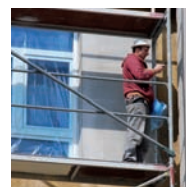
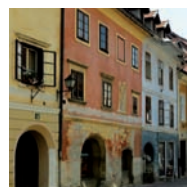


EEA GRANTS NORWAY GRANTS

STATUSREPORT
MAY 2008



norway
grants

eea grants
Iceland liechtenstein norway

Content



EEA and Norway Grants 01

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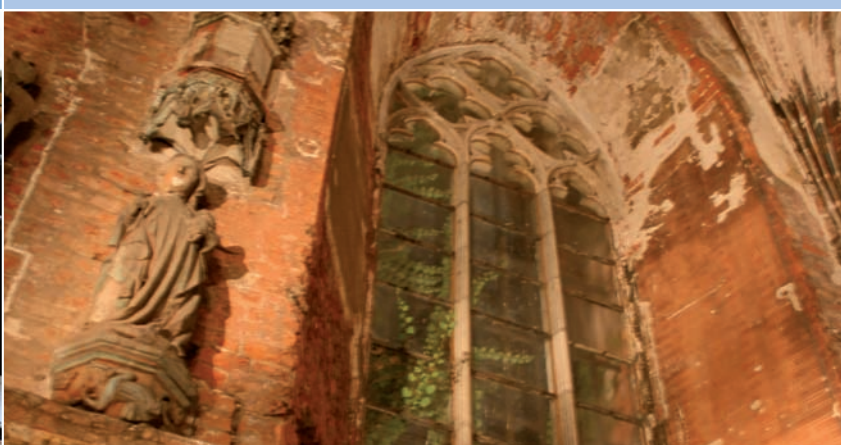
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€1.239 billion for reducing social and economic disparities and promoting cooperation in Europe

Four years into implementation, our joint effort to reduce social and economic disparities in the European Economic Area has resulted in funding of more than 500 projects in Central and Southern Europe.

Through the EEA Grants and the Norway Grants, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway will contribute €1.239 billion between 2004 and 2009 to the new EU member countries, as well as to Greece, Portugal and Spain. Norway, as the largest donor, is supporting the project portfolio with around 97 percent of the funding.

The European Economic Area agreement, which extends the internal market from the European Union to Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, goes beyond trade and economy to also include a shared solidarity for Europe's future. The EEA agreement links the internal market and its objective of economic prosperity with the financial mechanisms and their objective of economic and social cohesion in the European Economic Area after enlargement in 2004.

"The EEA Grants and Norway Grants are tools to promote solidarity and cooperation in Europe."

The EEA Grants and Norway Grants are also important tools for promoting cooperation between Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway and the 15 beneficiary states. We work effectively together on a political level to implement the mechanisms, and we are pleased that the many partnership projects have grounded this cooperation also at a local level in our countries. In the current portfolio of 511 projects, a total of 84 projects involve direct cooperation between parties in the beneficiary states and the three EEA EFTA states.

This status report lists some of the achievements and results from the mechanisms' fourth year of operation – from May 2007 to April 2008. We have made more than €1 billion available to applicants across Europe, of which €75 million have been channelled to civil society through specific funds for non governmental organisations.

We have committed €620 million in grants to over 500 projects, including activities such as restoration of cultural heritage sites, protection of the environment including energy efficient means, health and child care, and improvements in the quality of regional and local government services. With one year left of the commitment period until 2009, we are ready to take yet another leap towards achieving the core values underpinning our contribution: cooperation, solidarity and opportunity.

Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir
Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade,
Iceland

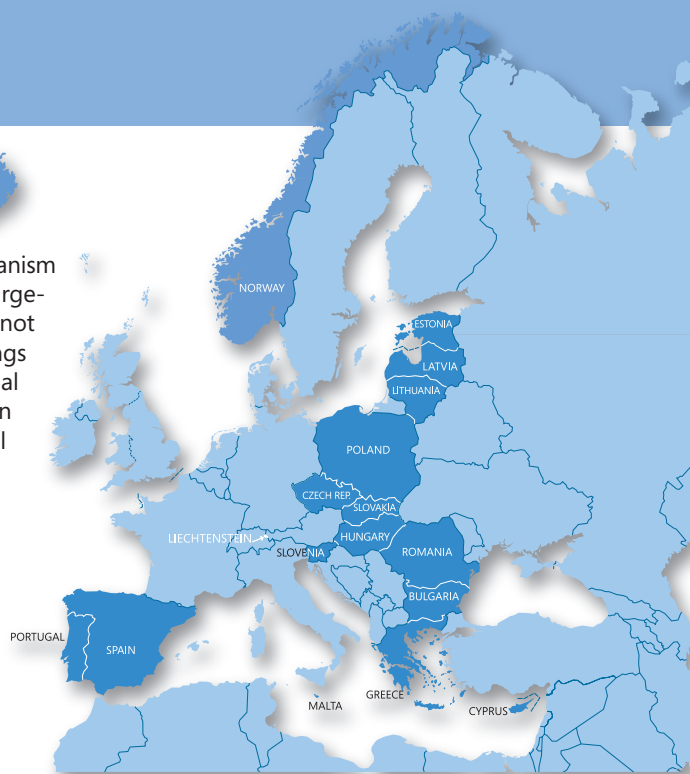
Rita Kieber-Beck
Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Liechtenstein

Jonas Gahr Støre
Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Norway

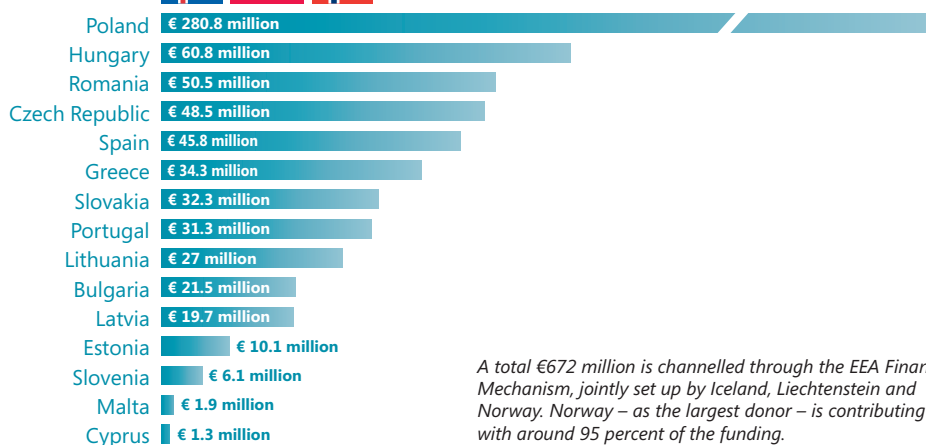
The EEA and Norway Grants

Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway established the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism in connection with the enlargement of the European Union in 2004. Ten new member states joined not only the EU, but also the European Economic Area (EEA), which brings together the EU and Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway in the Internal Market. The accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the European Union led to an additional enlargement of the EEA and of the EEA Financial Mechanism in 2007.

Over a five-year period until April 2009, the three EEA EFTA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) are making available €1.239 billion to reduce economic and social disparities in the enlarged EEA. A wide range of public authorities and institutions, organisations and businesses across Central and Southern Europe can apply for grants to realise projects in the public benefit. The Norwegian Financial Mechanism is solely targeted at the new EU member states since 2004, while the EEA Financial Mechanism also includes the EU member states Bulgaria, Greece, Portugal, Romania and Spain.



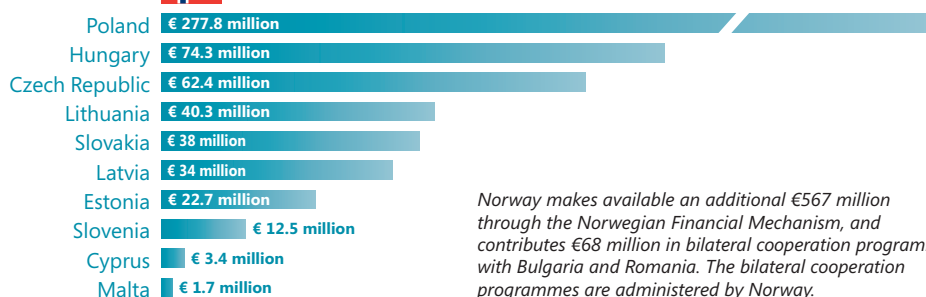
EEA Financial Mechanism



A total €672 million is channelled through the EEA Financial Mechanism, jointly set up by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. Norway – as the largest donor – is contributing with around 95 percent of the funding.



Norwegian Financial Mechanism



Norway makes available an additional €567 million through the Norwegian Financial Mechanism, and contributes €68 million in bilateral cooperation programmes with Bulgaria and Romania. The bilateral cooperation programmes are administered by Norway.

Cooperative implementation

The financial mechanisms are implemented as two pillars of the same overarching system aimed at reducing economic and social disparities in the EEA.

The implementation of the grant schemes is based on collaboration between the EEA EFTA states and the beneficiary states, with the Brussels-based Financial Mechanism Office (FMO) acting as the day-to-day secretariat.

In each beneficiary state a national Focal Point is set up as the coordinating authority.

The Focal Points announce calls for individual project proposals and prioritise among the submitted applications.

All public and private actors may apply for grants under the calls for proposals, as may non governmental organisations and other civil society organisations.

The prioritised applications from each call are forwarded by the beneficiary states to the FMO for a detailed appraisal and for a screening by the European Commission (EC). Finally, the EEA EFTA states make a decision on each application. This decision is based on a grant recommendation by the FMO, the opinion of the beneficiary state and a screening by the EC.

Flexible project assistance

The EEA and Norway Grants offer grant assistance in the form of individual projects, programmes and block grants ("funds"). Public or private sector bodies or NGOs constituted as legal entities in the beneficiary states and operating in the public interest can apply for project support. Institutions from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway can participate as project partners.

Individual projects are the most common form of support under the financial mechanisms, and applicants apply for assistance to individual projects under the calls for proposals announced by the beneficiary states. Individual projects have a minimum grant threshold of €250,000.

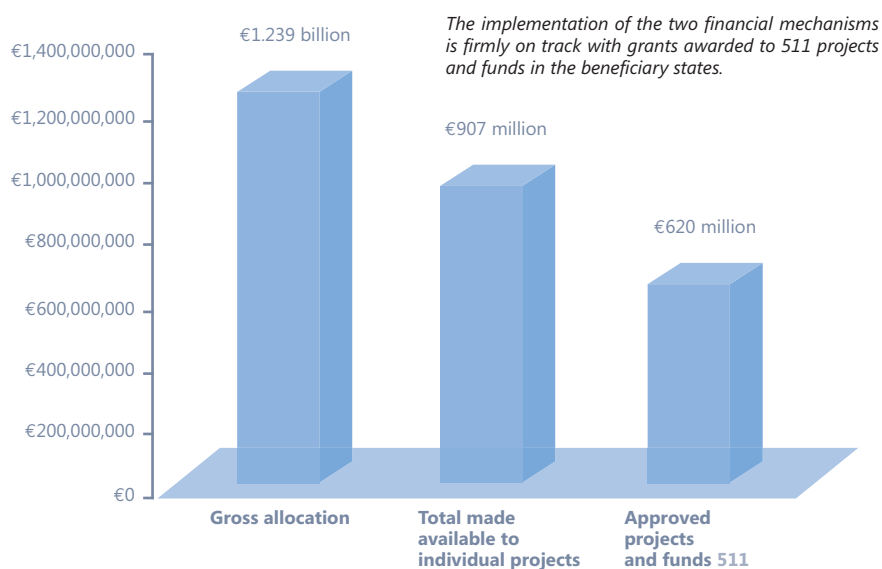
Programmes are defined as a "group of projects" and this instrument may be used to support several projects that share a common geographic or sectoral theme. Once approved, the implementation of programmes will be coordinated by a designated intermediary in the beneficiary state.

Block grants, usually referred to as funds, are established within the beneficiary state to channel support in accordance with the needs and requirements of specific groups or activities, such as funds for NGOs, scholarships or research. Once approved, the funds are operated by a designated intermediary in the beneficiary state.

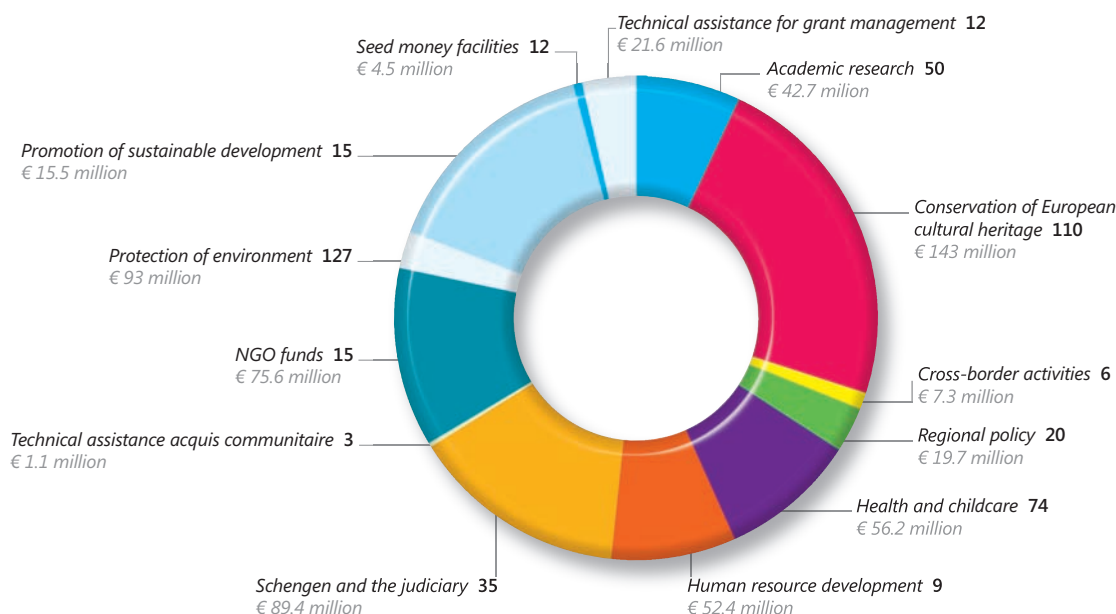
Implementation status

With one year left of the five-year commitment period to April 2009, a total €907 million have been made available to applicants through calls for proposals in the beneficiary states.

By end-April 2008, more than 800 project applications with a total value of €908 million have been forwarded by the beneficiary states to the FMO. Of these, 511 applications with a total value of €620 million have already been approved by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.



Distribution of awarded grants by priority sectors:



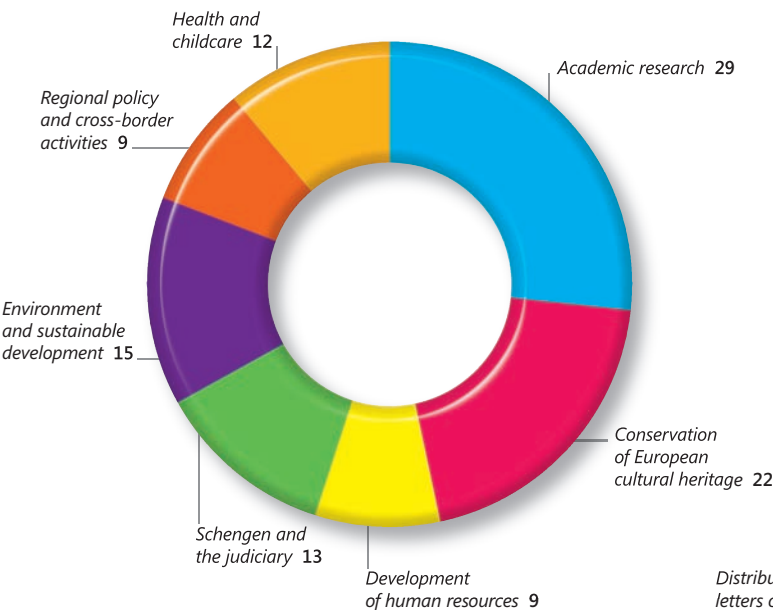
Partnership projects




The aim of strengthening bilateral relations between the EEA EFTA states and the beneficiary states underpins the financial mechanisms. International partnerships are greatly welcomed and institutions from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway can participate as partners in a project with a lead applicant from one of the beneficiary states. Applicants are encouraged to seek project partners in the EEA EFTA states for mutual benefit and strengthening of the project's quality.

Additionally, several of the funds are explicitly targeting partnerships with actors in Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, making them instrumental to the aim of strengthening bilateral relations between the EEA EFTA states and the beneficiary states. Most notable among these funds is the €15.3 million Polish-Norwegian research fund earmarked to partnership projects. The fund will provide grants to joint Polish-Norwegian research projects and support workshops and seminars facilitating research cooperation between the two countries. Partnerships are also at the core of the six scholarship funds already in place in the beneficiary states, providing grants to enhance school cooperation and exchanges of teachers and students.

By end-April 2008, Norwegian institutions were involved in more than 20 percent of the approved projects and funds. Of these activities, 53 funds and projects had the cooperation grounded in partnership statements, while 28 projects were carried out within a looser cooperation between institutions in Norway and the beneficiary states through letters of intent. In addition, more than 20 project promoters stated in their applications that they were interested in bringing a Norwegian partner onboard in their projects. Icelandic entities were by end-April 2008 participating in three projects and mentioned in one application, while partners from Liechtenstein were mentioned in one project application.

The approved bilateral projects were by end-2008 spread across nine beneficiary states, of which the largest number was found in Poland with 50 partnership projects. Second up was the Latvian project portfolio counting 17 bilateral projects, while neighboring Estonia and Lithuania had six and seven partnership projects respectively. Bilateral projects were also approved or already in implementation in the Czech Republic, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain. More than 50 of the bilateral projects concern cultural heritage and academic research. The cooperation is also substantial in respect of the priority sectors for Schengen and the judiciary, the environment and sustainable development as well as for activities aimed at strengthening regional development.



		Number of projects
	Norway	104
	Iceland	4
	Liechtenstein	1

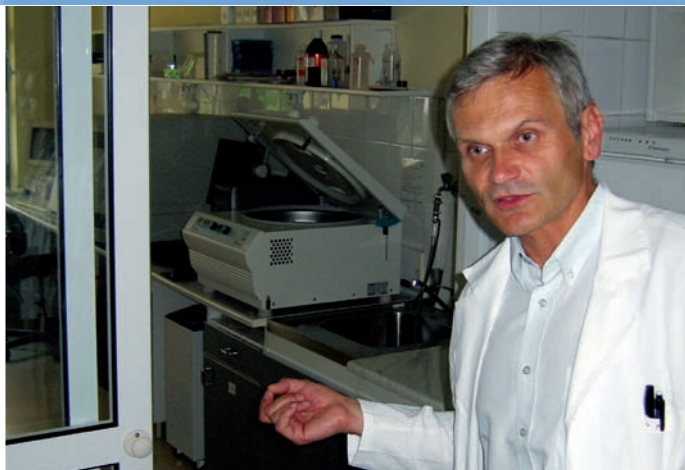
Distribution of projects involving EEA EFTA institutions through partnership statements, letters of intent, or mentioning of possible future cooperation in the application.

Civil society

Strengthening civil society and improving the capacity of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are given special attention under the financial mechanisms. With 18 NGO funds established or planned in twelve beneficiary states, Norway - as the largest donor - is turning into one of the primary supporters of civil society in Central Europe. The funds are operated by a national intermediary, responsible for making grants available to potential end-recipients.

The most prominent example is the Polish NGO fund which will provide more than €40 million to Polish NGOs and their partners in the EEA-EFTA states. To illustrate the impact of this, it is likely that this fund alone will support more than 1,000 NGO projects that will involve several thousand people through the activities that these grants will generate. NGO funds are already in place or in the pipeline in twelve of the beneficiary states, providing additional opportunities to the open calls for individual projects.

Academic research



A Polish-Norwegian research team is trying to develop breath tests as a method for disease detection to enable discomfort free-lung examination.

Cultural heritage



Through a major Public-Private Partnership, the Daugavpils city authorities aim to turn the city's fortress into a regional centre in Latvia for culture, business, recreation and tourism.

Academic research

Research grants are available under the financial mechanisms in eleven beneficiary states to support the development of innovative methods and technology. To date, 50 research projects have been awarded close to €50 million in support, with €19 million in additional funding set aside under research funds in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Poland and Slovakia. Poland stands out as the single largest beneficiary of academic research support, with 30 projects already under way.

Support is provided to academic research under all priority sectors, with a majority of the projects focusing on environment and health. The approved projects span from research on greenhouse gas emissions in Estonia to a project researching possibilities for prevention and early diagnosis of cancer in Portugal. Norway is also supporting the substantial €15.3 million Polish-Norwegian research fund, under which Polish and Norwegian researchers will cooperate on health and environmental research. Research funds are also operational in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and an expert exchange fund has been established in Estonia. Several of the academic research projects involve partnerships, facilitating exchange of practical experience and technical know-how while also building relations between researchers in Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and the beneficiary states.

Protection of the European cultural heritage

To date, cultural heritage is the topic receiving the largest financial contribution. Cultural heritage is a priority sector in all beneficiary states. Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway are already supporting over 100 projects amounting to more than €140 million in grants. While most cultural heritage projects are taking place in Poland, the largest beneficiary of the financial mechanisms, a significant number of projects are also under way in the Czech Republic, Lithuania and Slovenia.

From digitalisation of historic documents in the Czech Republic to rebuilding churches along medieval pilgrim routes in Spain, the priority sector covers a wide array of projects. The Polish cultural portfolio, counting 28 projects with a combined grant support of close to €80 million, include several large scale-projects. The National Museum of Krakow has been awarded €10 million for its renovation works and a €8.5 million grant will be applied to a renovation project in the renaissance town of Zamość, an area inscribed on the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List. However, the cultural heritage projects under the financial mechanisms go beyond renovation. In Latvia, a project to restore the Kuldiga District Museum also involves the training of local craftsmen in wooden restoration skills, in cooperation with the Norwegian Craft Development (NHU) at Maihaugen Open Air Museum. Partnership projects with Norwegian institutions are also promoted through the recently launched Polish cultural exchange fund, which will support arts, music and literature.

02 Priority sectors

Health and childcare



The city of Poznań in western Poland has redeveloped five sport activity zones with support from the EEA Grants.

Human resource development



The Czech scholarship fund has doubled the number of Czech students in Norway and boosted cooperation between secondary schools.

Health and childcare

Health and childcare is a priority sector in most beneficiary states. By end-April 2008, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway have approved and channelled support to 74 health and childcare projects, the majority taking place in Poland and Lithuania. The projects have been awarded grants totalling €56 million.

The projects within the sector for health and childcare will have a wide outreach, and thousands of people are set to benefit from the funded activities. By January this year, approximately 1800 children, 600 adults and 1500 patients were benefiting from health and childcare projects in the Czech Republic alone. A significant amount has been awarded to projects with a strong social impact, such as the development and renovation of playgrounds and sports facilities. The €1.3 million project to promote health through sports and recreational activities on the new sport facilities at the secondary schools in Wejherowo County, Poland is a case in point. Other health and childcare projects include an Estonian project to improve HIV prevention in neonates through the treatment and rehabilitation of pregnant drug dependents. A project to ensure early cancer diagnosis, prevention and treatment through purchase of equipment and awareness raising campaigns is also under way in Lithuania.

Human resource development

The human resources projects have a wide impact, and play an important role in reaching the financial mechanisms' objectives of social and economic cohesion. A wide range of activities is supported under this sector, from training of local authority staff and police forces to facilitating social inclusion and intercultural cooperation activities. All beneficiary states, with the exception of Malta, have chosen human resources as one of their priority sectors. Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway have approved 39 projects totalling more than €52 million in grants.

Much of the funding is targeted at capacity building in the public sector through training of employees on topics such as IT, languages, and equal opportunities legislation. But the sector is diverse, and support is also awarded to improve living and working conditions through digitalisation of data, renovation of public playgrounds or schools and projects focusing on disadvantaged groups. Poland is the largest beneficiary within this priority sector, with projects including a €3.3 million initiative to strengthen the institutional capacity of Polish local government in partnership with the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS). Among the ongoing projects is the development of a support system for social integration of Roma pupils in Slovak elementary schools. In Poland's capital, Warsaw, a project will improve support for victims of domestic violence.

02 Priority sectors

Protection of the environment



A comprehensive monitoring project is taking place in the Bohemian Switzerland National Park in the Czech Republic to obtain information on the park's ecosystems.

Sustainable development



An environmental education centre has been set up on Malta to spread knowledge and enhance research on renewable energy, water use and local biodiversity.

Protection of the environment

The environmental funding under the financial mechanisms is substantial, with protection of the environment being a prime priority sector in all the beneficiary states. The EEA EFTA states have approved 127 projects amounting to €93 million in grants. Additionally, a significant part of the academic research projects and projects supported by the many NGO funds are targeted at protecting the environment. In total, more than a quarter of the overall allocation from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway is estimated to be awarded to environment and climate related projects.

A majority of the approved projects will reduce greenhouse gas emissions through improved energy efficiency. Half of the environmental projects are taking place in Poland, where supported activities include thermal insulation of some 300 public buildings and several large-scale infrastructure projects on waste water treatment. The diverse environmental project portfolio also encompasses flood protection projects in Slovakia, forest fire prevention and rehabilitation in Spain and Portugal, and the improvement of industrial recycling of batteries in Estonia. In the old abandoned opal mines of Dubník, Slovakia, a €570,000 project will protect the thousands of bats roosting there. As issues concerning protection of the environment gain increasing importance, it remains one of the largest priority sectors for the financial mechanisms.

Sustainable development

The funding from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway to the European environment links in closely with the sector for sustainable development. A chosen priority sector for twelve of the beneficiary states, sustainable development is a sector smaller in numbers, but still largely significant. More than €15 million have been committed to 15 projects promoting sustainable development through improved management and use of resources.

Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway are now supporting marine projects on biological diversity in all the countries along the Baltic coast. Extensive monitoring and mapping of biodiversity in this area will be carried out to secure sustainable management of marine resources. Other projects under this sector include a €1.6 million project to develop the Estonian public transport information system and a €4 million programme for environmental policy integration in Latvia. In Slovakia, support is provided to install a biomass boiler in the city of Vrábce, which will supply more than 3,000 inhabitants with energy efficient heating, thereby reducing the emissions of carbon dioxide. Alternative energy sources and sustainable development are issues of growing importance and with grants through the financial mechanisms, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway are contributing towards a sustainable Europe.

02 Priority sectors

Regional policy



A Polish-Norwegian project to spur organic farming and eco-tourism is now underway under the Polish NGO Fund.

Schengen



An integrated security monitoring system will be set up in the Polish port Gdynia to ensure adequate sea border protection.

Regional policy and Cross border activities

Cross-border and regional cooperation serve as one of the driving forces behind economic and social cohesion in the financial mechanisms' target regions. Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway are now supporting 26 of these projects in eight beneficiary states. Several of the projects within this sector are targeting a region's development opportunities through an increased exchange of know-how and a strengthened cooperation among local and regional stakeholders.

Projects to promote regional policy and cross border activities have a positive impact on local authorities' capacity building while also fostering good governance in public administration. Simultaneously, several contribute to the support of environment protection in bordering countries through the sharing of experience and knowledge. In Sanok, Poland, a five-nation cooperation project is ongoing to stimulate cross-border collaboration in the underdeveloped regions of the Carpathian area covering Poland, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine. International partnerships is also the focus of a €3.5 million Lithuanian fund supporting exchange of know-how and best practices between Lithuanian and Norwegian local and regional level institutions.

Schengen and Acquis Communautaire

Integrating new Schengen members is given a prime focus under the mechanisms, with 38 projects amounting to €90.5 million in grant support already approved on issues related to border security, enhanced police cooperation and a strengthened judiciary. Projects within this priority sector are all funded by Norway through the Norwegian Financial Mechanism.

A significant amount of grant support within this priority sector has gone towards projects providing Schengen training for police forces, upgrading of border controls and improved Information Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure. Partnerships with the Norwegian police are an important element in several of the projects in the Czech Republic, Latvia and Poland. The approved projects in Poland include a €8.9 million project to provide Polish police with appropriate transport and specialist equipment on the country's and EU's north-eastern external border. Norway is also supporting a €0.5 million Latvian project to secure the successful reintegration of former convicts into society. Through funding, partnerships and contributions from both Norway and the Norwegian Police, these projects open up possibilities for strengthened European police cooperation.

Fighting forest fires in Spain

Extensive land areas will be secured against damaging forest fires thanks to a €3 million grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway to the Ebro water authorities' fire prevention project.

Situated between Valencia and Barcelona, the Ebro River is one of the longest rivers on the Iberian Peninsula, running from the Cantabrian mountains and through the Rioja wine region before emptying through a wide delta into the Mediterranean. Surrounding the river is the Ebro river basin, covering as much as 17 percent of the total land area of Spain.

Vulnerable forest area

In the last few years, devastating forest fires have become an increasing problem in the river basin, threatening not only the forests and local environment, but also the dams, reservoirs and watersheds that are crucial to the water supply in the region.

Increased erosion, silting and sedimentation are polluting the waters and disturbing the natural dynamics of the 25,000 hectares of forest. Lack of forest maintenance and care has also led to a profound increase in forest density. The excess of biomass is a common cause of forest fires in Mediterranean ecosystems, and this has added to the area's vulnerability. "The risk of forest fire in the Ebro river basin is now



The project in the Ebro river basin is one of three Spanish fire prevention and rehabilitation projects supported by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

significant, and an actual fire would have severe consequences for the local environment," Samuel Chopo, technical assistant at the Ebro water authorities, said.

The regional forestry service instigated efforts to prevent forest fires in the river basin, but with limited funding, it proved impossible to carry out sufficient work to secure the areas. Now, with a 50 percent grant from the financial mechanisms, the forestry service is able to implement a comprehensive €5.9 million project to prevent forest fires in the area "This project is of crucial importance to us, not only to prevent wild fires, but also to protect the soil against erosion and to secure the water quality in the reservoirs," Chopo said.

Preventive measures

The Ebro water authorities will now carry out extensive works in the forest, eliminating sick and dead trees and

thinning the densest areas. Led by Environmental Studies Service Manager Alfonso Calvo, a team of forest engineers, topographers, forest guards and technicians will ensure the completion of the project.

New firebreaks and thinning stripes alongside the forest tracks will be made, while existing firebreaks and tracks are to be repaired. The building of water pools where large amounts of water can be stored, will serve as a crucial and easily accessible weapon against raging wildfires.

An information campaign will be targeted at local residents, workers and tourists, to inform and create awareness about the danger of forest fires.

Chopo underlined that the project is large in scale, with enormous areas of forest to secure. However, the funding from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway gives the prevention work an important, and much needed boost.



Firebreaks in Huesca

Schengen integration sets off Polish-Norwegian police cooperation

Norwegian and Polish police services have taken on enhanced cooperation under the wider efforts of integrating European law enforcement agencies. Jointly bolstering Poland for Schengen cooperation, lays the ground for future direct operational cooperation.

The Norwegian Financial Mechanism with its support to implement Schengen requirements has touched off direct cooperation between the two national police services. Poland became part of border-free Europe in 2007. During bilateral talks between the Police Commissioners in 2004, a decision was taken to use the funding scheme to draw on Norway's fresh experiences with the free movement of people.

Poland has steered towards a similar path to what Norway chose for its integration into Schengen through joint preparation of several applications for grants under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism. Head of the Norwegian police's project for cooperation under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism, Magrethe Bjonge, says both aims of the grant scheme, reduction of social and economic disparities and promotion of cross-border relations, are highly relevant for the police. "In our time of globalisation, international police

cooperation is a must. As crime gets more sophisticated, it is crucial that the police services across Europe are adequately equipped", Bjonge said, adding: "Crime that is stopped in Poland does not reach us".

Mug shots and fingerprints

For Poland, the entry into Schengen calls for heightened security measures on the country's eastern border with Belarus, Ukraine and the Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation. Several of the 17 Schengen projects supported by Norway are aimed at providing the Polish police with the tools to combat cross-border crime, organised crime such as trafficking in human beings, and illegal immigration. The Polish police's needs include specialised equipment for pyrotechnic teams, tactical searchlights and more than 220 off-road scooters, heavy motorcycles, prison vans and other vehicles.

The Norwegian funding will also increase Poland's practical access to the

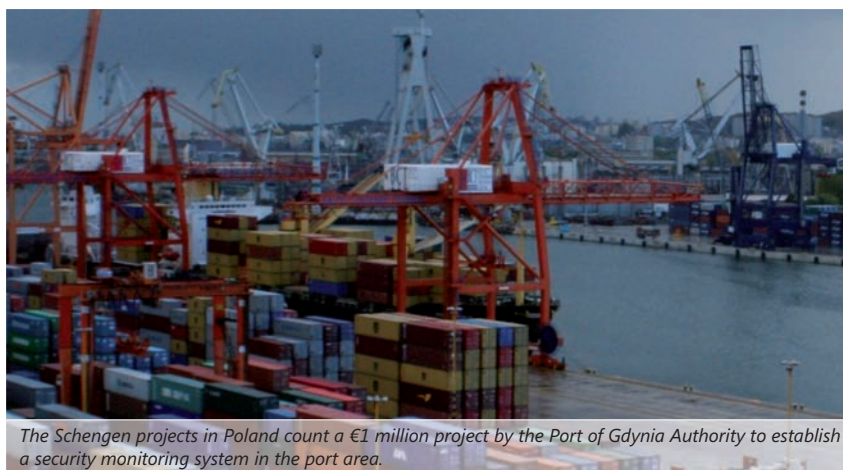
backbone of Schengen cooperation – the Schengen Information System (SIS). New equipment and training in the use of biometrics – using the body as authentication – will enable the police to simultaneously register and check a person's personal data, fingerprints, and mug shots against the common European police database. In addition, infrastructure will be set up across eastern and northern Poland to ensure wireless contact with the database for the users of the 3600 new sets of radiotelephones.

So far, the total support from Norway allocated for Schengen related issues amounts to nearly €80 million.

Cooperation on common challenges

Four years of close contact has widened the two police forces' collaboration. The initial joint preparatory efforts on applications have now developed into a cooperation that may soon be grounded in operational feedback.

According to the Polish police, the work of their Norwegian colleagues has been key to ensuring a continuation in the push towards this final stage. "We have developed something which is crucial for any interpersonal contact – trust", Miłosz Mazur, Head of the Unit for Assistance Funds in the Polish Police, said. "When police officers or experts on both sides discuss their mutual problems and come into contact through study visits or direct consultations, we broaden the horizons on both sides. And if the cooperation is based on personal contacts and stretches over a few years, as is the case here, the cooperation is less formal, more open and touching real problems," he said.



The Schengen projects in Poland count a €1 million project by the Port of Gdynia Authority to establish a security monitoring system in the port area.

Different approaches to environmental research

While renowned Czech and Norwegian scientists are making use of an international partnership to gather data to match Czech pollution levels to the goals of the Gothenburg protocol, Portuguese scientists are coaching the country's secondary schools to contribute to environmental research for the Agenda 21 agreement.

Assessing the impact of the Gothenburg protocol in the Czech Republic.



Surface waters will be sampled to map stream water chemistry.

At the Czech Geological Survey in Prague, Dr Jakub Hruška is leading a €1.1 million research project to measure changes in sulphur and nitrogen pollution in the Czech Republic. The former Republic of Czechoslovakia used to be responsible for some of the most significant sulphur and nitrogen emissions in the world, leading to large-scale pollution of waters and destruction of mountain forests. Efforts to reduce emissions were first put in place in 1989, more than a decade later than in Western European countries.

Working closely with the Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA), a leading research institution within the field of acidification, Dr Hruška and his research team are now monitoring and measuring the level of improvement in ecosystem conditions since the signing of the Gothenburg Protocol. Through

this 1995 agreement, the Czech Republic has committed to reducing sulphur, nitrogen oxides and ammonia emissions by 2010. The Czech research team is re-sampling sites that were surveyed before the implementation of the Protocol, to determine changes in pollution levels in waters, soils and forests. Two thirds of the costs are covered by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

"It is very important to be aware of the level of acidification in order to be able to reduce emissions in the whole country effectively, as well as to contribute to negotiations post-Gothenburg", Dr Hruška said.

"New negotiations have just begun, and an accurate comparison will help us determine what areas have now recovered completely, and which ones will need further reductions. Hence, we could achieve a better targeted plan to deal with sulphur and nitrogen emissions", he continued.

Two years into project implementation, the Czech Geological Survey is well on track to map the pollution levels in the Czech Republic. "We are hoping our project results will lead to effective and accurate negotiation of a new protocol for the Czech Republic once the Gothenburg protocol expires," Dr Hruška concluded.



By establishing the current scale of pollution, Czech and Norwegian researchers will contribute to a new national emission control strategy in the Czech Republic.

Local environmental research with international objectives in Portugal.

At the University of Porto in Portugal, environmental research is also being carried out with support from the EEA Grants. Led by Dr José Rocha e Silva, a €1 million project to train students and teachers across Portugal in collecting and measuring scientific data is now well underway. Supported by a €0.9 million grant from the EEA Financial Mechanism, the research project breaks new ground in its attempt to implement Agenda 21 processes in Portuguese schools and counties. Agenda 21 dates back to the UN Rio Summit in 1992, and is a comprehensive plan of actions for sustainable development to be taken at global, national and local levels.

"I was looking for an innovative approach to gathering of data, while getting our university out there, further than just the campus buildings. I wanted us to be in touch with the real world, and finally I wanted to contribute to reducing the

large differences in development within Portugal," Dr José Rocha e Silva said.

He added: "Collecting environmental data is normally tremendously expensive, so we thought up the idea of using secondary school students to gather the information. By providing schools with an incentive through scientific support and information on environmental issues, they are encouraged to sample various forms of environmental data. Thus we get the data at a very low cost," he said.

Measuring everything from weather conditions, hydrology and soils, the project brings together teachers and students from geography, physics, science, mathematics to language studies and philosophy. An e-learning platform allows the over 120 teachers involved to access the information necessary to carry out the research. The schools send the data via the

internet to the University of Porto, where it is processed and analysed.

"We contacted the schools directly, and visited them wherever in the country they were located," continued Dr Rocha e Silva. "As the University of Porto is the largest university in Portugal, schools are very happy to collaborate with us. Now, there are more schools wanting to work with us than we can manage to coordinate."

Through local secondary school teachers, the research team has also managed to establish contact and close cooperation with municipalities, true to the aims of Agenda 21.

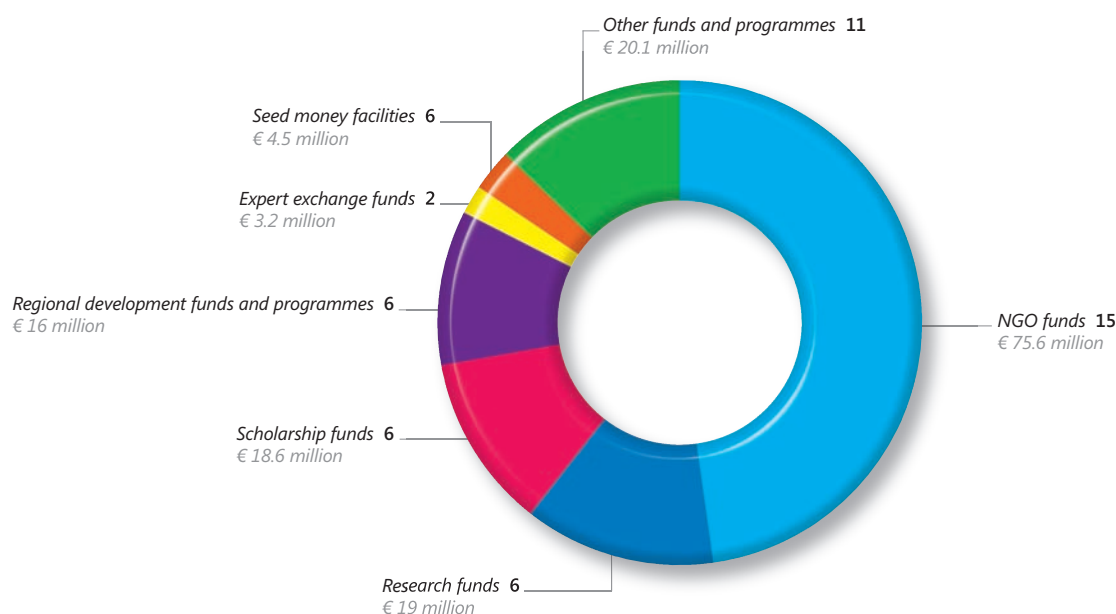
The project has been highly successful so far, and Dr Rocha e Silva would like to take the project idea further: "I believe we can use our experience to build an environmental monitoring mechanism to cover all of Europe," he said enthusiastically.



Portuguese secondary schools across the country will cooperate with Porto University in sampling environmental data.

Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway are supporting more than 50 versatile funds and programmes with close to €160 million in grants. Through simplified sets of guidelines and application procedures, the funds and programmes make available smaller, easily-accessible grants for groups such as civil society organisations, students and researchers. The many funds and programmes contribute to a strengthened civil society, lay the ground for bilateral cooperation with institutions in the EEA EFTA states, and support both regional and local level economic and social development.

Distribution of awarded grants to funds and programmes:



Regional development funds & Technical expert exchange funds

Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway are now supporting regional development funds in six countries, backing projects to increase the attractiveness and competitiveness of regions and local authorities. A €3.8 million Estonian fund to strengthen local and regional development was launched in the beginning of 2008, and funds are also being established in neighbouring countries Latvia and Lithuania.

Funding has also been set aside for technical expert exchange funds.

The funds aim to assist the beneficiary states in the implementation of EU policies by raising their level of knowledge and developing professional skills, funds include a €2 million Czech technical expert fund and a Latvian €1.3 million short-term expert fund.

04 Funds focus

NGO Funds



Civil society across Europe are eagerly taking part in the NGO funds set up under the EEA and Norway Grants.

With 18 NGO funds established or planned in twelve beneficiary states, Norway - as the largest donor - is turning into one of the primary supporters of civil society in Central Europe. The NGO funds provide small grants to non-governmental organisations within a diverse range of focus areas, spanning from the environment, human rights and democracy to social integration and capacity building.

Civil society organisations across the beneficiary states and in the donor states have eagerly anticipated this boost to civil society development in Central and Southern Europe, which is providing more than €75 million to their cause. At €41.5 million, the Polish NGO fund is the largest of these funds, followed by the €11 million Czech fund. NGO Funds have also been established in Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovakia and Slovenia, with funds set to be launched shortly in Bulgaria, Cyprus, and Romania.

€41.5 million boost for Polish civil society

The most notable example among the NGO funds is the €41.5 million fund in Poland, representing a considerable push for civil society development, opening up for small grants to grassroots organisations over several years to come. The fund receives ten percent co-financing from the Polish government.

Due to the considerable size and scope of the Polish NGO fund, the three focus areas are managed by two organisations with ties to civil society and the areas of intervention. The Co-operation Fund Foundation is responsible for the focus area of democracy and civil society. Environmental protection and sustainable development as well as equal opportunities and social integration is managed by Ecorys.

Since the launch of the NGO fund in 2007, around 3800 applications have been submitted for NGO projects to the two intermediaries. "Looking at the number of applications we have received, you can see that the NGO sector was waiting for an opportunity like this. The establishment of these funds was so important and so necessary for them," Bartosz Mielecki, fund coordinator for the component for Democracy and civil society, said. Rafał Szakalinis, fund coordinator at ECORYS Polska, echoed this: "Although funding opportunities for the Polish NGO community exist, these funds are unique in both size and duration," he said.

The current 165 project portfolio under the Polish NGO fund includes efforts to involve people in activities in support of human rights during the buildup to the Olympic Games in

04 Funds focus

Beijing, promotion of social participation and rehabilitation for children with special needs through theatre and drama therapy, as well as support to the international film festival WATCH DOCS and their goal of fostering social change and raising awareness about human rights.

The NGO fund opens up for cooperation projects between Polish civil society organisations, including social partners, and their counterparts from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway to further the aim of strengthening bilateral cooperation between Poland and the EEA EFTA states. "We encourage the applicants to get the partners on board as early on in the process as possible, even in writing the applications. Fresh ideas and

exchange of know-how can help the candidates at this crucial stage of the process," Szakalinis said.

Both intermediaries have attempted to achieve a fair distribution of the available resources. "Although it has been a challenge to attain a fair geographical distribution, we are pleased to see that our funding is also reaching grass root projects in smaller towns, not only the larger organisations based in Warsaw," Mielecki said. Also Szakalinis, fund coordinator at Ecorys, underlined the fact that the Polish NGO sector has appreciated the way their funds have been distributed. "From our funds, it is not only the most powerful organisations who receive support," he said.

NGO Norway Portal

The NGO Portal www.ngonorway.org has been set up by the Norwegian Helsinki Committee to facilitate the search for Norwegian NGOs for partnership projects. A specific database on this website, "Finding partners", lists information and contact details on Norwegian NGOs interested in participating in projects.



Scholarship funds

European school cooperation has received a real boost through the €18.6 million provided to establish scholarship funds in six beneficiary states. Encouraging educational cooperation between the beneficiary states and the EEA EFTA states, the funds support a wide range of activities, ranging from training of civil servants, support for students

with special needs to exchange of teachers and students in both secondary and higher education. Scholarship funds are now operational in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Portugal and Slovakia, while the planned funds in Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Slovenia and Spain are expected to be established by 2009.

Successful school cooperation in the Czech Republic

Through the €2.8 million Czech schools and scholarship fund, 21 cooperation programmes between Czech schools and partners in Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway are now underway.

The Czech fund was the first scholarship fund to become operational, and the fourth open call for grants was launched in February 2008. With another call in the pipeline, the National Agency for European Educational Programmes is busy facilitating the mounting cooperation between schools in the Czech Republic and the EEA EFTA states. Both upper secondary schools and universities are involved in the

school cooperation, receiving funding for projects on topics ranging from environmental issues to special needs and student exchanges. 18 partners from Norway, four from Iceland and one from Liechtenstein have so far participated in the school cooperation. Through the transfer of know-how, schools find inspiration to develop curricula and ideas for new material that can be used in everyday teaching. "Czech schools are really appreciating the opportunity to work with schools in the donor countries. With different systems and different education, we have a lot to learn from each other," commented Programme Manager Barbora Závodská.

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Supporting young mothers in higher education

True to one of the fund's main principles - providing equal opportunities - one of the projects supported by the Czech scholarship fund is "First Steps – Daycare centers", led by



Scholarship funds established in six countries are supporting a wide array of educational activities.

Professor Danuše Bauerová at the Technical University of Ostrava. The project encourages young mothers to access higher education by providing child care facilities at the university. "The project is a reaction to an unfilled void here in the Czech Republic," Professor Bauerová said. "We see similar facilities in place at foreign universities in the United Kingdom and Norway, and we felt there was a need for this type of service also here." The project is carried out by the Innovation of Education Institute, which also houses Sunflower, a disability resource centre providing support and advice to students at the university.

It was visually impaired university alumni Kateřina Pešková, pointing out the many difficulties she experienced as a student, and later as a mother, who spurred on the project idea. After learning about the Czech schools and scholarship fund, financial support from the EEA and Norwegian financial mechanisms has now made the project a reality.

The day-care centre will target mostly young mothers, but also young fathers struggling to balance childcare with university studies. Still in its early stages, the project team is now preparing a preliminary study to determine demand and interest for the service, while working in close collaboration with its partner, University in Agder in southern Norway.

Contact with university staff in Kristiansand is maintained by project manager Martin Pokorný. "We are hoping our project can serve as a trial project, from which other universities in the Czech Republic can learn. By sharing our experience, we hope other institutions will follow suit," Professor Bauerová added.

"This project will draw attention to an important issue here in the Czech Republic – the difficult dual role of young student parents, and the lack of support currently available."

Research funds

In addition to supporting individual research projects, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway also support academic research through research funds in five countries. A total €19 million is provided through such funds to research communities in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Poland and Slovakia. Grants are provided to projects within fields such as health, nanotechnology, biotechnology, environment and renewable energy. Largest of the lot is the €15.3 million Polish-Norwegian Research Fund, which aims to encourage and support fruitful and long-term collaboration between Polish and Norwegian researchers.



In addition to supporting individual research projects, the financial mechanisms are channeling €19 million to research funds

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Scholarships to bring Polish scholars home

After the EU enlargement in 2004, more than 1.5 million people chose to emigrate from Poland. Responding to the large number of young professionals and scientists moving abroad, the HOMING programme was launched in 2006 by the Foundation for Polish Science. Since 2007, the HOMING programme has received 60 percent support from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

"The principal objective of the programme is to encourage young Polish scientists to return to Poland after an extended research stay abroad," Homing Programme Officer Małgorzata Chmielecka said. "The programme does so by providing young scholars with financial support to facilitate their return and boosting their academic careers by offering them improved working conditions in Poland." To date, more than 90

researchers have applied for financial support, 32 of which have been successful. While some of the applicants had already decided they wanted to move back to Poland, for many candidates the two year scholarship and research grant were decisive factors. Around €560,000 is now being re-granted through the programme every year.

Chmielecka underlined the importance for Poland to have some of its most talented scientists coming back. "In the two years since its inception, the HOMING Programme and the Foundation have received strong approval from the Polish scientific community," Chmielecka said, adding: "We want to show young scholars that they are welcome and provide them with the necessary conditions to continue their research here in Poland."



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Geology research from Tokyo to Warszawa

Monika Kusiak is one of the young scientists benefiting from the HOMING programme. For two years, Kusiak was working as a post-doctoral fellow for the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), carrying out research in Nagoya and Tokyo. "Thanks to the HOMING programme, I could move back to Poland and continue my research there, while also continuing co-operation with Japanese colleges", Kusiak said. She now holds an adjunct position at the Institute of Geological Sciences at Kraków Research Centre.

Funded by the HOMING programme, Kusiak started her research project at Kraków Research Centre six months ago. Thanks to the grant support, she has been able to carry out field work in the Czech and German parts of the Bohemian Massif, while also travelling back to Tokyo to perform necessary analyses.

"In Japan I learned much about working fast and efficiently, and I hope it will be possible to continue this here in Poland, even though the financial situation and the standard of laboratories are different", Kusiak said. She is very grateful for the opportunities the programme has provided. "To be a laureate of the Foundation is not only financially important, it is also prestigious."

Contact centres for the scholarship funds have been established in the EEA EFTA states:

- The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education (SIU) :
http://siu.no/en/programoversikt/eu_program/eoes_ordningene
- The Icelandic Office for International Education:
<http://www.ask.hi.is/page/forsidaenglish>
- Contact point for the Scholarship Funds in Liechtenstein:
<http://www.llv.li/llv-lebensthemen/llv-lebensthemen-bildungsprogramme-home.htm>



FUNDED ACTIVITIES

www.eeagrants.org/projects

A searchable database on www.eeagrants.org/projects contains information on all approved projects, programmes and funds under the EEA and Norway Grants.

EEA Grants and Norway Grants

Contact details for the FMO and Focal Points in all beneficiary states are available on www.eeagrants.org

Norwegian Cooperation Programmes

The Norwegian Cooperation Programmes with Bulgaria and Romania are managed by the organisation Innovation Norway. Details on these programmes are available on www.norwaygrants.org