons. The resulting four changes to the suggested measures are as follows:

Suggested measures

- **‘Empowerment of children and youth with a minority or alternative care background’** – additional wording related to this suggested measure again emphasises the importance attached to the issue of children and youth in institutional care, foster care, or other;
- **‘Developing integrated health service and social care provisions for vulnerable children and youth’** – the addition to the suggested measure acknowledges the importance of cooperation between the various services regarding education, health care, child protection, youth work etc.;
- **‘Civil society engagement and/or partnerships between public, private and civil society entities, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs)’** – this additional suggested measure highlights the fact that civil society organisations, often the initiators of new initiatives, should be considered as potential project promoters / project partners;
- the suggested measure **‘Pilot-projects’** is deleted as such projects are eligible under all programme areas, and not specifically to this one.

Relevance of support

It is worth noting the mention by several NGOs of the need for specific reference to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. As a result, the Convention is explicitly mentioned in the text on the relevance of support.

Programme area n° 9 – Youth Participation in the Labour Market

The four respondents addressing this programme area made comments that do not require changes to the content of the ‘Blue Book’. Relevant comments might be taken into account during the programming stage.

Programme area n° 10 – Local Development and Poverty Reduction

Eleven respondents addressed this programme area. Many of the respondents addressing this programme area also provided comments to programme area n° 8 ‘Children and Youth at Risk’. A decision has been made to add a suggested measure:

Suggested measures

- **‘Awareness-raising and integration in relation to asylum seekers and migrants’.**

Programme area n° 11 – Environment and Ecosystems

Twenty-four respondents commented on this programme area. The EEA and Norway Grants have been funding projects regarding environmental protection for over a decade, and the level of interest among respondents reflects the long-standing commitment and expertise of the donor countries in environmental matters. Comments and suggestions came from our partners in the beneficiary countries, specialised organisations in the donor countries, and the civil society sector. For the majority of the comments received the existing text allows for concerns regarding eligibility to be taken into account, and no re-wording was necessary.

Based on the comments received, the donor countries have decided to make six changes to the draft text, two of which are significant and three of which are to the suggested measures:

Objective

- ‘Improved environmental status in ecosystems and reduced adverse effects of pollution **and other human activities**’ – this change to the text of the programme area objective allows for support to improve environmental status resulting from a broader number of stressors, not just pollution;

Programme area specifics

- The programme area specifics requirement in respect of the small grant scheme is adjusted to allow for greater discretion during the negotiations of the Memorandum of Understanding: ‘The programmes shall contain small grant scheme(s), targeting, **among others**, civil society including non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The first was suggested by the Norwegian Institute for Marine Research and broadens the objective of the programme area. The second meets suggestions from the National Focal Points in Greece and Poland for greater flexibility as regards the small grant schemes.

Suggested measures

The remaining three changes are made in regard of suggested measures, addressing comments from public entities in Norway, Poland and Portugal to loosen restrictions and to highlight that climate change has an impact on all ecosystems. The changes made are as follows:

- the following suggested measure is added: ‘**Exploration of the impact of climate change on marine, aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems**’ – this emphasises the broad scope of environments that are affected by climate change;
- the following wording is added to the suggested measure: ‘Promoting natural heritage as a basis for sustainable tourism **and local development**’ – this suggests that more reasons than just sustainable tourism underlie the promotion of natural heritage;
- ‘Promoting capacity development ~~of environmental authorities~~ in relation to integrated planning and control’ – this change to the suggested measure allows inclusion of actors other than just environmental authorities, such as custom officers, road transport inspectors or NGOs.

Relevance of support

The text of the relevance of support has been revised to further emphasise the importance of integrating policies on environmental protection and biodiversity with sectoral policies to ensure the resilience of ecosystems and provision of ecosystem services.

Programme area n° 12 – Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency, Energy Security

Twenty-three respondents addressed this programme area. Based on comments received from the National Focal Points in Latvia, Poland and Romania as well as the Polish Ministry of Environment, a significant change is made to one programme area specific:

Programme area specifics

- ‘Programmes targeting the reduction of greenhouse gas reductions and/or avoidance **through energy efficiency measures** shall deliver considerable reductions at a reasonable cost; a **maximum of 150 EUR grant per minimum of 100,000-tonne CO₂ equivalent per year reduced/avoided should be aimed for**’ – the re-phrasing is aimed to make the condition applicable to programmes taking account of measures related to energy efficiency and sets a maximum reasonable cost.

Comments from NGOs and entities active in the area of energy in both donor and beneficiary countries have additionally led to the following three clarifications:

Suggested measures

- ‘Production of ~~electricity~~ **energy** from renewable ~~energy~~ resources’ – this modification to the suggested measure clarifies that there is no intention to limit the production to electricity broadening the scope;
- the wording of the suggested measure is adjusted to terms used in EU legislation: ‘**Utilization of Energy recovery from** waste or pre-treated hazardous waste as an energy source (co-processing) in industrial processes’;
- the suggested measure is reworded in order not to narrow the scope: ‘Improved energy security through **diversification** ~~increased use of renewable energy sources~~’.

Relevance of support

The text of the relevance of support has been revised to emphasise the programme area’s alignment with the EU energy strategy’s aim of a secure, affordable and climate-friendly energy in Europe.

Programme area n° 13 – Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

Fifteen respondents addressed this programme area. The comments have brought about four significant changes, one to the objective, two changes to the areas of support and one to the programme area specifics:

Objective

- the wording of the objective of the programme area is adjusted to rectify a mistake: ‘Climate change **mitigated** ~~mitigation~~ and vulnerability to climate change reduced’.

Areas of support

- adjustments are also made to two areas of support in order to clarifying intentions: ‘Climate change adaptation **measures**’ and ‘**Climate change-related** extreme weather preparedness and risk management’.

Programme area specifics

- the programme area specifics requirement in respect of the small grant scheme is removed.

While the first three changes aim to make the text clearer, the change in respect of the small grant scheme meets suggestions from the National Focal Points in Estonia, Greece and Poland for greater flexibility in the programme area.

Comments further result in the following four adjustments to the suggested measures:

Suggested measures

- ‘Development and implementation of national, regional and local **strategies and** action plans on adaptation **and mitigation** measures’ – this re-wording of the suggested measure acknowledges the various approaches that measures related to addressing climate change should take;
- ‘**Mapping and assessment of specific climate change risks and integration into relevant policies, strategies and plans**’ – this additional suggested measure further complements the proposed list of possible actions;
- the adjustment of the areas of support outlined above requires the following addition to the suggested measure: ‘Development of **climate change-related** extreme event contingency plans’;
- the following suggested measure is added: ‘**Integration of climate change-related issues into general disaster/contingency plans**’.

The EEA and Norway Grants funded projects regarding climate change in the current funding period. The respondents included donor country organisations as well as NGOs and government ministries in the beneficiary countries. In the case of many responses, the existing text allows for concerns regarding eligibility to be taken into account. Responses also reflect the need to view this programme area together with programme area n° 23 ‘Disaster Prevention and Preparedness’ to clarify issues of potential overlap.

Programme area n° 14 – Cultural Entrepreneurship, Cultural Heritage and Cultural Cooperation

This programme area is among the top three in terms of interest and suggestions received during the consultation, with interest from twenty-eight respondents. The comments resulted in six changes, four of which are significant. Four changes are carried out in three of the seven areas of support based on comments from the Portuguese National Focal Point, the Ministries of Culture of the Czech Republic and Poland, as well as the Norwegian National Archives:

Areas of support

- ‘Cultural heritage management, **preservation** and conservation related to **national**, regional and local development’ – these two changes to the area of support address one issue each:

the first makes it clear that preservation work, often a more cost-effective approach than conservation, can be eligible; and the second makes it clear that projects important at all levels, including the national level, can be eligible;

- two areas of support are rephrased: ‘Cultural, creative **and artistic** activities contributing to sustainable development and social cohesion’ clarifies that not only material goods and monuments can be subject to the funding, but that the more immaterial aspects of culture and arts can also be eligible; and ‘Networking and international cultural cooperation/**exchange**’ makes the two-way aspect of the cooperation more explicit.

Programme area specifics

- the programme area specifics requirement in respect of the small grant scheme is removed.

Responses were made by a variety of institutions in both the donor and beneficiary countries, including current Programme Operators, Donor Programme Partners as well as NGOs and individuals from the field of culture. The level of interest and the comments made reflect continued high interest in this programme area and in the contribution the Grants make to the cultural sector in Europe. The suggestions that have led to two additional changes concern the following suggested measures:

Suggested measures

- the wording of a suggested measure is changed to clarify the types of measures that might be eligible: ‘Reinforcing cultural heritage management, **including infrastructure**, to strategically revitalise cultural heritage and/or contribute to sustainable local and regional development;
- in addition, one suggested measure is added to make it clear that support for intangible cultural heritage is eligible: ‘**Safeguarding tangible and intangible cultural heritage from risks**’.

Some of the other suggested changes – for example suggesting explicit mention of digitalisation as an eligible area – have not been made (in the case of digitalisation because it is eligible under the area of support ‘Documentation and accessibility of culture and cultural heritage’).

Programme area n° 15 – Civil Society

By far the largest contribution to the consultation of the draft ‘Blue Book’ not only came from NGOs, but also concerned the programme area addressing civil society. In total 527 respondents addressed this programme area. Three significant changes are made to the draft ‘Blue Book’ as a result of the high number of comments:

Areas of support

- ‘Human rights, ~~minority rights and anti-discrimination~~ **and equal treatment**, ~~including combating racism and xenophobia~~ **through combating any discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or gender identity**’ – the text of this area of support is amended to make its relevance to a broad scope of instances clear, in particular following a significant number of comments related to the rights of LGBTI persons and to the importance of cross-generational cooperation.

Programme area specifics

- 'At least 15% of the re-granting amount shall contribute to capacity development and sustainability of the civil society sector **including non-governmental organisations (NGOs)**' – the programme area specific is amended to make it clear that the capacity of both the sector at large as well as of individual organisations is addressed;
- the second area of support is rephrased to make it clear that all programmes (though not necessarily all projects) address youth: 'All programmes shall **include** address—youth inclusion'). This does not imply the exclusion of other age groups, and it may involve measures that offer cross-generational support.

The level of interest confirms the significant contribution of the EEA and Norway Grants to the development of civil society in Europe. The size of the contribution is also the result of leading NGOs in both Poland and Romania taking the initiative to run national consultations on this programme area, resulting in 466 responses.

The majority of the responses to this programme area reflect issues that are either specific to the organisations responding, or to the beneficiary country that the response concerned. These can be taken into account during the programming of the individual NGO Funds, which will include a separate stakeholder consultation. Nevertheless, four additional changes were made to the 'Blue Book' to clarify and highlight issues raised:

Suggested measures

- 'Support for freedom of expression, **investigative journalism** and media' – many responses highlighted the importance of access to information as the basis for civic action, leading to this addition to the suggested measure;
- following a considerable number of comments on the needs in respect of this issue, the following suggested measure is added: '**Promoting LGBTI rights and anti-discrimination activities**';
- **Intercultural** dialogue, including platforms for minority / majority interactions' – this change to the suggested measure is made to clarify that dialogue between cultures is addressed;
- the following suggested measure is also added based on a series of comments on the needs of the elderly in addition to those of young people: '**Inter-generational cooperation**'.

NGOs did not restrict their responses to this programme area, unsurprising given that two-thirds of the responses to the public consultation outside the NGO-led consultations in Poland and Romania were made by NGOs.

Programme area n° 16 – Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency

The seventeen responses in respect of this programme area came from both public institutions and NGOs. As a result of a review by the donor countries, the the following clarifications are made to the 'Blue Book' based on comments from the Norwegian Association of Local Governments (KS) and the Regional Environmental Centre (REC):

Suggested measures

- '**Capacity building** Competence and skills development within **all levels of** public administration' – the wording of the suggested measure is clarified;

- **‘Building citizens’ trust in public institutions at all levels of government’** – this suggested measure is added; it emphasises the importance of managing ethical dilemmas in the public sector and ensuring the conditions are set that allow for citizens’ expectations to be met.

The donor countries re-iterate that good governance – together with the principles of gender equality and sustainable development – must be integrated into the design of all programmes funded by the EEA and Norway Grants. This is not a matter that can be limited to this programme area.

Programme area n° 17 – Human Rights - National Implementation

Nineteen respondents addressed this programme area. Comments from the Polish National Focal Point and the Czech Institute for Labour and Family Research gave rise to two significant changes:

Areas of support

- ‘Developing and empowering **ombudsperson** ~~ombudsman~~ institutions, national human rights platforms and equality bodies’ – this adjustment makes the text of the area of support gender neutral. A similar change is made to the related suggested measure: ‘Capacity building measures linked to developing and empowering **ombudsperson** ~~ombudsman~~ institutions, national human rights institutions and equality bodies’;

Programme area specifics

- the programme area specifics requirement in respect of small grant scheme(s) is deleted to allow for greater discretion during the negotiations of the Memoranda of Understanding: ~~Programmes shall include small grant scheme(s) for partnerships between the public sector and civil society including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), with minimum allocations for such scheme(s) to be identified in the memorandum of understanding or exceptionally in the programme’s concept note.~~

An additional change proposed by an NGO led to a clarification of the measures eligible for support from the EEA and Norway Grants:

Suggested measures

- **‘Combating all forms of discrimination through awareness-raising campaigns and human rights education** ~~on combating all forms of discrimination’~~ – this addition in the suggested measure clarifies the scope of the support that the donor countries are willing to support.

Programme area n° 18 – Asylum and Migration

Nine respondents addressed this programme area, although mention of migrant-related issues were also seen in programme areas such as n° 6 ‘European Public Health Challenges’ and n° 15 ‘Civil Society’. The majority of the comments reviewed can be taken into consideration at the programming stage, but one suggested measure is added:

Suggested measures

- **‘Cross-border cooperation’** – this change is made to make it clear that cross-border cooperation, which is essential to meeting the programme area’s objective, is mentioned explicitly.

The donor countries re-iterate that this programme area is focussed on asylum and migration management as the need for that in many beneficiary countries is large. There were comments that the programme area should address human rights and democracy education, but these are topics that can be covered by other programme areas.

Programme area n° 19 – Correctional Services and Pre-trial Detention

Three respondents addressed this programme area. The comments did not lead to changes in the 'Blue Book' text. Relevant comments might be taken into account during the programming stage.

Programme area n° 20 – International Police Cooperation and Combatting Crime

Six respondents provided comments to this programme area. No changes are proposed for the content of the 'Blue Book', but comments might be taken into account during the programming stage.

Programme area n° 21 – Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Judicial System, Strengthening Rule of Law

Eight respondents reacted to this programme area. The comments did not lead to changes in the 'Blue Book'. Relevant comments might be taken into account during the programming stage.

Programme area n° 22 – Domestic and Gender-based Violence

Six respondents made comments to this programme area. There are no significant changes, as the issues raised can be accommodated within the existing 'Blue Book' text and where necessary can be addressed through the Memoranda of Understanding and/or during programming. The following change is made in one suggested measure:

Suggested measures

- 'Advocacy, awareness-raising and capacity building activities on **gender-based and sexual harassment**, including online harassment' – this suggested measure is now makes explicit mention of ways hostility toward women is expressed.

The donor countries re-iterate that gender equality principles – together with the principles of sustainable development and of good governance – must be integrated into the design of all programmes funded by the EEA and Norway Grants. This is not a matter that can be limited to this programme area.

Programme area n° 23 – Disaster Prevention and Preparedness

Comments on this programme area did not led to changes in the 'Blue Book'. Nine respondents (agencies specialised in disaster and emergency response in the beneficiary and donor countries) commented on this programme area. Some of the comments were made in relation to both this programme area and programme area n° 13 'Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation' in order to clarify the distinctions between the two. What adjustments resulted have been made in programme area n° 13.

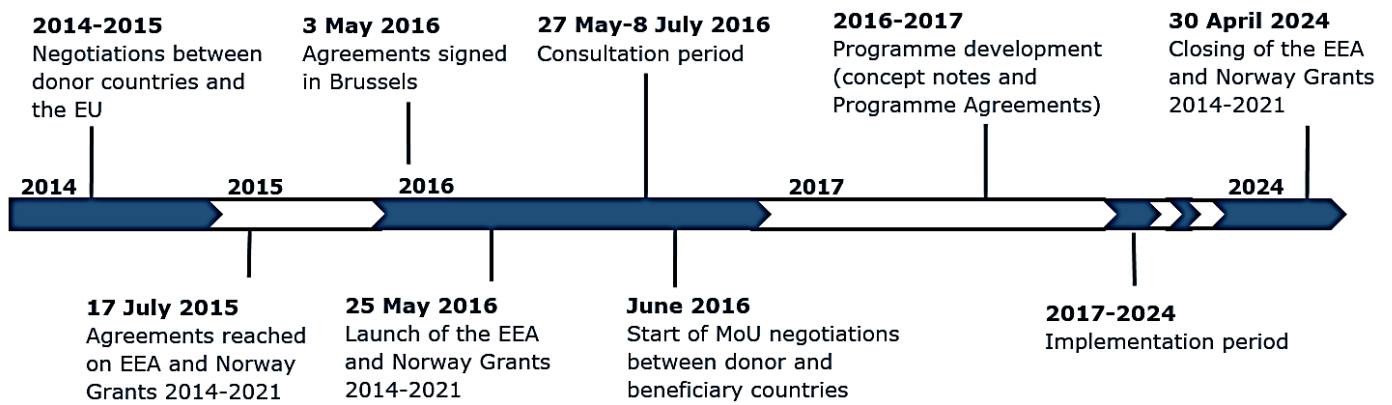
Conclusion and next steps

The donor countries have finalised the 'Blue Book' on the priority sectors and programme areas of the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021. It will now serve as one of the reference documents for negotiating the specific focus and allocation of funding in each of the fifteen beneficiary countries. It provides a menu from which the donor and beneficiary countries can draw on to establish the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 in each country. The possibility that programme areas are merged in some programmes in some countries needs to be borne in mind.

Before the Grants become available to applicants through calls for proposals, a number of key decisions will have an effect on the scope and availability of funding in each of the beneficiary countries:

- the donor countries will negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Focal Point in each beneficiary country. The Memoranda of Understanding specify the programme areas to be funded in each country. The aim is to tailor the support from the EEA and Norway Grants to each country on the basis of its needs, aims and capacity, as well as on any particular bilateral interest regarding at least one donor and the beneficiary country;
- once the respective Memoranda of Understanding have been signed, the nominated Programme Operators will draft a concept note for a programme under the programme areas specified in their country. The concept notes are prepared in cooperation with the Financial Mechanism Office and in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including any involved DPPs and/or IPOs. It also takes account of the National Focal Point's responsibility for programme implementation. Again, the concept note will be based on needs, aims, capacity and on bilateral interest.
- This process will further influence the eligibility of projects selected for support under the programmes. The aims and scope of the assistance established in the 'Blue Book' will thus be refined over two subsequent phases.

Timeline for the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021:



Those interested in accessing the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 should follow progress on the development of the programmes in the beneficiary countries through the website of the EEA and Norway Grants (www.eegrants.org) and/or be in touch with the relevant National Focal Point.