



# Strategic Report

## EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2009-2014

### Romania

1 January – 31 December 2014

Ministry of European Funds

## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2014, the National Focal Point's and Programme Operator's efforts have concentrated on the set-up of the management and controls systems, preparation of working procedures, completion of MCS descriptions and related audit missions, as well as the preparation and carrying-out of calls for proposals, fulfilment of pre-eligibility conditions and contracting of pre-defined projects.

All programmes entered the implementation phase, with last Programme Agreements having been concluded: RO19 – Initiatives in Public Health, RO02 – Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, RO04 – Reduction of Hazardous Substances in January, RO25 – Poverty Alleviation in June and RO07 – Adaptation to Climate Change in August. All the calls for proposals included in Programmes have been launched by the end of the year, with some programmes in a more advanced phase – RO09, RO17, RO06, RO14, RO15 and others reaching the final stages by the end of 2014, such as RO12, RO13, RO10 and RO20.

Predefined projects represent a significant part of the implementation framework, having a total budget of 91,574,719 Euros. A number of 34 predefined projects have been contracted by the end of 2014 of the total 39 approved in the programming documents.

In terms of financial progress, an amount of 82,236,209 Euros has been disbursed by the Donors to Romanian Programmes and payment rates at Programme level have reached 44% of received pre-financing and 13% of the total budget.

The management and control system description for all Programme Operators and related compliance audit opinions were finalised and submitted according to the provisions of the Regulations.

Considering the provisions of the Regulations related to the deadline for modifications in budgetary appropriations for Programmes and the analysis of both needs and absorption capacity, in October 2014 a reallocation of funds was agreed, resulting in increased available amounts for programmes RO12 – Conservation and revitalisation of cultural heritage, RO19 – Public Health Initiatives and RO15 – Scholarships.

In April 2014, the NFP launched the second round of the open call under the Bilateral Fund at National Level for travel support and initiatives to be financed under priority areas, as provided in the Work plan agreed with the donors. The call, initially open until end of October 2014, was subsequently extended to December 2015 (or funds depletion). The Fund was also implemented through predefined activities, mutually agreed with the donors. As a result, the implementation of the Fund made significant progress: 96 applications received and 44 approved. Thus, in 2014, the NFP has signed financing contracts (for the

applications submitted in 2014) in amount of 679,914 Euros. For the applications submitted in 2014 (financing contracts signed also in 2014), the NFP made payments of 311,447 Euros.

In 2014 the NFP has paid a total amount of 355,236 Euros out of which for application submitted in 2013 the amount of 23,789 Euros and 311,447 Euros for applications submitted in 2014.

Throughout the year both NFP and Programme Operators experienced a very good level of cooperation with Donor Programme Partners and the Royal Norwegian Embassy. All donor partnership programmes have organized Cooperation Committee meetings, discussing progress in implementation and important next steps, such as necessary programme modifications.

Also, based on the reallocation agreed by the NFP and the FMO, a new programme RO 25 – Poverty Alleviation has been approved in 2014.

In terms of identified risks, and considering the current status of implementation as presented in this report, the main reason for concern remains the short period of time left for project implementation. Some of them, particularly pre-defined projects, are rather complex, with large budgets and potentially lengthy procurement procedures. On the side of programme operators there are risks related to availability of sufficient human resources in terms both of number and expertise as well as staff migration. The large number of programmes (22) within the Romanian implementation framework poses significant challenges in terms of coordination and necessary inter-institutional arrangements.

The important delays encountered in the implementation of environment programmes (RO02, RO04, RO07 and RO05) pose significant risks for the achievement of results, considering also their relatively important financial allocation within the implementation framework.

## 2 ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECT OF THE GRANTS

### 2.1 Cohesion

The financial contribution of the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2009-2014 for Romania shall support the objective of economic and social cohesion through the implementation of the established programmes and the achievement of outcomes and outputs measured by set indicators.

However, the EEA and Norway Grants 2009-2014's objective of reducing social and economic disparities should be placed in the context of Romania's socio-economic condition, which continues to lag behind in terms development compared to the rest of the EU, as demonstrated by relevant statistical indicators.

In terms of economic performance, Romania's **GDP** is estimated to continue to increase in 2014 by 2.6%, following an increase of 3.6% in 2013. The GDP per capita in PPS is calculated at 55% of the EU28 average in 2013, the second lowest in the EU, but increasing from 42% in 2007 (Eurostat, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>).

As stated in the European Commission's Country Report of 2015, Romania's economic growth is expected to remain robust in 2015 and 2016, mainly driven by domestic demand and accompanied by a stable labour market. GDP growth is forecast to stay above potential and remain robust at 2.7% in 2015 and 2.9 % in 2016, based on the Commission 2015 winter forecast. Also, the *budget deficit* was reduced to 1.8 % of GDP in 2014, with the support of three consecutive EU/IMF programmes (the European Commission 2015 winter forecast).

In terms of the human development, the **Human Development Index**, a comparative measure compiled from 4 indicators: life expectancy, literacy, education and standard of living, Romania occupies the 55<sup>th</sup> position at global level in 2012, the second lowest in the EU.

**People at risk of poverty or social exclusion**, the sum of persons who are at risk of poverty or severely materially deprived or living in households with very low work intensity, represent 40.4% of the total population compared to an EU28 average of 24.5 in 2013. **Early leavers from education and training** (population aged 18-24) reached 17.7% in 2014 compared to EU average of 11.3%.

Romania is subject to great disparities in wealth, opportunity, education, skills, health and in many areas these have intensified in the past decade. There is a profound territorial character to disparities, with pronounced variations between regions and between urban and rural areas. With a value of the **Gini coefficient** of 34 in 2013, Romania is ranked among the last in the EU in terms of inequality of income or wealth as a measure.

Indicators show that there is a big gap that separates Romania from the developed countries in the EU in regard to health status. Romania has the highest **infant mortality rates**, with 9.0 deaths per 1 000 live births compared to an EU28 average of 3.8 deaths per 1 000 live birth. *Life expectancy at birth* is among the lowest in the EU with an average of 74.5 years in 2012, compared to the EU28 average of 80.3 years.

An important issue affecting the delivery of public services in Romania is perceived to be corruption: based on regular progress reports, independent reviews and perception survey, corruption continues to be identified by the public as a barrier to quality public services at central and local levels, as a phenomenon that undermines the effective administration of public funds and obstructing justice, also affecting business environment. Romania scores a value of 43 and ranks 69th in the world in the **Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index**, thus being among the last in the EU, sharing the same place with Bulgaria, Italy and Greece. As also stated in the European Commission's Country Report of 2015, in the recent years, significant steps taken were taken for fighting high-level corruption, in 2014 many people involved in high-level corruption have been prosecuted and trialled. There was also an increase of cases of corruption within the judiciary brought forward by the prosecution.

Romania is still characterized by weak **administrative capacity** of public institutions and a predominance of bureaucracy and disproportionate regulation that seriously influence the competitiveness of Romania's business environment. Despite efforts to implement a robust policy process in Romania, reforms are urgently needed to improve the quality of public administration. Romania has taken numerous steps to create a strong, independent and well respected justice system. While progress has been made in many areas, it still remains a need for further capacity-building, reform and modernization.

## 2.2 Bilateral relations

The objective of strengthened bilateral relations between Romania and the donor states is mainly supported by implementing the means established in the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms:

- the Fund for Bilateral Relations at national level,
- the Funds for Bilateral Relations at programme level,
- implementation of donor partnership programmes and donor partnership projects.

### **Implementation of the Fund for Bilateral Relations at national level**

According to the agreed work plan and revised implementation system, the Fund for Bilateral Relations at national level was implemented through an open call for proposals with a total budget of 736,000 Euro and through mutually agreed predefined activities.

Thus, a second call for proposals under the bilateral fund at national level was launched on 11.04.2014. The date of closing of the call was set for 31.10.2014 or until the funds available for the for the measure/priority sector are spent. The budget allocated for Measure I – Travel Support is 100,000 Euro and the budget allocated for the Measure II – Priority Sectors is 636,000 Euro.

Given the fact that by the end of the period a consistent part of the budget remained available, the call was extended until 31.12.2015 or until funds depletion. Some modifications were also made in the Guideline of Applicants, two corrigenda being published ([www.eeagrants.ro](http://www.eeagrants.ro)), being also included the Minister of European Funds' Order no. 1055/2014 regarding the application of lump sums in the case of travels financed under the Funds for Bilateral Relations at national and programme level under the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014.

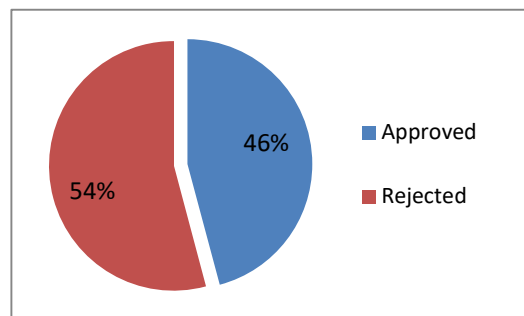
As by December 2014, the available budget under the priority area Cultural cooperation, cultural diversity, heritage and cultural exchange (170,000 Euro) was committed almost entirely to either signed

contracts or approved applications, a readjustment of the budget was agreed, increasing the budget for the Cultural Cooperation priority area with 50,000 Euros, by reallocating 30,000 Euros from the Environment PA and 20,000 Euros from the General and Horizontal Priorities PA.

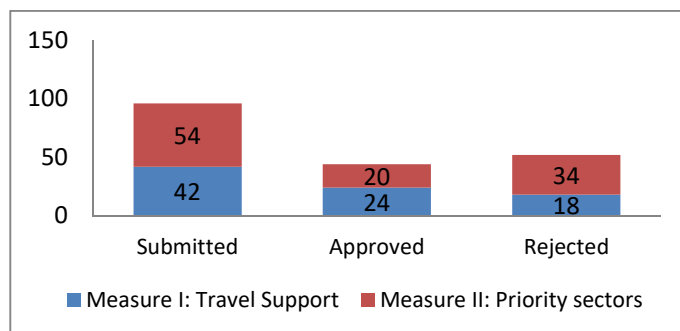
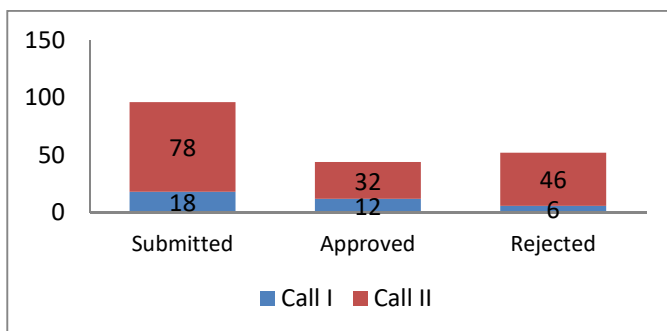
**Results of the open call for proposals**

Applications received, approved and rejected in 2014:

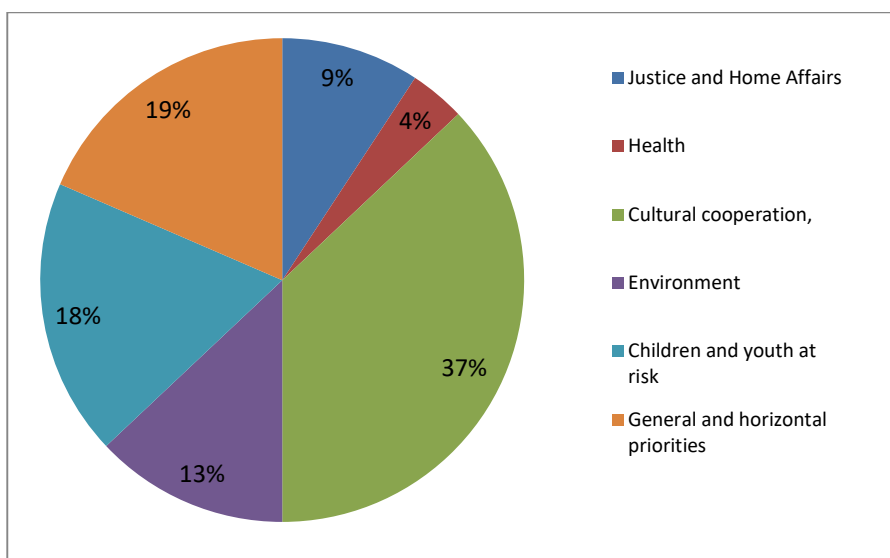
| 2014    | Total | Approved | Rejected |
|---------|-------|----------|----------|
|         | 96    | 44       | 52       |
| Call I  | 18    | 12       | 6        |
| Call II | 78    | 32       | 46       |



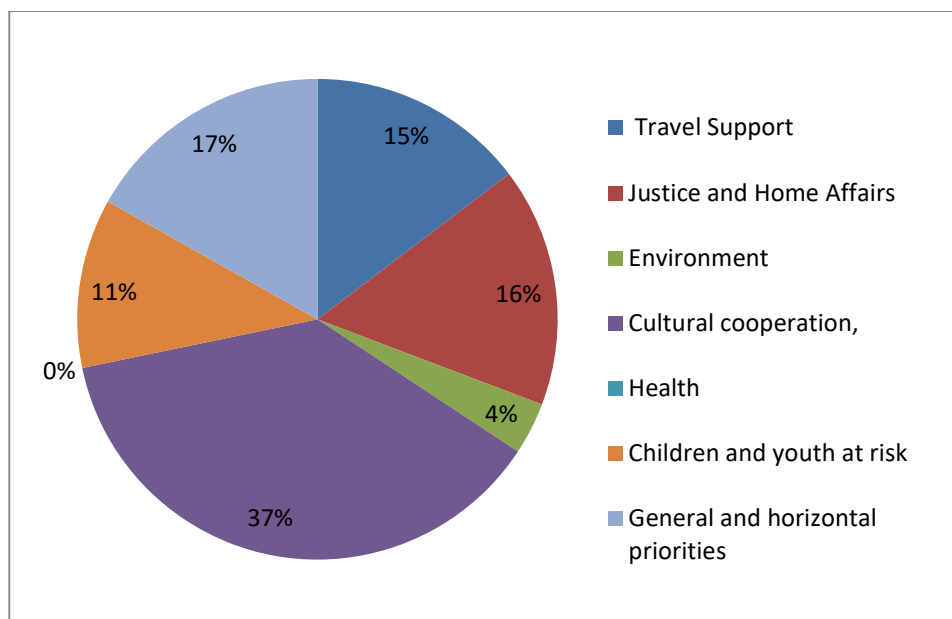
Number of applications received, approved and rejected by Call and Measure:



Number of applications received by priority sectors:



Applications approved – budget distribution on priority sectors:



A list of activities approved under the call is presented (all the applications received in 2013 and 2014) in **Attachment 12**.

#### **Conclusions:**

- The call has raised a good level of interest from applicants, with approximately **100 applications** received in 2014 (77 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Call); generally, applicants from the NGOs sector have been more active, as public institutions are confronted with a limited capacity for implementing this type of activities.
- A general low quality level of applications received continues to be an issue; the NFP is conducting a thorough process of evaluation and selection in order to ensure an appropriate level of quality, relevance and the premises for the achievement of results.
- Applications received have targeted a diverse range of sectors, with a higher interest demonstrated in the field of cultural cooperation, but also of children and youth at risk and horizontal priorities.
- Generally, applications are limited in terms of budget and scope, financing mainly travel expenditure.

However, larger activities have also been financed in 2014 through the call, such as:

- the Conference „Sustainable and Ethical Public Procurement – exploring the successful Norway model of public procurement and identifying for promoting similar experiences in Romania”, developed by the Institute for Public Policy, a well-known Romanian NGO in the field of good governance, in partnership with International Development Norway (17,556 €)
- Bilateral conference and workshops on rare diseases organised by Romanian Prader Willi Association and Frambu of Norway (23,762€)

Also, activities with significant impact have been selected for financing during 2014, to be implemented in 2015:

- a workshop on Corruption and economic crime investigation, organized by the National Anticorruption Directorate of Romanian and OKOKRIM of Norway (35,574 €)
- the initiative of the Romanian Film Promotion Association and The Norwegian Film Institute for promoting cultural cooperation, diversity, dialogue and cultural exchange between Romania and

Norway through the Norwegian arts presence at TIFF 2015. TIFF is the most important international film festival in Romania, organized each year in Cluj-Napoca (55,418 €)

### ***Predefined activities***

Regarding **predefined activities**, the NFP has proactively informed the POs and other relevant public entities in order to develop such initiatives. The Norwegian Embassy in Bucharest has had a very important contribution in this respect. During the semi-annual meeting of December 2014, a number of such activities have been discussed and agreed.

The list of current predefined activities under the bilateral fund at national level is presented in **Attachment 12** and it has been approved by the NFP and FMO in the semi-annual meeting from December 2014.

### ***Implementation of funds for bilateral relations at programme level***

The progress in the implementation of programme level bilateral funds is consistent with the general progress of the programmes. As 2014 was period for implementing calls for proposals, mainly Measure A activities (establishment of partnerships) have been implemented so far. Measure B activities are expected to take place beginning with 2015.

#### **Implementation of bilateral funds at programme level:**

| <b>Programme title/number</b>   | <b>Total budget<br/>(with cofinancing)</b> | <b>Paid</b> | <b>Implementation</b>  |
|---|--|-------------|--|
| RO02 - Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services                              | 352,941                                    | 10,560      | One activity already implemented: match making seminar   |
| RO03 - Environmental monitoring and integrated planning and control,    | 206,875                                    | 0           | No activities implemented.   |
| RO04 - Reduction of Hazardous Substances                                | 235,294                                    | 7,026       | One activity already implemented: match making seminar   |
| RO05 - Energy Efficiency  | 141,176                                    | 0           | No activities implemented. No application received under the first call.   |
| RO06 - Renewable Energy   | 216,529                                    | 32,432      | Three activities already implemented: seed money for projects development in Norway, seed money for projects development in Iceland, match making event  |
| RO07 - Adaptation to Climate Change                                     | 173,240                                    | 0           | -  |
| RO09 – NGO Fund   | 544,950                                    |             | The 2nd Call for proposals for seed money facility was launched in Dec. 2013, with a deadline for submission of proposals on February 20, 2014. 31 contracts have been signed and implemented by Romanian organisations with a partnership agreement from a donorstate entity. |
| RO 10 - Children and Youth at Risk and Local and Regional Initiatives   | 476,471                                    | 13,958      | The revised plan for the use of the fund for bilateral relations has to be approved by the FMO. Two activities already implemented: seed money for projects development, match-making workshop.  |
| RO11 - Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Promoting Work-Life Balance    | 80,000                                     | 0           | No activities implemented.   |
| RO12 - Conservation and Revitalisation of Cultural and Natural Heritage | 100,000                                    | 57,426      | Implementation of Measure A through 33 projects – search for partners for donor partnership projects, development of such  |

|  |                  |                 |  |
|--|------------------|-----------------|--|
|  |                  |                 | partnerships and preparation of applications.  |
| RO13 - Promotion of Diversity in Culture and Arts      | 84,232           | 71,359          | Implementation of Measure A through 56 projects – search for partners for donor partnership projects, development of such partnerships and preparation of applications.  |
| RO14 - Research within priority sectors                | 352,942          | 18,178          | Under measure A, one Info Day and one Brokerage event were held in Romania in December 2013 in relation to the launched Call for proposals. Only 4 applications for the reimbursement of projects preparation costs were received.   |
| RO15 - Scholarships                                    | 86,000           | 33,646          | An amount of 33 646 Euro has been used from the bilateral funds (meaning 39.12%) for Preparatory Visits (23 projects) and contact seminar.   |
| RO17 – Green Industry Innovation                       | 445,500          | -               | 12 applications for Travel Support were received in relation to the 2nd Call, out of which 11 were approved by Innovation Norway. In addition 12 Travel Support grants have been approved for participation in the media event in June and for the CSR seminar in October. |
| RO18 - Capacity Building and Institutional Cooperation | 175,765          | 0               | Five applications received. Three applications under evaluation. Two applications accepted for financing (8240 Euro).  |
| RO19 - Public Health Initiatives                       | 398,894          | 0               | The plan for the use of the fund for bilateral relations is not yet approved by the FMO. It has to be revised in accordance with the new allocated budget.   |
| RO20 - Domestic and Gender-based Violence              | 70,588           | 0               | Two activities implemented - total budget of 2,335 Euro.   |
| RO21 - Schengen Cooperation                            | 94,215           | 0               | The plan for the use of the fund for bilateral relations is not yet agreed with the partners.  |
| RO23 - Correctional Services                           | 200,000          | 0               | Measure B - Four activities implemented with a total budget of 22905 Euro.   |
| RO24 - Judicial Capacity                               | 300,000          | 0               | Measure B - One activity implemented - budget of 1.992 Euro.   |
| RO25 – Poverty Alleviation                             | 300,000          | -               | -  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>5,035,612</b> | <b>244,586*</b> |  |

\* payments available only for Programmes with POs from the Beneficiary State

### **Conclusion:**

The current level of implementation of the bilateral funds at programme level is relatively low, due mainly to difficulties in identifying donor state entities to be involved in bilateral activities as well as the general progress of the programmes.

The total amount of programme level bilateral funds under Romanian programmes is **4,669,465 euros grant (5,035,612 Euros with national cofinancing)**, a very high amount, considering the type of activities to be supported (limited in scope and budget).

### **Donor partnership projects**

Currently, 22 of a total of 39 predefined projects are Donor Partnership Projects. A number of 72 donor partnership projects have been selected as a result of calls for proposals conducted in 2014.

The results of donor partnership projects may be assessed only after implementation.

## **3 REPORTING ON PROGRAMMES**

### **3.1 Overview of Programme status**

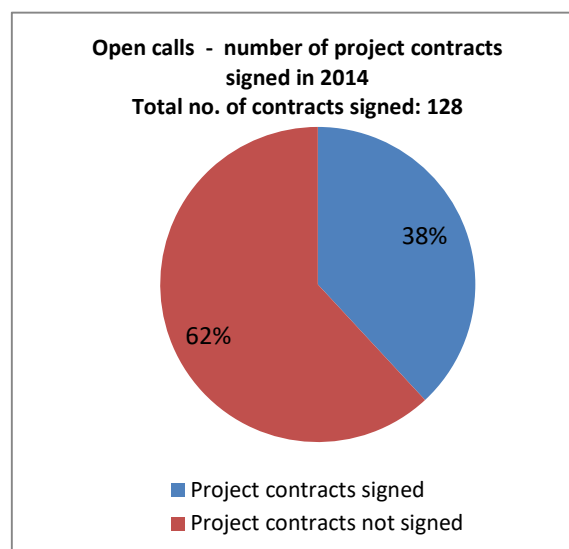
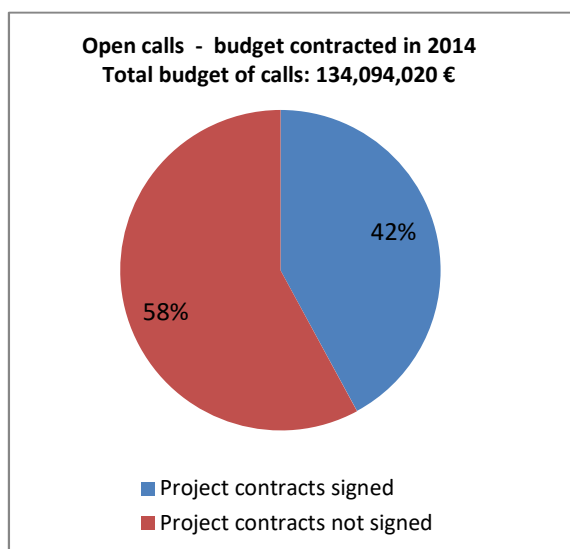
The process of Programmes approval and signing of Programme Agreements was finalized in 2014 and the programmes have started the implementation phase.

During 2014, the main activity at level of Programmes was the preparation and carrying-out of **calls for proposals**:

- 28 calls for proposals in 13 programmes in a total amount of 134,094,020 Euros were undertaken in 2014;
- 8 of them have been finalised (all project contracts signed) or in advanced stage of finalisation by the end of the year;
- A total amount of **56,435,680 euros** was awarded to **128 contracted projects** as a result of calls for proposals by the end of 2014.

The call under Programme RO05 has been cancelled by the PO, due to delays occurred in the conclusion of results; a second call is under preparation. Significant delays in the launching of calls and evaluation of applications occurred in the case of Programmes RO02 – Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services and RO04 – Reduction of Hazardous Substances. A longer than expected evaluation and selection process was registered under Programmes RO20 - Domestic and Gender-Based Violence and RO11 - Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Promoting Work-Life Balance. Programme RO10 – Children and Youth at Risk also faced a long period for evaluation, selection and contracting, due to both the large number of applications received as well as complexity of the selection and contracting processes (especially those involving local authorities).

Results of calls for proposals in 2014:

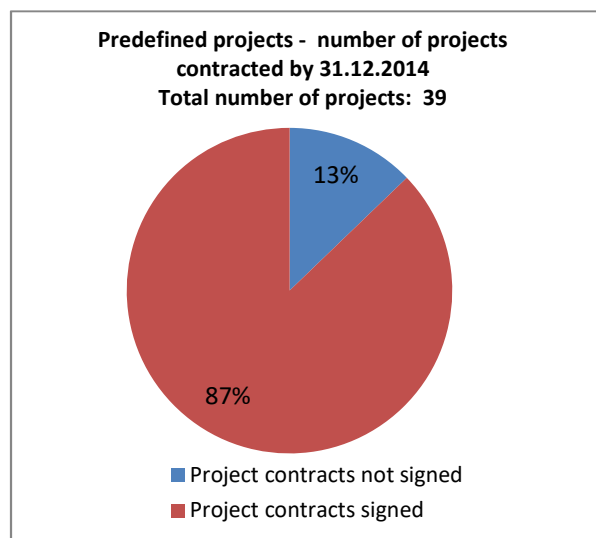
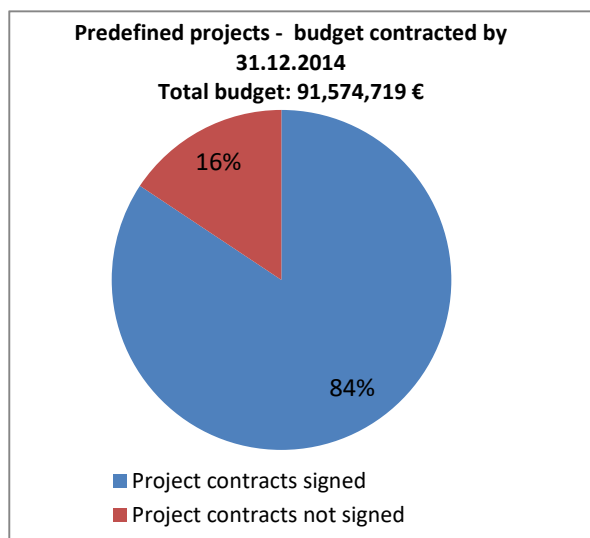


An overview of calls for proposals is presented in **Attachment 9**.



Regarding **predefined projects**:

- A total number of **39 predefined projects** are currently approved under the Romanian programmes, in total amount of **91,574,719 Euros**.
- All predefined projects were under implementation in 2014, with various levels of progress, with the exception of two projects under the programmes RO02 and RO07, to be contracted at the beginning of 2015.



An overview of predefined projects is presented in **Attachment 10**.

In terms of **financial implementation** of the programmes, at the end of 2014, disbursements made by Donors have reached the level of approximately 30%. The level payments made within Programmes reached **44%** of the total amounts received (disbursed by Donors) and **13%** of the total budget. An overview of disbursements and payments at the level of all Programmes is presented in **Attachment 11**.

**Reallocation**

Considering the provisions of the Regulations related to the deadline for modifications in budgetary appropriations for Programmes and the analysis of both needs and absorption capacity, in October 2014 a reallocation was agreed as follows:

| Programme   | Amount reallocated |
|---|--------------------|
| RO18 – Capacity Building and Institutional Cooperation      | - 1,000,000 Eur    |
| RO01 – Technical Assistance                                 | - 2,000,000 Eur    |
| RO07 – Adaptation to Climate Change                         | - 683,000 Eur      |
| RO12 – Conservation and revitalisation of cultural heritage | + 1,683,000 Eur    |
| RO19 – Public Health Initiatives                            | + 1,500,000 Eur    |
| RO15 - Scholarships   | + 500,000 Eur      |

### *Individual Programme summaries*

#### **RO02/PA2 Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services**

**Programme Operator:** Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests

**Donor Programme Partner:** Norwegian Environment Agency

The programme objective, outcomes and outputs reflect the goals and priorities of the recent strategies and actions plans at European and national level. The outcomes and outputs were selected based on Romania's most stringent needs in the biodiversity field, in order to fill the gap between the ecosystem services (knowledge, information and awareness necessity) and the fragmentation of the ecosystems.

OUTCOME 1 - For the outcome "Increased awareness of and education in biodiversity and ecosystem services, including awareness of and education in the linkage between biodiversity and climate change, and economic valuation of ecosystems" the total eligible budget is €4,000,000 with €3,400,000 EEA/Norway Grant and €600,000 National co-financing.

The programme comprises within the Outcome 1 a predefined project "Demonstrating and promoting natural values to support decision-making in Romania (Nature4Decision-making – N4D)" having as Project Promoter the National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) and the Project Partners: Norwegian Institute for Nature Research (NINA), WWF Romania and Romanian Space Agency (ROSA). The total eligible budget for the predefined project is 3,172,969 Euro and the project will include activities such as:

- A methodology to assess ecosystems and their services
- Analysis, harmonization and calibration of existing data
- Identification/analysis of the existing ecosystems data
- Data management for the analysis and mapping of ecosystems
- Supply of socio-economic data
- Supply of geo-spatial data

The implementation of the predefined project "Demonstrating and promoting natural values to support decision-making in Romania (Nature4Decision-making – N4D)" did not started yet, since the contract is about to be signed on February 2015. The project is going to be evaluated and approved by external auditors from the Bucharest University on January 2015.

OUTCOME 2 – For the outcome "Avoided fragmentation of ecosystems" the total eligible budget is €7,770,214 with €6,604,682 EEA/Norway Grant and €1,165,532 National co-financing.

OUTCOME 3 – "Improved integration of biodiversity considerations in sectorial policies and legislation" the total eligible budget is €4,400,000 with €3,740,000 EEA/Norway Grant and €660,000 National co-financing.

The management costs for this programme are €863,013 and the costs incurred were on the conference for launching of the programme, acquisition of the dedicated website of the programmes [www.eeagrantsmediu.ro](http://www.eeagrantsmediu.ro), amortization of equipment, phone bills and the expenses for two delegates at the 1st Programme Operator and Donor Programme Partner Workshop in Brussels between 2nd and 4th of December 2014.

Regarding the fund dedicated for bilateral relations is €352,941, out of which 300,000 Euro represents the financial contribution from the EEA Financial Mechanism and 52,941 Euro represents the national co-financing, the text call was approved by FMO on 12 September however it was not relevant to launch the calls and no calls were launched on bilateral funds on 2014, it is forecasted to launch measure B in 2015.

The calls for submitting financing applications were launched late, on 28th of August 2014, with deadline submission date 28th October 2014, extended to 12th of November, furthermore the evaluation process had not started by the end of the year.

There were submitted 25 Project Proposals within calls 1 – 3:

- 16 Project proposals on CALL FOR PROPOSALS NO. 1: "STUDIES AND TRAINING REGARDING PROTECTED AREAS' NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS CONTRIBUTION TO MAIN ECONOMIC SECTORS" – eligible applicants were public authorities, and non-governmental organisations.
- 3 Project proposals on CALL FOR PROPOSALS NO. 2: "INCREASED CAPACITY IN MANAGING AND MONITORING ECOLOGICAL CORRIDORS" - eligible applicants were public authorities
- 6 Project proposals on CALL FOR PROPOSALS NO. 3: "LARGE ECOSYSTEMS RESTORATION SCHEME" - eligible applicants were public authorities

The applications are going to be evaluated by external evaluators, going through administrative and eligibility appraisal as a first phase with possibility for appeal followed by the technical evaluation of the project. At this moment the first phase of evaluation is ongoing, the clarifications were transmitted to the Project Promoters and the external evaluators were informed regarding the received documents.

RISKS - One aspect that is considered to be threatening to the predefined project "Demonstrating and promoting natural values to support decision-making in Romania (Nature4Decision-making – N4D)" is the postponement of the advance payment to the project promoter. Still, the PO has already submitted to the Ministry of Public Finance the multi-annual budgetary proposal for the programme.

There were several changes (HR, structural, etc.) in the ministry during the 2014, which had a negative impact on the preparation and implementation of the programme and therefore the programme faces delays. Considering the findings and recommendations of the audit mission of the Audit Authority the OP updated the procedures, the management control system and the structure of the implementation team was made according to the recommendation report. It comprises the financial mechanism coordinator, the programme manager, one reporting officer, one financial manager, five financial experts, one procurement officer, two technical experts, one officer dealing with payment requests, one information and publicity officer and one legal adviser. Within this team only two persons are working 100% for EEA grants financial mechanism. The rest of the unit is a support team within the ministry.

The frequent changes in the political sphere triggers structural changes in the PO's institutional organization, causing delays in the management of the programme.

### **RO03/PA3 Environmental Monitoring and Integrated Planning and Control**

**Programme Operator:** National Focal Point

The outcome of the Programme is „Strengthened capacity of environmental authorities in relation to integrated planning and control". The project entered into implementation phase in February 2014. During the evaluation and contracting of the pre-defined project, additional measures were taken to avoid double funding. Following consultations to avoid double financing, the initial area established for production of a detailed Terrain Model, new maps and orthophotos for about 50 000 sqkm in the southern part of Romania, the Danube river Including Areas along the entire Danube Delta, was replaced with the six counties area comprising: Bihor, Arad, Hunedoara, Alba, Mures and Harghita, including high-risk flood zone (the area from the border with the Republic of Hungary in Arad and Bihor). Indicators have not been modified, the results remained the same. The new versions of Annex I and Annex II to the Programme Agreement entered into force on the 17/09/2014.

Given the delays in achieving the main activities, the outputs set out in the programme proposal and respectively of the predefined project which implements this programme, no significant results were recorded in the reporting period. The main achievements are related to the completion of technical documentation for launching the procurement procedures in collaboration with project partners from donor countries.

The Updated Work plan confirms some risks addressed in the programme proposal regarding **procurement procedure**: the procedure for the submission of appeals according to the public procurement legislation and **technical conditions**: flyover advice, weather conditions (rain, fog, snow). Initial planning was modified due to arising risks that have delayed implementation phases. The risks were mostly related to Administrative changes and financial mechanism put in place at national level for

the management of the funds which became more complicated in 2014, due to a radical change imposed by the Ministry of Public Finances to the National Treasury and to all public institutions using the accounts in the Treasury, change that it was implemented in the middle of the year (July 2014).

The Norwegian and Icelandic project partners visited the Romanian partner in August 2014 in order to prepare the tender documentation. This is the first time Project Promoter launches such a tenders and is also the first time Romania produces digital maps so, they need the experience and collaboration of their donors partners. In December 2014, technical specifications were completed. After translated in English, were sent by Romanian side for no objection to Project Donors Partners. The procurement procedures are ready to be launched after the Programme Operator received no objection on technical specifications from them which will be at the beginning of 2015. In the reporting period, several technical meetings between the Programme Operator, Programme Promoters and the Project Donors Partners took place and there is an excellent cooperation among the four institutions, which led to enhancing the bilateral relations through sharing experience and knowledge. All decisions regarding the changes that have occurred in the predefined project which implements the programme were taken in consultation with project partners from donor countries.

The indicator set to verify the progress of bilateral cooperation within the programme, which is „Number of project partnership agreements in the beneficiary public sector” was achieved in February 2014, in the reporting period, when the Partnership Agreement between Project Promoter and the Project Donors Partners was signed. In addition, besides the meetings mentioned before, there is a strong cooperation process established between the Programme Operator and the Project Promoter and PDPs; the PDPs had a valuable contribution to draw a good quality Programme Proposal, they reacted promptly whenever key documents had to be circulated for comments and suggestions. Until now, no developments regarding the implementation of the Fund for bilateral relations at programme level were made.

The Programme Operator and the Project Promoter have postponed the activities funded from Bilateral funds such as trainings /study visits/workshops activity for 2015 and some activity shall be done also in 2016.

#### **RO04/PA4 Reduction of Hazardous Substances**

**Programme Operator:** Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests

**Donor Programme Partner:** Norwegian Environment Agency

The Programme RO04 Reduction of hazardous substances aimed at correlating the Romanian legislation to the European directives through insuring a legislative framework for applying European legislation in Romania. The objective of the programme is to prevent injury and adverse environmental effects caused by chemicals and hazardous waste. Total eligible budget is €11,764,706 (85% grant €10,000,000 and 15% co-financing €1,764,706).

For the outcome “Strengthened capacity to enforce and implement EU chemicals and hazardous waste legislation” the total eligible budget is €8,334,142 and for the outcome “Improved monitoring of hazardous substances in the environment” the programme comprises a predefined project “Towards a proper aquatic environment” implemented by National Administration Romanian Waters with a total budget of €2,341,039. The overall objective of the project is to increase the knowledge and awareness in the field of water policy by expanding the actual monitoring activity based on the new European requirements and it was approved on 5 September 2014. The implementation of the project started on 1 October 2014 and the contract was signed on 19 September by National Administration Romanian Waters and on 25.11.2014 by the Programme Operator. The Project Partner is the Norwegian Environment Agency (NEA). One aspect that is considered to be threatening to the predefined project “Towards a proper aquatic environment” is the postponement of the advance payment to the project promoter. Still, the PO has already submitted to the Ministry of Public Finance the multi-annual budgetary proposal for the programme.

The management costs for this programme are €669,968 and the costs incurred so far were on the conference for launching of the programme, acquisition of the dedicated website of the programmes [www.eegrantsmediu.ro](http://www.eegrantsmediu.ro), amortization of equipment, phone bills and the expenses for two delegates at the 1st Programme Operator and Donor Programme Partner Workshop in Brussels.

The fund dedicated for bilateral relations is €235,294, the text call was approved by FMO on 12 September however it was not relevant to launch the calls and no calls were launched on bilateral funds on 2014, it is forecasted to launch measure B in 2015.

There were several changes (HR, structural, etc.) in the ministry during the 2014, which had a negative impact on the preparation and implementation of the programme and therefore the programme faces delays. Considering the findings and recommendations of the audit mission of the Audit Authority the PO updated the procedures, the management control system and the structure of the implementation team was made according to the recommendation report. It comprises the financial mechanism coordinator, the programme manager, one reporting officer, one financial manager, five financial experts, one procurement officer, two technical experts, one officer dealing with payment requests, one information and publicity officer and one legal adviser. Within this team only two persons are working 100% for EEA grants financial mechanism. The rest of the unit is a support team within the ministry. The frequent changes in the political sphere triggers structural changes in the PO's institutional organization, causing delays in the management of the programme. However this can be considered challenging as it is desired to have more available human resources working at the programme implementation level and a new coordination of the institution might set EEA grants as top priority and allocate the necessary resources for its optimal functioning.

The calls for submitting financing applications were launched late, on 5 September, with deadline submission date 5 November 2016, extended to 17 November. There were two calls launched, with eligible applicants public bodies:

1. CALL FOR PROPOSALS NO. 1: "DECISION-MAKING SUPPORTING INSTRUMENTS", with available budget of 7.145.770 euro. Minimum and maximum grant amount per project. The minimum value of the grant applied for is Euro 1,000,000 and the maximum value is Euro 1,500,000.
2. CALL FOR PROPOSALS NO. 2: "TRAINING AND AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS", with available budget 1.188.372 euro. Minimum and maximum grant amount per project: the minimum value of the grant applied for is Euro 250,000 and the maximum value is Euro 500,000.

Furthermore the evaluation process had not started by the end of the year, hence the short period left for the implementation of the projects and the risk of not achieving the programme indicators. The applications are going to be evaluated by external evaluators, going through administrative and eligibility appraisal as a first phase with possibility for appeal followed by the technical evaluation of the project.

### **RO05/PA5 Energy Efficiency**

**Programme Operator:** Ministry of Economy, Commerce and Tourism

The Programme is in implementation, however, after the 1st call for proposals launched in March 2014 no financing contracts for the selected projects were signed, and the entire grant amount was reported to the 2nd call for proposals planned to be launched in the 1st trimester of 2015. All documents related to this are completed and are in process of internal approval.

Following the first call of proposals, 5 applications were submitted to the PO, 4 projects were selected for financing, but no projects were financed, due to internal reorganization within the Ministry of Economy, problems encountered in the selection process with disrespect of the regulation, facts observed in the monitoring visits from FMO and external audit and throughout the 4 months period following the appraisal. An official communication was sent to NFC and FMO explaining the situation and the reasons that led to this. Mainly this occurred because of the repeated changes in the OP management level, internal bureaucracy, slow decision making in OP departments, independent from

the OP PIU and general instability and decision level In the next period a 2nd call will be launched and the projects in this phase will contribute to the outcome and outputs of the programme.

The outcomes for this past year were not met, due to the fact that the PO has no project in implementation stage, and there are made preparations for a second call to be launched. The programme agreement was modified so this second call could be launched on a de minimis scheme, rather than regional scheme as the previous call was launched.

Regarding the risks, there is a high risk that the programme does not achieve its expected outcomes, due to the fact that at this time the second call is still not launched and the implementation period is considerably reduced. More, the risk assessment is not favourable for the OP or the second call, because the main problems concerning the PO management are still occurring. However, the PO tried to have a better approach in this call, through the diminishing of the grants and outcomes for the projects so the SMEs could apply more easily.

In the reporting period the PO management tried to raise awareness about the financing opportunities and attract support from national interested actors, used the dissemination events to spread information, but due to the problems mentioned above, along with inexperienced staff, the delays in approving the ministry's procurement annual plan in order to conclude the externalization of some areas of the management, the program blocked several times and this is a risk that the situation can happen again. The mitigation plan for the 2nd call consists of including in all the stages of the program a higher number of external experts as an added value to the existent staff.

The 1st call for proposals was opened between 10th of March and 9th of May 2014. At the end of the call 5 applications were received, 4 applications were selected by the Selection Committee). The total grant amount for the projects selected was 2.180.000 euro.

Regarding the bilateral component of the programme, no requests were received in the 1st call, although information was also presented on this opportunity and several contacts were published on the PO webpage and in the presentations of the programme. Complementary actions are planned after the end of the 2nd call, in order to involve PP's in the activities and events to be organized.

The Communication plan was carried out as planned, information and publicity events were made for the first call of proposals – launching event in Bucharest on 10th of February 2014 – 120 participants, and three dissemination events in the country (Timisoara, 25th February – 70 participants, Iasi -3rd March – 70 participants , Cluj-Napoca – 28th February, 80 participants). Press releases were published on the ministry website and dedicated section for the programme and also they were sent to the local Chambers of Commerce, clusters, regional development agencies. For 2015 the Programme Operator has a procurement plan for a separate website for the programme, dedicated only to EEA Grants and RO 05.

A high risk was identified within the PO for the 2nd call also, due to insufficient and inexperienced staff, and as only solution is to include external experts on all the fields in order to perform a better management of the program (financial, appraisal, etc.). This would be the only solution in case the organizational changes continue and the instability of structural organization remains a constant.

### **RO06/PA06 - Renewable Energy**

**Programme Operator:** Environment Fund Administration

**Donor Programme Partners:** NVE (Norway), OS (Iceland)

During 2014, five grant contracts have been signed within the RO 06 Renewable energy programme (RONDINE), as follows:

- three economic operators for the hydropower component
- two local authorities for the geothermal component

The values set as targets for the outcomes and outputs are to be fulfilled by implementing the projects which the contracts have been signed for.

Taking into consideration that the amount allocated for the programme has not been completely used by signing the financing contracts, a series of pre-defined project proposals emerged, as presented below.

Regarding the bilateral relations, the Programme Operator organised two events under the measure A, in Norway (March 24-28, 2014) and Iceland (May 5-9, 2014), in order to facilitate the development of partnerships among entities from Romania and the Donor states. Four entities that participated at these events submitted applications within the open call and with three of them the Programme Operator signed financing contracts.

The Programme's expected outcomes and indicators are to be fulfilled during projects implementation.

The Programme's expected outputs are to be fulfilled during projects implementation.

Regarding the estimated quantitative bilateral indicators:

| Indicator   | Target | 2014 | Total achievement |
|---|--------|------|-------------------|
| Number of project partnership agreements in the beneficiary private sector  | 1      | 2    | 2                 |
| Number of project partnership agreements in the beneficiary public sector   | 1      | 1    | 1                 |
| Number of women involved in exchange visits between beneficiary and donor states  | 25     | 4    | 4                 |
| Number of men involved in exchange visits between beneficiary and donor states  | 25     | 27   | 27                |
| Number of joint (bilateral) articles published, written by persons from both an institutions in a beneficiary and donor state, published in a national or international publications, originated from a project financed by the programme | 2      | 0    | 0                 |

In 2014 two events organised under the Measure a – Seed money took place, as follows:

#### 1. Visiting NVE, Oslo & Trondheim

Period: 24 – 28 March 2014

Location: 24 – 25 March 2014 Oslo, Norway; 25 – 28 March 2014 Trondheim, Norway;

Participants: representatives of 5 economic operators, out of which 1 on his own expense;

Goals: Strengthening bilateral relations and developing partnerships with entities from Norway.

#### 2. Visiting OS, Reykjavik, Iceland

Period: 5 – 9 May 2014

Location: Reykjavík, Iceland

Participants: representatives of 3 economic operators and 2 local authorities;

Goals: Strengthening bilateral relations and developing partnerships with entities from Iceland.

Within the programme, there are 3 partnership agreements: 2 under the hydropower component and 1 under the geothermal component.

### RO07/PA7 Adaptation to Climate Change

#### Programme Operator: Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests

The programme aims to contribute to the implementation of the overall objectives of the EEA Financial Mechanism namely the reduction of economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area and to strengthen bilateral relations between the Donor States and Romania. The selected outcome and outputs of the Programme reflect the goals and priorities of the strategies and action plans at European

and National level and the most stringent needs regarding adaptation to climate change in Region 7 Center of Romania, in order to fill the existing gap in the degree of preparedness to a changing climate as well as level of awareness, education and administrative capacity regarding adaptation to climate change. The outcomes of the programme are developed strategies and measures for adapting to a changing climate and improved energy efficiency in buildings.

The Programme Agreement was signed in August 2014 and the pre-eligibility condition on the pre-defined project as specified in the Programme Agreement was considered to have been met in September 2014. The initial budget of the programme was €5,882,353 (85% grant which is €5,000,000 and 15% national co-financing €882,353). After reallocation, in October 2014, the budget has been decreased by €804,236 the current total budget of the programme is €5,078,116. Until December 2014 the PO has not modified the Annex 1 of the Programme Agreement in accordance with the provisions of MOU.

There were several changes (HR, structural, etc.) in the ministry during the 2014, which had a negative impact on the preparation and implementation of the programme and therefore the programme faces delays. Considering the findings and recommendations of the audit mission of the Audit Authority the OP updated the procedures, the management control system and the structure of the implementation team was made according to the recommendation report. It comprises the financial mechanism coordinator, the programme manager, one reporting officer, one financial manager, five financial experts, one procurement officer, two technical experts, one officer dealing with payment requests, one information and publicity officer and one legal adviser. Within this team only two persons are working 100% for EEA grants financial mechanism. The rest of the unit is a support team within the ministry. The frequent changes in the political sphere triggers structural changes in the PO's institutional organization, causing delays in the management of the programme. However this can be considered challenging as it is desired to have more available human resources working at the programme implementation level and a new coordination of the institution might set EEA grants as top priority and allocate the necessary resources for its optimal functioning.

Within the RO07 programme there is one predefined project "Green way to sustainable development" with total eligible budget of € 4,497,644 (85% grant € 3,822,997,51 euro and 15% co-financing € 674,646,62).

The partners in this project are The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities, KS, Norway, National Meteorological Administration, Sibiu Municipality, Brasov Municipality, Tg. Mures Municipality, "Lucian Blaga" University Sibiu. The current project proposal was transmitted to the PO on 4.11.2014 and it was positively appraised by an internal evaluation commission on 28.11.2014. The project aims at developing local local strategies, action plans and guidelines on adaptation to climate change for three municipalities, guidelines for adaptation to climate change at local level in four vulnerable sectors, guidelines for municipal adaptation to climate change strategy in one municipality, four meteorological studies aiming at supporting climate change adaptation plans at regional level, installing 10019 underground electric and communication cables in Sibiu Municipality, planting 30 trees in bus stations, elaborating one study for efficient traffic in Sibiu Municipality, adapting to climate change the office of the Agency for Environmental Protection Sibiu, covering three public institution buildings by the energy efficiency studies, educating 300 people regarding the adaptation to climate change and developing one training module and one post university course for specialists in adaptation to climate change.

The project focuses on adaptation to climate change at all levels, climate change effects affecting all sectors. The Project contributes to sustainable economic development by implementing pilot projects that will reduce human and material damage and loss in the transport and energy sectors and maintenance and rehabilitation costs in buildings. Using construction materials adapted to climate change will increase life cycle of the building thus reducing rehabilitation costs. The systems used in the building will reduce the operational costs both for the governmental building and for the kindergarten owned by the municipality. By setting the cables underground the Programme Operator prevent material and human damage and loss in extreme weather events, when the population needs to be evacuated.



Integration of social inclusion aspects in the adaptation to climate change will be addressed in all major outputs of the project: the training, the development of the 3 municipal strategies and the consultation process that will be undertaken for this purpose in the respective local communities, as well as in the pilot projects and the awareness and educational activities.

Existing research on climate change vulnerability tends to conclude that poor people are most vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change, due to their precarious socio-economic position which exacerbates their vulnerability to shocks, natural disasters or other emergency situations, limiting their adaptive capacities. In this context, a particularly vulnerable group in Romania is represented by the Roma population, 3.2% of the entire population of the country according to the 2011 census. A great majority of them live in poverty: improper housing, poor access to water and basic utilities, poor health and low and unstable income characterize their condition. At the same time, international researchers show that children are more vulnerable than adults to increased problems as an indirect and direct consequence of climate change. Several researches emphasize risks to public health and children's increased vulnerability to health problems as a result of climate change.

The contract is estimated to be signed in January 2015.

Regarding bilateral relations, the call text was approved by FMO on 12 September 2014, however too late to be launched and implemented therefore will have to be updated in 2015. During 02-03 December 2014 it took place the 1st Programme Operator and Donor Programme Partner Workshop in Brussels, favourable for strengthening relations with other countries, discussing on Annual Programme Report, Programme follow-up and information sharing, irregularities, bilateral cooperation and complementary action.

## **RO09/PA10 Funds for Non-Governmental Organizations**

**Programme Operator:** Civil Society Development Foundation

2014 was the year of signing contracts for projects selected under Round 1 as well as the year of launching the Calls for proposals and evaluation of project proposals received under Round 2.

First projects under the NGO Fund started in March 2014, and contracting period lasted for 7 months due to a significant reallocation received (from a cancelled Romanian Programme under EEA & Norway Grants) for funding projects on the reserve list, 6,330,000 euro that were added to the initial sum.

214 projects, out of which 28 benefitting of a partnership with a donor country, started implementation in 2014. They cover all relevant activities that are eligible under the NGO Fund, and, most importantly, some of them have as a unique opportunity of funding the NGO Fund, such as democracy, human rights, anticorruption, advocacy, think-tanks, networks and coalitions.

The EEA Grants are the most important donor in terms of general allocations for NGOs as well as in key areas such as human rights, democracy, welfare, advocacy, anticorruption, think-tanks, networks and coalitions, some of this areas having as unique funding opportunity the NGO Fund; more than that, strong partnerships with different important stakeholders at local, regional or national level develop through funded projects.

Romanian NGO Fund addresses all 10 of the specific **Outcomes**. Due to the fact that each project must be categorized in only one main outcome from the financial point of view there are 2 outcomes that do not represent a main (but a secondary) outcome in the projects, thus having less projects mainly addressing them, out of the total number of projects, respectively: Outcome 3 - Cross-sectorial partnerships developed, particularly with government organisations at local, regional and/or national level and Outcome 5 - Advocacy and watchdog role developed. The main reason is that these 2 outcomes represent methods which lead to fulfilling the other outcomes of the Programme.

In what concerns projects' contribution to **Programme indicators**, an analysis made only on projects proposed for funding under Round 1 show that already over 80% of the indicators will be over-achieved.

Risks were tackled proactively through a prevention policy, thus most risks were avoided. Particular risks in 2014 were related to workload and the number of projects that were signed, considering the reallocation of 6,330,000 euro for NGO Fund to cover the projects on the reserve list. Another specific risk was the short period of time available for launching and contracting projects in the Second Round. One of the solutions was to enlarge the team of grant officers and to develop the online platform thus facilitating the application process and decreasing the workload of the team. Also, for the Second Round a larger number of evaluators were contracted.

A risk that appeared in the reporting period is the changing of national legislation concerning procurement. In tackling the risk of poor implementation of specific procedures it is to be mentioned the good practice example of organising Project management and, respectively, financial management training with a common session concerning procurement rules for all project Promoters. This ensures the accurate application of procurement rules within the projects.

A change to the contract with FMO was made due to the reallocation of 6,330,000 euro for financing projects on the reserve list from Round 1 (from a cancelled Romanian Programme). Also funds from predefined projects were reallocated to support projects under the Second Call for Proposals.

Complementary actions in 2014 followed the outline as approved in July 2013 and also contained some added-value activities on hate speech topic, and contributed to ensuring the exchange of experience and good practices from both the transnational perspective (at the level of Fund Operators and promoters), and the national one (activities meant to bring know-how and useful, relevant knowledge for the national programme stakeholders, with focus on promoters and potential promoters). One of the major events organised in 2014 was the first edition of [Civil Society Forum from Central and Eastern Europe](#). Special focus on (no) hate speech theme continued to be present in the activities in 2014.

In 2014, most relevant progresses registered with regard to strengthening bilateral relations refer to the implementation of the second Call for proposal for seed money facility, support and assistance for projects financed under the NGO Fund with donor partners involved and also ensuring presence and involvement of donor countries' organizations/experts in the events organized over the reporting period (mainly the NGO Fest, the NGO Forum as referred under the Complementary section).

The **2<sup>nd</sup> Call for proposals for seed money facility** was officially launched in December 2013, with a deadline for submission of proposals on February 20, 2014. Out of the 44 registered proposals, 33 were recommended for being financed. In the end, **31 contracts have been signed and implemented** by Romanian organisations with a partnership agreement from a donor state entity.

## **RO10/PA11&12 Children and Youth at Risk and Local and Regional Initiatives to Reduce National Inequalities and to Promote Social Inclusion**

**Programme Operator:** The Romanian Social Development Fund

**Programme Partner:** Council of Europe

The programme implementation entered into force in 2014, PO closing all the 4 planned calls for proposals, appraising all the applications and starting to contract the approved projects. Out of the 105 projects estimated to be financed under the programme, PO contracted 39, all being under implementation and prepared for contracting other 7 projects.

Bearing in mind that the first contracted projects started the implementation in December and due to the slow progress of the pre-defined project, PO cannot document progress in the achievement of the programme outcomes and outputs, but based on the indicators of the contracted projects, PO estimates that there is no risk for not achieving the main programme targets. Also, PO estimates that the main outcomes regarding the Roma inclusion within the programme to be overcome. All of the 39 contracted projects are targeting, at list partially, Roma inclusion and, according to their indicators, the programme outcomes regarding Roma beneficiaries (children and young people) seem to be overcome already.

Out of the risks identified during the preparation and implementation of the Programme, the one considered having a major impact on the achievement of the programme outcomes is the risk of failure to complete all the funded projects, due to the short implementation period. To mitigate this risk, PO discussed with relevant stakeholders about the possibility to extend the deadline for the implementation of the financed projects and took some internal decisions to streamline the projects appraisal and contracting process.

Despite the efforts made by PO, the appraisal and contracting period took more than expected, only a third part of the projects being contracted in 2014. On the other hand, even the overall value of the projects approved under the first 3 call was higher than the calls budgets, due to the limited number of projects fulfilling the conditions to be approved, the reduced number of months for implementation leading to the adjustment of the projects budgets accordingly and considering the number of projects withdrawn/ contracts cancelled by PPs after selection/ approval (one major reason being the short duration of implementation and the adjustment of budget accordingly), around €3,500,000 of funds allocated to projects is estimated to remain un-contracted.

Based on the progress registered in the programme implementation, PO considers that an extension of the deadline for projects' implementation is absolutely necessary. The projects implementation period was limited by PO during the contracting process, but there is a risk for PPs to failure to complete all the planned activities in this short period. Also, in order to contract all the funds for re-granting, the PO identified 1-2 possible pre-defined projects directly connected to the objectives and outcomes of the programme and is intending to propose to the donors the funding of new predefined projects with nationwide approach and important impact.

PO faced serious problems in implementing the Plan for Bilateral Relations. Due to the low interest of the entities from the Donor states, only one of the 3 match making seminars planned were organized, and only 5 applications for seed money were submitted under the call for Measure (a). As a result, only about 4,850 euro were spent, out of the 120,000 allocated for Measure (a). On the other hand, out of the 418 applications received under the 4 calls for project proposals, only 19 (about 4.5%) were submitted in partnership with entities from the Donor states. Anyway, the results of the activities carried out by PO under the Plan for Bilateral Relations are visible, two of these applications being developed with the seed money support provided by OP, and 5 being submitted in partnership with entities from the Donor states participated at the match making seminar.

At the end of 2014, a new version of the Plan for Bilateral Relations was submitted and approved by FMO, but PO still considers a high risk not to be able to disburse the 100,000 Euro allocated for seed money under Measure (b). In order to mitigate this risk, PO started to promote and to organize consultations with PPs on the documents of the call for Measure (b), in order to adapt it to the needs and expectations of potential beneficiaries. Also, another option considered by PO is not to limit (at one) the number of financing requests for one applicant, and to allow two successive grants.

### **RO11/PA14 Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Promoting Work-Life Balance**

**Programme Operator:** Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly People

During 2014 (from the 31<sup>st</sup> of March to the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July) the call for projects were launched (the conditions in the programme proposal contains one call to be open, according to the one outcome of the programme).

27 applications were submitted under the call, requesting approximately 1.7 times the available budget. However, 5 from the total number of the submitted applications failed to meet the formal and eligibility requirements. The 22 projects were technically evaluated by two independent experts. The meeting of the Selection Committee was organized on 4<sup>th</sup> of December 2014 and the first 14 projects were recommended for funding, due to the available budget. All the projects submitted for approval within the selection committee were approved within the meeting.

At Programme level, out of the 14 proposals selected **1 project involved partners** from the Donor States (Norway). However, all of the project promoters included in their project proposals bilateral activities to be carried on during the implementation of the programme.

Results of the call: 27 applications were submitted, requesting 7.290.765 EUR; 15 applications were subject of further clarifications during the administrative and eligibility check. 5 applications failed to meet the requirements stated in the Applicant's guide; 3 appeals were received by the PO; 22 project proposals qualified for the technical and financial evaluation stage, and 14 were proposed to be financed.

In what regards the geographic distribution of the projects, there will be set up a daycare center financed through the programme in each of the 8 development regions in Romania:

- Bucharest – Ilfov => 4 projects (3 in district 3, and 1 submitted by the Social Assistance Directorate of Bucharest);
- South East => county of Tulcea and county of Vrancea
- South Muntenia => City of Băicoi
- South West => City of Orsova
- West => Caras Severin County
- Center => City of Reghin and City of Tarnaveni
- North West => City of Baia Mare and City of Seini
- North East => City of Iasi

For the bilateral activities under measure A, no expenses were incurred. At the moment the programme operator is working on designing new activities with a bilateral component to effectively spend the money initially destined for measure A.

Aside from this, all 14 selected projects have included in the project form bilateral activities to be implemented under measure B.

Given the fact the evaluation period took longer than initially planned, the grants initially submitted by the PPs need to be adapted in the next period, this being the major deviation in the programme, especially considering the public procurement issue. This aspect is detailed in the table below

| Description of risk  | Likelihood | Consequence   | Mitigation planned  |
|--|------------|---|---|
| Inability of the PPs (local authorities to fully include the gender mainstreaming policy on the overall project) | 2 Possible | The projects could focus only on the work-life balance and overlook the gender mainstreaming aspect   | Continuous monitoring of the awareness activities by establishing a communication process with a monitoring expert within the PO establishing a procedure by which the PO can assist the PP in developing the gender mainstreaming related activities |
| Low interest of the PPs or of the partners in the Donor countries  | 3 Likely   | The bilateral outcome of the programme could not be reached in an adequate manner, and the projects could have a less than satisfactory transnational dimension | The PO could develop certain communication channels and activities in order to facilitate and stimulate the bilateral activities.   |
| Risks related to the public procurement issues.  | 3 likely   | Considerable delays in the implementation of the projects   | The documentation for procurements that are over 150.000 euros will be checked by the Programme Operator in an ex ante manner.  |

## RO12/PA16 Conservation and Revitalisation of Cultural and Natural Heritage

**Programme Operator:** Ministry of Culture

**Donor Programme Partner:** Directorate for Cultural Heritage in Norway

During 2014 three calls for projects were launched (Call for large projects, Small grant scheme, Call for bilateral actions). Under the Call for large projects 186 applications were submitted, requesting 24,3 times the available budget. However 69% from the total number of submitted applications failed to meet the formal and eligibility requirements and only 42 projects which qualified for the technical and financial evaluation received a score of at least 70 points. The meeting of the Selection Committee was organized on 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2014 and the first 7 projects were recommended for funding, within the available budget. Given the FMO decision to supplement the budget of the Programme with 1.683.601 Euro, the first 2 large projects from the reserve list are also financed.

The Small grant scheme was open between January 6 – April 25. Under this call 132 applications were submitted, requesting 7,7 times the available budget. 80% from the total number of submitted applications failed to meet the formal and eligibility criteria. Thus, only 26 project proposals qualified for the technical and financial evaluation stage, but only 18 received a score of at least 70 points. The meeting of the Selection Committee for the Small Grant Scheme was organized on 28<sup>th</sup> of January 2015.

The bilateral actions under the Programme (1 call for project launched in 2013 and 1 call implemented in 2014) generated expenses amounting to 41.053 Euro for financing 33 partnership actions. At Programme level, out of the 318 project proposals submitted (both large projects and small grants) **65 involved project partners** from the Donor States (20,4%). Most of the organizations interested in developing cultural projects with Romanian operators were from Norway (58 entities), while the rest of the donor partnership projects involved the other 2 Donor States (6 organizations from Iceland and 1 organization from Lichtenstein). Thus, the bilateral indicators at Programme level (25 project partnership agreements) were far exceeded during 2014. The remaining budget under the Bilateral Fund will be spent for networking, exchange, sharing and transfer of knowledge and best practices between Project promoters and entities in the Donor States (measure B) and also through activities implemented by the PO and the Donor Programme Partner.

In 2014 the PO implemented one complementary action by organizing in May a seminar dedicated to best practices in project evaluation. The event was attended by the independent experts selected for evaluating the projects submitted under the Programme and also by representatives of POs from Poland, Lithuania and Latvia, who shared their experience in selecting the projects financed under PA 16 (56 participants).

In order to assist potential applicants and promote EEA Financial Mechanism and PA16/RO12 Programme, the PO organized information seminars in 7 of the 8 development regions of Romania. The seminars were attended by over 700 potential applicants, representatives of public entities, NGOs, religious organizations and associations, higher education institutions and research institutes.

During 2014 the PO constantly monitored the implementation of the predefined project, by attending the launching event and verifying the 2 progress interim reports submitted by the project promoter, ASTRA Museum - Sibiu.

The outcomes of the programme will be achieved through the outputs set in the Programme Agreement. During 2014 the activities implemented by the promoter of the predefined project contributed towards Outcome 1. *Cultural heritage restored, renovated and protected*. The second outcome of the Programme - *Local communities further developed and economically sustainable livelihoods established through the revitalisation of cultural and natural heritage* will be achieved mostly through the implementation of the small projects, which will be contracted in 2015.

During 2014 Astra Museum launched the project and started the works for the PAMM - Multicultural Museum Pavilion; restored 15 cultural items, including the Roma household and horse mill; prepared the thematic plan of the permanent and temporary exhibition; organized the study visit to Norway and conducted a part of the research regarding the cultural heritage of minorities.

The PO structured the risk categories concerning project promoters and developed mitigation measures for each type. Thus, the main types of risks the PO will closely monitor during project implementation are: 1. Risks related to public procurement procedures; 2. Financial risks; 3. Risks related to the implementation of projects (failing to reach the objectives, improper work execution, purchase of equipment with poor features/performance, etc.). One major risk related to projects involving restoration works is the eligibility period which might not be sufficient for completing all the planned activities.

There were no major deviations from the plan during this reporting period.

Following the proposal sent by FMC, dated 22 October 2014, Brussels, which suggested certain amendments to Annex B to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway and the Government of Romania, including the supplementation of the amount allocated to PA16/RO12 Programme – *Conservation and revitalization of cultural and natural heritage* with 1.683.601 Euro, the PO proposed the additional funds to be allocated to Outcome 1 - Cultural heritage conserved, restored, renovated and protected. Also, the PO proposed to the FMO and NFP the removal of 1 Output indicator related to the second outcome, namely the Output - Natural heritage sites protected or revitalized

Under the calls for bilateral actions (1 launched in 2013 and the second in 2014), 41.053 euro were spent to finance 33 partnership actions. The immediate result of these contracts was the development of 18 donor partnership projects, submitted under the Call for large projects and the Small grant scheme.

### **RO13/PA17 Promotion of Diversity in Culture and Arts within the European Cultural Heritage**

**Programme Operator:** Ministry of Culture

**Donor Programme Partner:** Arts Council, Norway

During 2014 four calls for projects were launched (Call for large projects, Call for small projects, 2 Calls for bilateral actions).

Within call for large projects, finally, 72 applications scored at least 70 points, out of which the first 40 projects on the ranking list were proposed for financing within the available budget of the call (6.327.957 euro) and the remaining 32 applications were placed on the reserve list. The meeting of the Selection Committee was organized on 10th of September 2014 and the first 40 projects were recommended for funding, due to the available budget.

Following the project selection, in December 2014 the Programme Operator signed the first 33 contracts for large projects amounting to 4,796,129.01 euro, value of awarded grant.

The call for small projects was opened between January 6<sup>th</sup> - April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014. A number of 59 applications were declared compliant with the administrative and eligibility criteria and entered the technical and financial evaluation phase at the end of 2014. Evaluation of small projects is still an ongoing process. The next two Calls for proposals regarding Bilateral Partnership Actions were opened between January 15<sup>th</sup> – February 14<sup>th</sup> 2014, respectively February 24<sup>th</sup> – March 10<sup>th</sup> 2014.

Finally, 48 partnership actions were financed and the payments made within Measure A (3 calls for bilateral grants and the matchmaking seminar) were amounting to a total of 71,359 euro.

In 2014 the PO implemented one complementary action by organizing in May a seminar dedicated to best practices in project evaluation. The event was attended by the independent experts selected for evaluating the projects submitted under the Programme and also by representatives of POs from Poland, Lithuania and Latvia, who shared their experience in selecting the projects financed under PA 17/RO 13 (over 50 participants).

In order to assist potential applicants and to promote the EEA Financial Mechanism and PA17/RO13 Programme, the PO organized information seminars in 7 of the 8 development regions of Romania. The

seminars were attended by over 700 potential applicants, representatives of public entities, NGOs, higher education institutions and cultural institutes.

The Programme Operator paid special attention to the achievement of the Programme outcomes and opted to present in the Applicant Guide the expected outputs as sub-categories of the two main outcomes set for PA17/ RO13, namely:

A. Outcome: Awareness of cultural diversity raised and intercultural dialogue strengthened; Outputs expected: Increased mobility for artists and their works at international level; Education through art and culture reaching a broader audience; Projects concerning stage arts; Projects concerning fine and visual arts;

B. Outcome: Cultural history documented; Outputs expected: Cultural history of minorities enhanced and promoted; Events/productions involving minorities (fairs, festivals, performances, etc.)

The application form for large and small projects require the applicants to structure their expected project outputs and output indicators according to the outcomes of the Programme: A. Awareness of cultural diversity raised and intercultural dialogue strengthened; B. Cultural history documented and to describe how the project contributes to one or both of the Programme outcomes. Since these project results which are addressed together, both for large projects and small projects and the call for small projects is still an on-going process, the final outputs achieved will be reported earliest in 2015.

The PO structured the risk categories concerning project promoters and developed mitigation measures for each type. Thus, the main types of risks the PO will closely monitor during project implementation are: 1. Risks related to public procurement procedures; 2. Financial risks; 3. Risks related to the implementation of projects (failing to reach the objectives, improper work execution, purchase of equipment with poor features/performance, etc.). The mitigation measures envisaged for the risks mentioned above consist of on-site monitoring visits established as a result of the evaluation of project interim reports by the PO, regular contacts and flexible communication with project promoters.

According to the provisions set in the Programme Agreement for PA17/RO13, one of the output indicators stipulated in the Annex I - Programme Decision is „percentage of projects implemented in partnership with Donor State entities/cultural players” with a target of 50%. For the small projects call, 115 applications were submitted out of which 15 applications (13%) have donor partnership projects. Considering the above situation related to small projects the PO requested **the removal of this output indicator** from the programme results since it is foreseeable the objective impossibility to meet the quoted indicator for the small projects. The Programme Operator underline that the strengthening of bilateral relations between Romanian cultural operators from the Donor States in the field of arts and culture is not affected since even projects without donor partnership projects include activities of cross-border cultural exchanges.

Another aspect to be considered is the fact that among the large projects selected for financing 75% are entirely or partially addressing aspects of Roma culture, therefore an estimated amount of 20%, i.e over 1.25 meuro, of the total allocation for the large projects is directed towards cultural projects seeking to improve the situation of the Roma population. This represents 15% of the total eligible costs of the Programme which are targeting Roma related projects.

On the other hand, among the applications submitted for small projects only 15% refer partly or entirely to Roma culture, while for this call an amount of 100,000 euro is reserved for projects seeking to improve the situation of the Roma population. This shows that higher interest for Roma related grants was manifested for large projects than for small projects, contrary to the assumptions made during the programming phase. In this context the reserved mentioned amount may not be possible to be allocated to small projects.

The bilateral relations budget for the Programme PA17/RO13 is 120,332 euro. For Measure A- the financial allocation amounted to 84,232 euro. Measure A - Partnership development / building provided small mobility grants in order to the search for project partners prior to or during the preparation of a potential project application, for the development of such partnerships with entities from the Donor

States. There have been 3 calls for partnership actions (one call in 2013 and 2 calls in 2014)-. *See the attachment with situation of the allocations for partnership actions.*

The partnership actions have included study trips, visits and meetings organized by potential partners. The grant was of max. 1500 euro/mobility action/entity.

Overall, the existing allocation was contracted in a proportion of 98%.

Of the 56 beneficiaries, 4 beneficiaries were withdrawn after contracts were signed, from various reasons. As a result, 52 bilateral actions were implemented out of which 48 submitted reports and received a total reimbursement of 58.620 euro.

The payments made within Measure A (bilateral grants and the matchmaking seminar) amounting to a total of **71,359 euro** (85%). The remaining amount shall be reallocated to the Fund for bilateral relations, Measure B.

### **RO14/PA18 Research within Priority Sectors**

Programme Operator: Ministry of National Education

Donor Programme Partners: Norwegian Research Council – NRC (Norway) and the Icelandic Centre for Research – RANNIS (Iceland)

The Programme “Research within Priority Sectors”, approved by the Donor States on August 5, 2013 entered into its implementation phase on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013 after signing the Programme Agreement and the Programme Implementation Agreement. A range of activities related to the set-up of the Programme Operator structure, management and control system for the Programme, preparation and organization of the single Call foreseen for this Programme, evaluation and selection process of the eligible submitted applications, negotiation and contracting of the selected projects, as well as publicity and information on the Programme were carried out.

Under the four thematic areas identified for the Call (“Renewable energy to fight climate change”, “Health and food safety”, “Environmental protection and management” and “Social sciences and humanities”), 414 project proposals were submitted. The eligible applications (412 projects) were evaluated with the support of external independent experts, ranked and then selected by the Programme Committee members. On June 30, 2014, 23 approved joint research projects, amounting to the entire earmarked budget for the Call (21.681.063 euro) were contracted until April 30, 2017.

The Programme expected outcome, as defined in the Programme proposal, is an “Increased research cooperation between Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Romania”. Currently, data for only four out of seven outcome indicators is currently available as shown in the summary table below.

| No | Outcome  | Outcome indicator(s)   | Baseline | Target | Achieved | Source of Verification                            |
|----|--|--|----------|--------|----------|---|
| 1  | Increased research cooperation between Romania and EFTA States | The number of joint research projects between Romania and EFTA States  | 0        | 20     | 23       | Number of financed joint research projects        |
| 2  |  | The number of research partners involved in joint research cooperation   | 0        | 50     | 87       | Contracts   |
| 3  |  | The number of small medium sized enterprises engaged in Research Development and/or Innovative activities under this Programme | 0        | 5      | 8        | Contracts   |
| 4  |  | The number of postdocs and / or PhD students funded in joint research projects   | 0        | 50     | 204      | Periodic/final reports of joint research projects |



As a result of the Call for proposals (open between November 15, 2013 and January 24, 2014), three out of four Programme outputs are already achieved within the first reporting period of the Programme. The current situation on the Programme output indicators is presented in the summary table below.

| No | Output  | Output indicator(s)   | Baseline | Target | Achieved | Source of Verification                               |
|----|---|---|----------|--------|----------|--|
| 1  | Increasing number of research institutions                        | Number of research partners involved in joint research projects                       | 0        | 50     | 87       | Contracts  |
| 2  | Increasing number of researchers                                  | Number of researchers involved in joint research projects                             | 0        | 150    | 444      | Periodic or final reports of joint research projects |
| 3  | Increased the role of postdocs and / or PhD students in R&D field | The number of postdocs and / or PhD students participating in joint research projects | 0        | 50     | 204      | Periodic or final reports of joint research projects |

No new risks that could affect the achievement of the planned Programme outcome apart from those already mentioned in the Programme proposal were identified. Two out of six risks were eliminated, namely “lack of interest in the Programme by the target groups on both sides” and “lack of interest in the Programme due to existing complementary funding sources for PhDs and postdocs” as a result of the Call. For the remaining risks, actions are taken by PO in order to mitigate or minimize them according to the set risk mitigation plan.

The incurred costs for the organization of two Call-related events (Info day and brokerage), held in December 2013, were declared under measure A of the earmarked budget. Due to the fact that the number of payment requests for the reimbursement of project’s preparatory costs was far below expectations, most of the budget is unused. An Action Plan prepared by PO with concrete measures for the use of bilateral funds was discussed, yet not finalized, at the Programme Committee meeting held on February, 2015. A revised draft Action Plan is still under consideration of the PC members and observers. Finally, the Action Plan should be approved by the Programme Committee, as well as any reallocation of funds between measure A “seeking partners” and measure B “networking and exchange measures”.

### **RO15/PA19 Scholarships**

Programme Operator: The National Agency for Community Programmes in the Field of Education and Vocational Training

Donor Programme Partners: The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education (SIU); Icelandic Centre for Research (RANNIS); National Agency for International Education Affairs (AIBA) in Liechtenstein

The Scholarships and inter-institutional cooperation Programme started in Romania with a big delay (of 6 months) as compared to the Programme Proposal, which affected the results of the 1st year, 2013: as the analysis of the 2013 mobility projects reports (done in the 4th quarter of 2014) show, the absorption rate was of 63% (at the end of the projects) and the volume of mobility was not too impressive: 56 outgoing students, 2 incoming students, 58 outgoing staff, 15 incoming staff. However, the 2014 Call showed an improved participation in the programme, with 17 selected HEIs for mobility and 6 selected projects for cooperation (out of 10 applications), with 100% committed funds.

The policy factors (at EU and national level) described in the Proposal continued to support a good implementation of the programme and all the institutions with key roles in implementing the

mechanism (FMO, National Focal Point and Certifying and Payments Authority) had a supportive attitude and tried to solve promptly various problems all over 2014.

The negative factors described in the previous report continued to affect the implementation and results.

The limited capacity of the HEIs from Donor States to absorb the mobility flows from all the Beneficiary States, especially because the increased volume of the flows (as compared to the previous Programme), due to increased budgets, materialized in the relatively small number of Preparatory Visits (only 11), although the Romanian HEIs had several attempts to contact potential partners from DS; also, although there are many bilateral agreements concluded between RO and DS HEIs, the number of participants accepted finally by the DS HEIs (especially students) is very low. The Programme Operator underlines as a good practice the initiative of SIU to organise, together with the other DPPs, a speed dating seminar in Oslo, where the Programme Operator sent 10 participants and as a result 10 applications for cooperation projects in 2014 were received.

Another issue that was not foreseen at the application stage was related to the financial mechanism put in place at national level for the management of the funds, which is very complicated and requires additional bureaucratic and unnecessary burden for the Romanian HEIs as Programme Promoters but also for the Programme Operator; in addition, besides the bureaucracy, in 2014 there were 2 moments when the financial flows and the financial operations were blocked because of new and additional regulations imposed by the Ministry of Finances for public institutions, in July and in December 2014-Janary 2015; taking into account the period of the year when these 2 blockages occurred, they affected seriously the departure of the students for the 1-st and 2-nd semester of the academic year; the result is a huge demotivation of HEIs and students for the EEA grants in Romania.

The areas where the Programme performed well were: strengthening of bilateral relations and promotion/communication. The fact that the number of bilateral agreements concluded between RO HEIs and those from DS is already higher than the target established for the whole period of the programme is encouraging and it creates opportunities for further enhancing of the bilateral relations between universities, no matter the source of funding, EEA grants or Erasmus+.

In as far the as promotion/communication is concerned, the presentation of the Programme and its opportunities for individuals (students and staff) and institutions was done in much more events and to a much larger public than foreseen in the Proposal (see details in dedicated chapter below).

For 2015-2016 a challenge will be to achieve some results in the area of improving the social integration of Roma. Good grounds for obtaining results in mobility projects is the ad-hoc partnership concluded with Roma Education Fund, expected to show its fruits during the selection of students in spring 2015.

For the Outcome 1 (i.e. "Increased higher education student and staff mobility between Beneficiary and EEA EFTA States"), the following Programme outputs have been proposed:

1.1 HE mobility programme promoted effectively among institutions and beneficiaries selected on a competitive basis; the indicators are:

- Number of mobility project applications received by PO-target 30 (for the whole programme)
- Number of promotional events where EEA/NRW Grants scholarship programme was presented-target 6 (for the whole programme)

1.2 Agreements for HE student and staff mobility formalized / existing agreements enhanced; the indicators are:

- Number of mobile students as part of new or existing mobility agreements-target 365
- Number of mobile staff (including teachers) as part of new or existing mobility agreements-target 140 (both targets are for the whole programme)

For the Outcome 2 (i.e. "Increased and strengthened institutional cooperation at all levels of the education sector between Beneficiary and EEA EFTA States"), the following Programme outputs have been proposed:

## 2.1 Mobility programme for institutional cooperation effectively implemented; the indicators are:

- Number of cooperation projects applications received by PO-target 15
- Number of promotional events where EEA/NRW Grants scholarship programme was presented-target 6 (both targets for the whole programme)
- Number of mobile staff as part of existing or new mobility agreements: target 140

## 2.2 Joint projects identified and implemented by partner institutions; the indicators are:

- Number of bilateral partnership agreements (existing or new)-target 50
- Number of cooperation projects- target 11 (both targets for the whole programme)

Actually, the applications received and financed under the 2014 Call show the following situation as regards the indicators:

- Total number of HE bilateral mobility agreements: 51 (more than the target established at 50). Out of which, number of new HE mobility agreements: 33 (it represents either agreements concluded by RO HEIs that did not participate in the previous programme, or new agreements concluded by RO HEIs that participated in the former programme, but the agreements are now concluded with other HEIs from DS.)

17 applications for Mobility projects were received in 2014 (all of them eligible and financed) and 10 applications for Cooperation projects, out of which 6 were approved. These figures should be added to those achieved in 2013 (i.e. 17/15 and 4/2) in order to observe the progress towards the achievement of the targets.

The analysis of the Mobility applications shows the following numbers (based on the bilateral agreements):

- Number of students(both incoming and outgoing) who are estimated to go in mobility during the academic year 2014-2015: 292
- Number of staff (both incoming and outgoing) who will go in mobility during the 2-nd semester of the academic year 2013-2014: 133

In addition, the analysis of the reports of mobility projects financed in 2013 shows that 100% of the staff declared that they have improved to a large extent their skills/competencies (at least 2 skills out of the following : Linguistic skills, Working in an international environment, Teamwork, Research skills, Using multimedia tools, Networking for further cooperation projects, Peer-learning, Teaching centred on learning outcomes), which brings a solid contribution to the enhancement of the human capital.

Adding these estimations to the final results of the 1-st Call in 2013, there are grounds to consider that the Programme is progressing in the right direction and there is hope to achieve the targets and thus to obtain the expected outcomes (although there are risks, listed below).

The level of achievement of the targets established for the outputs indicators is as follows:

| Indicator  | Target for the whole programme | Realised so far |
|--|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Number of students with received ECTS credits  | 365                            | 58              |
| Percentage of staff declaring that they have increased their competencies                  | 90%                            | 100%            |
| Number of mobility project applications received by PO                                     | 30                             | 34              |
| Number of promotional events where EEA/NRW Grants scholarship programme was presented      | 6                              | 7               |
| Number of mobile staff (including teachers) as part of new or existing mobility agreements | 140                            | 88              |

|  |    |         |
|--|----|---------|
| Number of joint papers/publications/articles                               | 8  | n/a yet |
| Number of joint summer schools/intensive programmes                        | 2  | n/a yet |
| Number of seminars, workshops, conferences organised jointly               | 10 | 3       |
| Number of cooperation projects applications received by PO                 | 15 | 14      |
| Number of cooperation projects financed                                    | 11 | 8       |
| Number of bilateral agreements concluded between RO HEIs and those from DS | 50 | 51      |

Despite these promising results, there is a risk to not achieve the final targets as regards the students' mobility due to the limited capacity of the DS HEIs in receiving too many students from Beneficiary States, which leads to a lower interest in concluding new agreements or in enhancing the existing ones, especially because the Programme Operator received additional funds (500 000 Euro) to be spent in 5 semesters, instead of 6 semesters as foreseen in the Programme proposal. The experience of the Call 2013 shows that it is possible that the figures shown above (i.e. for the number of students and staff supposed to go in mobility over the academic year 2014-2015) - which are based on the request of the HEIs in the applications- are overestimated (usually, when concluding bilateral agreements HEIs do not establish exact figures, but they rather have a flexible approach). As mitigating actions the Programme Operator will continue the cooperation with the DPPs, as being the main actors in promoting the programme among the HEIs in DS.

Another cause could be the demotivation of the Romanian HEIs to involve in projects financed under EEA Mechanism, due to the complications of the national financial regulations, which put a disproportionate burden on the financial services. In addition, a weak point of the programme was, from the beginning, the fact that only hosting HEIs (the majority of them being from DS) receive funds for the organisation of mobility (350Euro/capita), different from what is happening in Erasmus; the truth is that the Romanian HEIs (that are PPs) have all the obligations in terms of managing the complicated financial flows and reporting, without having any incentive; a lesson learnt from this programme is to foresee a part of the budget (in the future, if there will be a further Scholarships programme) for funding the organisation of mobility for the sending institutions too).

Finally, another risk is foreseen: the risk to not be able to absorb entirely the budget, which was increased in the middle of the Programme although the Programme Operator has a shorter period of time to spend it (shorter than in the Proposal) and the beneficiaries are challenged to cope with over-complicated financial requirements.

The Programme Operator will continue to promote the benefits that could be obtained through these projects and to assist closely the PPs, by helping them to cope with the financial/administrative problems (but with the limits of our position).

A new risk has been introduced, i.e. the risk of not being able to fulfil the conditionality of spending 10% of the budget for improving Roma conditions, the sector of education our programme is focused on being not appropriate for such measures; as the Programme Operator has underlined many times, in order to obtain long term impact in social integration of Roma, the most appropriate sector of education is pre-primary and primary sector.

### **RO17/PA21 Green Industry Innovation**

Programme Operator: Innovation Norway

GII 17 Programme is implemented according to plans, and contributes directly to the outcome indicators set for the Programme. Hence, the overall objectives of Norway Grants are considered to be fulfilled.

During 2014 decision making and contracting phase for the 1<sup>st</sup> Call for Project Proposals has taken place and monitoring phase for projects approved under 1<sup>st</sup> Call has started (35 projects are under implementation). On July 2014, 2<sup>nd</sup> Call for Project Proposals was launched and assessment process has been finalised for all projects. The decision making process has started during December 2014 and 1st project has been approved in the same month.

The overall progress of the Programme provides with a positive trend for projects to be completed within or even before the eligibility deadline of 30 April 2016.

As regards the outcome selected for the Programme (“Realisation of the business opportunities of greening the European economy”), the progress registered during 2014 has been measured using the agreed outcome indicators in the Programme Agreement.

Indicators at project level were included in all applications and Innovation Norway has assessed the relevance of each project taking into consideration the extent to which the projects are contributing to the Programme outputs and thus to the achievement of the Programme outcome. The Programme Operator underlines that all approved projects are contributing through their chosen outcomes and outputs at project level to the selected Programme outcome. Outcome indicators at project level will be further monitored and reported to the PO during projects’ implementation phase. All approved projects/Project Promoters have reported/given an update of the outcome indicators as part of their annual reporting as per year end. There is no significant impact to be reported in 2014. It is expected that relevant results will be registered during 2015.

As regards the three outputs that were suggested in the Programme Proposal and further defined and agreed in the Programme Agreement, the result at 31.12.2014 includes all projects approved in the frame of the 1st Call. Small Grants Scheme (SGS) includes 14 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) projects and 2 business projects implemented by small enterprises. Individual Project Scheme (IPS) includes only business projects implemented by SMEs and large enterprises. As it can be observed from the table below, Innovation Norway has approved exactly the same number of projects as estimated upon Programme Agreement signing.

| Output   | Output indicator  | Baseline | Target | Result 31.12.14                 |
|--|---|----------|--------|---------------------------------|
| Innovative green technologies and products applied   | Number of projects with innovative environmental technologies supported   | 0        | 6      | 7 (IPS)                         |
|  | Number of projects related to development/improvement of green products or services supported                             | 0        | 6      | 5 (1 SGS and 4 IPS)             |
| Initiatives to increase efficiency in business operations, material handling and improved waste management applied | Number of supported projects related to material efficiency and improved waste management                                 | 0        | 4      | 6 (1 SGS and 5 IPS)             |
|  | Number of projects related to development and implementation strategies for “greener” management and production processes | 0        | 4      | 3 (IPS)                         |
| Eco-innovative business development in less developed areas in Romania improved                                    | Number of projects supporting eco-innovative business development in less developed areas                                 | 0        | 15     | 14 (All NGO projects under SGS) |
|  | Number of people participating in training and awareness raising  | 0        | 150    | Not applicable yet              |

## Potential risks that may threaten the achievement of the objectives set out in the Programmes

| Description of risk   | Likelihood | Consequence | Mitigation planned/done   |
|---|------------|-------------|---|
| Failure to achieve objectives and outcomes foreseen in the project applications | 1          | 3           | Regular monitoring and financial control by PO. On the spot visits to all projects.<br>Risk assessment made on each interim report<br>Close assistance of from PO for projects that register an increase of their risk of not achieving the objectives and outcomes<br>Rules & Procedures, Guidelines, information meetings, FAQ, help desk etc.  |
| Insufficient number of good project proposals                                   | 2          | 3           | Rules & Procedures, Guidelines, information meetings, FAQ, help desk etc.   |
| Political risks and risks related to changes in the legal framework             | 1          | 1           | PO from donor country, main target group private sector, cooperation with NFP and EMB   |
| Lack of co-financing for projects   | 2          | 3           | Meetings with banks in Romania. Credit check of all companies.<br>Check of audited accounts – in order to judge their ability to take on a new bank loan.<br>During projects' implementation period:<br>Monitoring of the financial status of the company during the implementation process; verifying the costs selected within the procurement procedures, assets registered in accountancy |

Fund for Bilateral Relations was opened during 2014 within 2<sup>nd</sup> Call for project proposals.

Travel Support (lump sum of EUR 1,200 per entity) has been used as a tool to foster and strengthen bilateral partnerships. A budget of EUR 30,000 was set aside for the 2nd Call. (Marketing activities are in general covered by the PO's management budget.) 12 applications for Travel Support were received in relation to the 2nd Call, out of which 11 were approved by Innovation Norway. In addition 12 Travel Support grants have been approved for participation in the media event in June and for the CSR seminar in October (see Information and Publicity).

### **RO18/PA25 Capacity-Building and Institutional Cooperation between Beneficiary State and Norwegian Public Institutions, Local and Regional Authorities**

**Programme Operator:** National Focal Point

**Donor Programme Partner:** Norwegian Radiation Protection Authority

In 2014 the programme has made significant progress, both pre-defined projects having entered the implementation phase.

The development and evaluation of the project Improving Integrity in the National Agency for Fiscal Administration (NAFA) through Institutional Cooperation and Capacity Building promoted by the NAFA in partnership with the Norwegian Tax Administration (Skatteetaten) and the General Secretariat of the Government has been finalised and the project contract was signed in October 2014.

The predefined project Regional Excellence Project on Regulatory Capacity Building in Nuclear and Radiological Safety, Emergency Preparedness and Response in Romania, is under implementation and has made good progress towards the fulfilment of its objectives, although some delays have occurred, due to a later than expected start of the project activities .

The Programme has an important bilateral aspect, as it targets the cooperation and exchange of experience between Romanian and Norwegian public institutions. Both predefined projects are implemented in partnership.

Regarding the cooperation between the PO and the Donor Programme Partner, a Cooperation Committee meeting was organized on 14 March 2014 in Bucharest. Representatives of the Programme Operator, Project promoters, Donor partner program and FMO have participated to the meeting and several important aspects have been discussed and settled: the implementation of the Fund for Bilateral Relations at programme level, the necessary updates and modifications to the Programme Agreement, the update of the communication plan and a reallocation of management cost budget towards the fund for bilateral relations.

The Fund for Bilateral Relations at the level of Programme is to be implemented through an open call, which was launched on 11 April 2014; the deadline for submission of applications was extended until 31 December 2015 or until funds depletion. The total budget of the call is 175,765 Euro. The fund is dedicated to supporting projects/actions that correspond to the general objective of the Programme, which is identifying partners for the purpose of developing partnership projects, organization of conferences and seminars on common interest themes, technical cooperation and exchange of experts, short-term training, study visits, elaboration of reports and studies, other common interest activities, transfer of knowledge, experience, techniques, good practices between similar entities in Romania and Donor States.

Given the limited scope of the Programme, focusing on specific areas of the Romanian public administration through predefined projects, the main risks affecting it are of operational nature and relate to the low capacity of managing the projects at the level of the Project Promoters and the lengthy and complex process of public procurement which could lead to delays in implementation and implicitly to not achieving the expected results.

### **RO19/PA27 - Public Health Initiatives**

Programme Operator: Ministry of Health

The overall objective of the programme is to improve the health status of the population and reduce inequalities through initiatives developed in the public health area. The main areas of interest are:

- Prevention and treatment of communicable diseases (including HIV/AIDS and TB);
- Health care resources developed at all levels;
- Prevention and reduction of the life-style-related diseases.

Subsequently the programme focus on primary health care including health care for children and elderly, address specific needs of minority groups, with a particular emphasis on Roma and will strengthen primary health care in terms of quantity and quality of services provided.

The programme approach is to focus on the improvement of the relevant health indicators in Romania. In terms of health, population of Romania has some of the worst indicators across the European region, not only at EU level. The objectives of the new Ministry of Health Strategy for 2014-2020 (approved in November 2014) aimed at reducing the disparities in health status of the population in Romania compared to EU by providing safer and affordable access to health services. As such, the objectives planned to be financed by Norway Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 are linked to this strategic approach.

The official launching conference of the Programme was held on 29<sup>th</sup> of September 2014, as part of the Communication Plan. On this occasion, the programme was presented to the main stakeholders and the feedback of participants was positive.

The initial programme budget was 9,534,118 euro, but in October 2013 and further in October 2014 it was supplemented, the total value being now 26,592,941 euro.

The programme contains only strategic pre-defined projects targeting the outcomes of the programme, as follow:

- PDP 1 Improving the health status of the Romanian population in Romania by increasing Tuberculosis control (budget: 10,748,280 Euro);
- PDP 2 Strengthening the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS, HVB, HVC in Romania (budget: 1,373,470 Euro);
- PDP 3 Strengthening the National Network of Roma Health Mediators to Improve the Health Status of Roma Population (budget: 1,052,910 Euro);
- PDP 4 Multi-level interventions for prevention of lifestyle related non communicable diseases (NCD) in Romania (budget: 1,115,120 Euro);
- PDP 5 “Better patient outreach and services planning through better Diseases Registries”(budget 1,035,000 Euro);
- PDP 6 “Increase Capacity of the Romanian Health Sector to Implement Organized Screening for Cancers Amenable To Cost-Effective Early Detection Interventions” ( budget 1,500,000 Euro);
- PDP 7 “Improved healthcare for high-risk pregnancy, premature birth and haematological diseases” (budget 1,760,362 Euro).

However, after the last Program Agreement modification, there is still an amount of 6,381,219.00 euro which is unallocated. In December 2014, the PO has proposed a new project called *“Improving Paediatric Oncology-Haematology Services in Romania through the acquisition of goods, services and specialized works”* with an indicative budget of 5.655.653 Euro. For the remaining amount of 725,566.00 euro, the PO will propose to increase the budgets of the contracted projects.

During 2014, all the projects were positively evaluated and contracted. In the period May-August 2014, Ministry of Health encountered several delays due to the insufficient co-financing funds allocated by Ministry of Public Finance in the 2014 PO budget. All necessary funds were allocated, through the 2014 budget rectification.

In terms of achievements, all the predefined projects are in the implementation stage. Being an initial stage for all projects, the activities implemented during 2014 were mainly related to the planning and organization, procurement, information and publicity, training, collection of data and assessment of the specific situation within each pre-project.

During the reporting period, planned activities of the Programme were not influenced by changes at social and economic level. Moreover, the target group of the programme (TB/ MDR TB patients, drug addicted persons at risk of becoming HIV-infected, persons living with hepatitis C and B, vulnerable Roma, general population, including children and adults at risk) continue to require measures to improve the social conditions of their present and future situation.

Regarding the management of the programme, during 2014 the internal structure of PO was created, the necessary staff and working procedures are in place. The Audit Authority opinion is that the PO management and control system are in line with the Regulation. However, the PO still have to implement a few recommendations to improve certain work processes.



No “new” risks - other than those mentioned in the Programme proposal - were identified by PO, concerning the fulfilment of the Programme objectives and targets. All the risks identified in the programme proposal have mitigation measures, most of them being already in place.

The main objective of the fund for bilateral relations is the strengthening the bilateral relations by networking, exchange, sharing and transfer of knowledge, technology, experience and best practice between Project Promoters and entities in the Donor State. Due to the fact that the programme contains only predefined projects, the fund for bilateral relations will be split between project promoters. In the reporting period the bilateral fund was not used. The PO has, initially, prepared a plan for using the fund for bilateral relations, but giving the supplement of the programme budget, it will be updated and sent for FMO approval.

In the reporting period, the PO has given a special attention to conditionality no 13 which state that “the National Focal Point shall ensure that the Programme Operator develops and presents by the end of 2014, specific plans on TB prevention and treatment including financing beyond the funding from the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014. The National Focal Point shall report on these specific plans in the Strategic Reports”. The National Focal Point will submit the relevant document in January 2015.

### **RO21/PA30 - Schengen Cooperation and Combating Cross-border and Organised Crime, including Trafficking and Itinerant Criminal Groups**

Programme Operator: The Ministry of Internal Affairs

Donor programme partner: The Norwegian Police Directorate (POD)

Key activities undertaken in 2014:

- the first Cooperation Committee of RO21 Programme, "*Schengen Cooperation and Combating Cross-border and Organized Crime, including Trafficking and Itinerant Criminal Groups*" was organized on the 28th of January 2014;
- the first modification of the RO 21 Programme Agreement, by creating an exception to the article 7.3 b of the Regulation on the implementation, submitted to the FMO and approved on 22.05.2014;
- the finalization of the RO 21 Management and Control System and Operational Procedures and the audit performed by the "*Central Harmonization Unit for Public internal Audit*" (March-April 2014);
- the second modification of the RO 21 Programme Agreement, by introducing precise details and indicators for PDP3, eliminating the partnership with Ukraine (due to the difficult political environment in the neighbouring country, etc);
- the financial framework was finalized (banking accounts procurements, operationalization of all accounts either for the Programme Operator (PO) as for the Project Promoters (PPs), etc);
- the Second Cooperation Committee of RO21 Programme was organized on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2014. The topics of discussion envisaged the state of play – projects, rules of procedure, bilateral fund – presentation and proposal, complementary fund – presentation and proposals, PDP1 – mandates, deployment plan, requirements. The bilateral plan was revised and submitted to the Programme Partner for approval;

Key activities at Project level:

- all Partnership Agreements (PA) have been signed (including the PAs with the Council of Europe and the OSCE);
- by the end of 2014, **all 6 predefined projects are in implementation.**

All projects are on early stages of implementation, since all financing contracts of the predefined projects were signed during the period of June-October 2014, followed by the transfer of the advance payment. In this respect, the progress towards the final outcomes of the project is not quite visible at

this moment. However, in order to have a better and more secure approach regarding the implementation of the predefined projects, the Programme Operator has developed a systematic, standardized and transparent mechanism to monitor the projects' progress, by monthly follow-up meetings with all PPs. This instrument is helping to exchange experience, identify the problems and avoid issues during the implementation phases, is supported by monthly financial and progress reports, and represents an effective proactive approach to diminish the implementation risks.

As described before, no relevant fulfilment of the indicators at the Programme level can be observed during 2014, since all projects are at their first beginning, and the indicators are relevant for assessing the results, so at a later stage. So far, the only output indicator that has been partially accomplished is linked to the PDP2, which completed 2 of the 4 study visits involving specialists from neighbouring countries (Moldavia and Hungary). However, more identifiable issues are mentioned below, at point 5 „Information on predefined projects”.

The key problem regarding the implementation of pre-defined project PDP1 (the most important project of the Programme, either by the budget - about half of the total budget of the Programme – as for the impact – regarding the joint missions in Norway) is the fact that the budget for the missions has been calculated by taking into consideration initially a longer period of implementation (about 3 years). Due to the delayed start of all Programmes, including RO 21, delays that were recorded in the early stages of the Programmes, in order to proficiently use the whole budget, the teams of Romanian officers deployed simultaneously in Norway shall be more numerous as provided initially. Unfortunately, the Programme Partner considers that, due to the small dimensions of the Police Units in Norway, it could be quite difficult to manage large teams of foreign officers.

In order to mitigate the risk of an incomplete accomplishment of the expectations regarding the PDP1, a request for increasing the eligibility period of the project/programme will be submitted to the FMO and, if approved, that shall be a convenient solution to decrease the burden on the Norwegian Programme Partner, regarding the logistic and operational difficulties linked to the absorption of large number of the Romanian officers deployed simultaneously in Norway.

The **Bilateral Plan** (total budget: 94,215 euro) was revised during the second **Cooperation Committee**, in order to focus on organizing an important seminar on Roma issues (not specific police issues, such as criminality, modus operandi, profiles, etc., but also topics such as traditions, beliefs, habitudes, customs and so on), in order to better understand the difficulties and specificities (estimated budget: 30.000 euro). The seminar shall be supported not only by law enforcement specialists in this domain, but also experts from specialized NGOs, representatives of Roma communities, researchers, etc. The Programme Partner will study the proposal and a decision will be taken in Q1, 2015.

## **RO22 - Decent Work and Tripartite Dialogue**

**Programme Operator:** Innovation Norway

*Finalised.*

## **RO20/PA29 - Domestic and Gender-Based Violence**

**Programme Operator:** Ministry of Justice

**Donor Programme Partners:** Council of Europe (CoE) and the Norwegian Police Directorate (POD)

In the field of domestic violence, progress on operationalizing the structures at the level of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly has been registered by elaborating the draft Government Ordinance for amending and supplementing the Law no. 217/2003 on preventing and combating domestic violence. Thus, the basis for creating specialized departments fulfilling the tasks provided in the Law no. 217/2003 on preventing and combating domestic violence has been created.

The Programme's outcomes and outputs are expected to be achieved through:

- two pre-defined projects, namely: pre-defined project no. 1 “Best practice model on assistance for victims of trafficking in human beings – Pilot project” promoted by the National Agency against Trafficking in Persons (the financing contract was signed on May 12<sup>th</sup> 2014), and pre-defined project no. 2 “Joint action against domestic violence” (JAD) promoted by the General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police (the financing contract was signed on July 14<sup>th</sup> 2014).
- projects selected through open call for proposals, on 3 priority areas (Supporting the network of units in the framework of the Law on domestic violence – 4 selected projects, Awareness and sensitising activities – 2 selected projects, Training activities for the professionals working in the field of domestic violence – 2 selected projects).
- **Outcome „Domestic violence reduced”** is expected to be achieved by JAD pre-defined project and the selected projects through open calls.

The financing contract for the pre-defined project „Joint action against domestic violence” promoted by the General Inspectorate for the Romanian Police was signed on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 2014. During 2014, it started the implementation of the project activities targeting the achievement of the output „Professionals (including the judiciary) trained on how to deal with DV in the context of the provisions of the new law on domestic violence” (output indicators: Number of working instruments (e.g. guidelines, handbooks etc.) for the use of the specialists working with DV cases created and Number of professionals trained on DV).

In what regards selected projects through the call for proposals, the selection process of the projects to be funded has been completed in December 2014 and the signing of the financing contracts and beginning of the implementing of the projects are estimated to take place during the first quarter of 2015.

- **Outcome „Victims of trafficking supported”** is expected to be achieved by the implementation of the pre-defined project “Best practice model on assistance for victims of trafficking in human beings – Pilot project” promoted by the National Agency against Trafficking in Persons (NATP). The financing contract for this project was signed on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 2014. The project implementation was affected by the impossibility to carry out the activities for establishing an assistance centre for victims of human trafficking and all related actions. The mitigation action proposed was to modify the project and consequently the programme agreement in order to eliminate the corresponding outputs and indicators, which could no longer be achieved.

The projects selected under the calls will contribute to outputs under Outcome 1 „Domestic violence reduced” (Counselling centres for perpetrators/Perpetrator programmes set up or supported in line with international standards; New services reflecting specific needs of vulnerable groups and European standards on victim services created; Awareness on the harmful effects of domestic violence raised; Professionals (including the judiciary) trained on how to deal with DV in the context of the provisions of the new law on domestic violence). Furthermore, JAD pre-defined project will also contribute to the achievement of output “Professionals (including the judiciary) trained on how to deal with DV in the context of the provisions of the new law on domestic violence”. The project is ongoing, significant progress in its implementation following to be registered in 2015 and 2016.

The pre-defined project “Best practice model on assistance for victims of trafficking in human beings – Pilot project” promoted by the National Agency against Trafficking in Persons (NATP) will contribute to the achievement of the outputs under Outcome 2 of the programme (Services for victims of trafficking set up and improved in line with international and CoE standards and recommendations; Victims of trafficking assisted; Training of the specialists dealing with THB provided (including NGOs); National assistance system evaluated in accordance with the national Standards for Specialized Assistance Services provided to trafficking victims as well as international standards; National prevention campaign on THB targeting the Roma and other vulnerable communities). Shortly after the start of the project implementation, the building which followed to be transformed in centre for assistance of trafficking victims, identified and provided by Bucharest Municipality, was no longer available because of the legal restitution request over the building property initiated before a court of justice. The PP tried to identify another building, efforts which proved to be unsuccessful. As a consequence, the first two outputs will

no longer be achieved because of the proposed modification to remove the shelter component and all its related activities from the project. The Programme Agreement will be amended accordingly.

*Potential risks* that may threaten the achievement of the objectives set out in the Programmes are

1. Due to its complexity, the procurement procedure needed for selecting independent and impartial experts for performing the substantial evaluation of the applications was finalized with delay and the circumstance lead to the postponement of the selection and respectively signing of financing contracts for the projects submitted within the calls for proposals.

2. Secondly, due to the impossibility of the project promoter National Agency against Trafficking in Persons of the predefined project “Best practice model on assistance for victims of trafficking in human beings – Pilot project” of ensuring a building with the purpose of functioning as a centre for the victims of trafficking in human beings, the project underwent significant revision and modification in the sense that the component related to the centre and all related activities was removed from the project. It was a solution agreed between the project promoter and its partners during the Cooperation Committee held in December 2014.

In what concerns the first risk identified, considering the fact that most of the selected projects and of the projects on the reserve list have an estimated 18 months implementation period, in order to meet the deadline for the implementation of the projects (30 April 2016), it was decided to reduce the duration of the selected projects to meet this criterion.

With the purpose of overcoming the second risk identified, during the Cooperation Committee, the project promoter, its partners and the PO decided to dismiss the component related to the centre and its related activities and reallocate the funds to outcome 1 - „Domestic violence reduce” of the programme, in particular to funding more projects to be selected through open calls.

Considering, on the one side, the complexity of the projects (especially of those selected under the first priority “Supporting the network of units in the framework of the Law on domestic violence”) and, on the other side, the need to reallocate the funds saved as a result of the modification of the pre-defined project promoted by the National Agency against Trafficking in Persons and, consequently, conclude additional financing contracts for the projects on the reserve list, in order to ensure the achievement of the objectives of the Programme, it should be taken into account the extension of the implementation period of the programme until 30th of April 2017.

Regarding the use of funds for bilateral relations, an information day was organized on the 14th of February 2014 open to all potential project promoters, during which a representative of Arkimedes AS, Norwegian NGO with competencies in the field of the call/programme, held a presentation of their activity leaving open the possibility to conclude partnerships within the project proposals to be submitted on the call and thus, contributing to the strengthening of the bilateral relations with the donor state. Furthermore, the PO published when launching the call a list of Norwegian entities with competencies in the field of domestic violence. As a result, out of the 68 overall projects submitted on the calls for proposal, 11 are in partnership with Norwegian entities.

One representative of the PO attended the presentation of the world’s biggest ever violence against women survey, launched by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) on 5th of March 2014, and seminar „Violence against women in Europe – our response” organized by the FMO on the 6th of March 2014 in Brussels.

### **RO23/PA32 Correctional Services, including Non-Custodial Sanctions**

**Programme Operator:** Ministry of Justice

**Donor Programme Partner:** The Norwegian Correctional Services (KSF)

The Programme foresees that its outcomes and outputs are to be achieved through six pre-defined projects. For all the 6 pre-defined projects, partnership agreements (6 in total) and project implementations plans were agreed upon between the Project Promoters and Project Partners and the

financing contracts were concluded in the second trimester of 2014, following their positive appraisal in the Cooperation Committee.

The projects are being implemented in partnership with Norwegian project partners (5 projects) and the Council of Europe (1 project), selected based on their specific expertise, competences and experience required for the achievement of the outcomes of the pre-defined projects. The implementation of the pre-defined projects has started in the second trimester of 2014 and they are starting to register progress. Regarding the particular situation of pre-defined project 2 *“Strengthening the capacity of the Bacau prison for minors and youngsters to comply with the relevant international human rights instruments”*, on the 12th of November, 2014 the FMO informed the National Focal Point on the fulfilment of the pre-eligibility condition and on the approval of the findings of the feasibility study and of option C as described in the study and proposed by the Cooperation Committee members. The implementation of the project activities for Bacau project will start in 2015. The framework offered by the pre-defined projects represents a premise and an opportunity for ensuring the transfer by the project partners of knowledge, experience and best practice adapted to the peculiarities of the Romanian correctional services system and for the achievement of the Programme’s outcomes and outputs.

The outputs and indicators corresponding to outcome 1 (*“Overcome challenges connected to growing prison population and prison overcrowding”*), outcome 2 (*“Increased application of alternatives to prison”*), outcome 3 (*“Increased focus on vulnerable groups in prison”*) and outcome 4 (*“Improved competences of both inmates and prison staff”*) are on-going and they will be achieved through the six pre-defined projects. The activities leading to the achievement of these indicators are in progress, and they will continue during 2015-2016.

The implementation of the pre-defined projects is on-going and the projects are starting to register progress. The pre-eligibility condition for the pre-defined project 2 (the Bacau project) was fulfilled and thus the activities of the project may commence. In order to avoid any risks in accomplishing the activities and results of the Bacau project within the remaining implementation period, the schedule of the project activities will be revised together with the Norwegian partner, as to ensure their implementation within the eligibility period.

The risks identified by the Programme Operator refer in particular to the works and endowments components of the projects which imply complex procurement procedures and lengthy administrative proceedings for approving the investment works, and for which the tender procedures have not been yet launched. Thus, the PO will follow up closely on the predefined project 5 (Police project) and pre-defined project 2 (Bacau project) for which the tenders need to be launched in the first part of 2015, as to ensure that the Project Promoters are committed to effectively planning the public procurement, in terms of timeframe, so as to ensure the implementation of the activities within the period of eligibility of the Programme.

During 2014, three amendments to the Programme Agreement the Programme were approved by the FMO. A fourth amendment to the Programme Agreement was sent to the FMO, on the 5th of December 2014, for approval, as a follow up to the fulfilment of the pre-eligibility condition and approval of the findings of the feasibility study and the Scenario C approach for the pre-defined project no. 2 *“Strengthening the capacity of the Bacau prison for minors and youngsters to comply with the relevant international human rights instruments”*. The proposed amendment is pending Donor approval.

The PO launched the call for the bilateral fund at programme level on the 27th of May, 2014. The fund is open for submitting applications on a continuous basis from the first date of eligibility of the Programme until the deadlines set in the call, no later than 30th of April 2016. The eligible applicants are Project Promoters and donor project partners. During the reporting period, four applications have been submitted and approved by the Cooperation Committee members for which financing contracts were concluded in the total amount of 22.905 euro, out of which during 2014 an advance payment of 90% was made to the beneficiaries. The beneficiaries of the funds were the National Probation Directorate

and the National Administration of Penitentiaries. The Project Promoters informed about their intention to further submit new applications.

## **RO24/PA31 Judicial Capacity-Building and Cooperation**

**Programme Operator:** Ministry of Justice

**Donor Programme Partners:** Norwegian Court Administration (DA) and the Council of Europe (CoE)

The Programme's outcomes and outputs are expected to be achieved through three predefined projects: predefined project no. 1 „Strengthening the capacity of the Romanian judicial system to face new legislative and institutional challenges”, predefined project no. 2 “Improvement of the Electronic Court Register Information System (ECRIS)”, and predefined project no. 3 „Improving access to justice. An integrated approach with a focus on Roma and other vulnerable groups”.

Except predefined project no. 2, significant progress has been registered in the implementation of the predefined projects (e.g., training activities under predefined project no. 1 are carried out according to the schedule, the feasibility study on the access to justice of vulnerable groups, with a special focus on the Roma has been elaborated), consequently contributing to the achievement of the programme's outputs and outcomes.

### ➤ **Outcome 1 “Improved efficiency of the court systems, including the development of systems for case handling”**

The indicator under the outcome “Improved efficiency of the court systems, including the development of systems for case handling” will make the object of a modification request of the RO24 Programme Agreement, which will be submitted to the Donors. The proposed modifications reside in the need to modify the predefined project no. 2 “Improvement of the Electronic Court Register Information System (ECRIS)”.

### ➤ **Outcome 2 “Increased competence of actors within the judiciary”**

The implementation of the related predefined project is steadily going towards the achievement of the envisaged outputs, and thus to the achievement of the outcome of the programme. Thus, reported to the outcome standard indicator (*Number of legal professionals trained – target 6000*), considerable progress has been registered, as during 2014, over 2.600 legal professionals were trained within the training activities carried out in the framework of the project.

### ➤ **Outcome 3 “Improved access to justice, including for vulnerable persons (e.g. Roma population, victims, minors, other minorities)”**

In accordance with the implementation status of the related predefined project, progress has been recorded towards the achievement of the envisaged outputs, and consequently of the outcome. Regarding the outcome indicator (*Number of individuals benefitting from free legal advice (including Roma) – target 1000*), the legal assistance offices have not been established yet. These specific activities will be carried out in the course of 2015.

The outputs and indicators related to the outcome 1 “Improved efficiency of the court systems, including the development of systems for case handling” will make the object of a modification request of the RO 24 Programme Agreement, which is expected to be submitted to the donors in January 2015. The envisaged modifications reside in the need to modify the predefined project no. 2 “Improvement of the Electronic Court Register Information System (ECRIS)”.

The outputs related to the outcome 2 “Increased competence of actors within the judiciary” are expected to be achieved through the predefined project 1 “Strengthening the capacity of the Romanian judicial system to face new legislative and institutional challenges”. Regarding the *Output 1 “Legal professionals have increased knowledge”*, significant progress was recorded in the achievement of its related indicators, in the reporting period (1866 court staff and legal professionals were trained on the new legal codes, 240 court staff and legal professionals have been trained on the ECHR, 134 court staff

and legal professionals have been trained on court management, 186 court staff and legal professionals have been trained on alternative dispute resolutions (ADR).

Regarding Output 1 “Improved access to (primary) legal aid of the citizens from vulnerable groups, including the Roma community”, related to the outcome 3 “Improved access to justice, including for vulnerable persons (e.g. Roma population, victims, minors, other minorities)”, the registered progress resides in the achievement of one of its specific indicators, namely the feasibility study on the access to justice of vulnerable groups, with a special focus on the Roma has been conducted.

Potential risks that may threaten the achievement of the objectives:

1. The predefined project no. 2 “Improvement of the Electronic Court Register Information System (ECRIS)” was modified in cooperation with the DPPs, and a modification request of the RO24 Programme Agreement, along the modified project, will be submitted to the Donors. Thus, the envisaged modification of the Programme agreement resides in the need to modify the predefined project no. 2, so as to mitigate the risks related to its implementation in its initial form, namely the actual revamping and adaptation of the electronic case management system, which could not be undertaken any longer in the framework of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014.

2. Concerning the predefined project no. 3 „Improving access to justice. An integrated approach with a focus on Roma and other vulnerable groups”, as the legal assistance offices must function for no less than 12 months, and considering that the procurement procedure has not been launched yet, and the fact that the project, in its current form, has to be finalised by 29<sup>th</sup> of February, 2016, in order to mitigate the risk associated with the length of a public procurement procedure, and to ensure the proper timeframe for the implementation of the project, it should be taken into account the prolongation of the implementation period at least until 30<sup>th</sup> of April, 2016, but also the extension of the eligibility period of the programme, beyond this date.

While through the PdP no. 2 it is not anymore feasible to actually develop and implement the new electronic case management system, the modified project aims at paving the way for the future developments of such electronic systems at the level of the judiciary, in alignment with e-Justice tendencies and standards.

Regarding the use of funds for bilateral relations, in accordance with the agreed procedure and implementation plan, the Programme Operator launched the call for bilateral project proposals under the bilateral fund at programme level, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April, 2014. The fund is open for submitting applications on a continuous basis from 30.04.2014 until the last date of eligibility of the predefined projects. The eligible applicants are Project Promoters and donor project partners. One application was submitted by the Superior Council of Magistracy, as Project Promoter, and approved for financing. The contract, with a total budget of 1.992 EURO, was signed on the 9th of September 2014, and an advanced payment of 1.792,8 Euro was made. However, the Project Promoters informed about their intention to further submit new applications.

## **RO25 – Poverty Alleviation**

**Programme Operator:** Financial Mechanism Office / Deloitte

The Programme aims at contributing to closing the gap between the most deprived and the rest of the society in Romania, also through bilateral cooperation with key stakeholders from Norway and with strategic international partners to the Norway Grants. The overall Programme budget is 20,000,000 EUR. Roma population and Roma communities are priority topics within the entire programme.

In May 2014 Financial Mechanism Office selected Deloitte Consultanta as Fund Operator for the “Poverty Alleviation” Programme. The management contract with Deloitte was signed on 16th June 2014 and the Fund Operator has the responsibility in the first phase of the project to develop the programme management and control systems on the section regarding contacting and monitoring projects.

In the present reporting period, after receiving the formal donor approval, the Fund Operator signed 4 contracts with promoters, amounting 9,570,957 EUR with extension of 1,692,000 EUR. At the present moment, it has 3 other contracts under negotiations, amounting 6,397,704 EUR. Therefore 17,660,661 EUR out of the total allocation of 20,000,000 EUR is already engaged for pre-defined approved projects.

For the signed projects the Fund Operator has already paid the advance payments, amounting of 2,869,340 EUR.

## 4 MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

### 4.1 Management and control systems

The process of setting-up the Programme Operators' structures and the management and control systems was finalised in 2014.

The descriptions of the management and control systems and the related compliance audit reports and opinions were submitted to the provisions of the Regulations, as follows:

| Date of submission of MCS description and audit opinion | Programme Operator                         | Programme(s)   |
|---|--|--|
| <b>15 May 2014</b>                                      | The Romanian Social Development Fund       | RO10 - Children and Youth at Risk and Local and Regional Initiatives to Reduce National Inequalities and to Promote Social Inclusion   |
|   | Ministry of Culture                        | RO12 - Conservation and Revitalisation of Cultural and Natural Heritage, RO13 - Promotion of Diversity in Culture and Arts within European Cultural Heritage   |
|   | Ministry of National Education             | RO14 – Research in priority sectors  |
|   | NACPF EVT                                  | RO15 – Scholarships  |
|   | Ministry of European Funds                 | RO03 - Environmental Monitoring and Integrated Planning and Control; RO18 - Capacity-building and Institutional Cooperation between Romanian and Norwegian Public Institutions, Local and Regional Authorities |
|   | Ministry of Internal Affairs               | RO21 - Schengen Cooperation and Combating Cross-border and Organised Crime, including Trafficking and Itinerant Criminal Groups  |
|   | Ministry of Justice                        | RO20 - Domestic and Gender-based Violence; RO23 - Correctional Services, including Non-custodial Sanctions; RO24 - Judicial Capacity-building and Cooperation  |
| <b>09 September 2014</b>                                | Ministry of Environment and Climate Change | RO02 - Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services; RO04 - Reduction of Hazardous Substances; RO07 - Adaptation to Climate Change  |
|   | Ministry of Economy                        | RO05 - Energy Efficiency   |
|   | The Environment Fund Administration        | RO06 - Renewable Energy  |
|   | Ministry of Health                         | RO19 - Public Health Initiatives   |

Due to a reorganisation of the Romanian Government institutional structure, the following modifications have occurred at the level of a number of Programme Operators designated under the EEA Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 in Romania:



- For Programme RO14 – Research in Priority Sectors, the role of Programme Operator was taken over by the National Authority for Scientific Research and Innovation, an institution subordinated to the Ministry of Education and Research, responsible for implementing the ministry's tasks in the field of scientific research, technological development and innovation, created through Government Emergency Ordinance no. 86/2014 regarding certain measures of reorganization at the level of the central public administration and functioning based on Government Decision no. 27/23.01.2015.
- For Programmes RO02 – Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, RO04 – Reduction of Hazardous Substances and RO07 – Adaptation to Climate Change, the name of the Programme Operator was modified from Ministry of Environment and Climate Change to Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests, through Government Emergency Ordinance no. 86/2014 regarding certain measures of reorganization at the level of the central public administration.
- For Programme RO05 – Energy Efficiency, the name of the Programme Operator was modified from Ministry of Economy to Ministry of Economy, Commerce and Tourism, through Government Emergency Ordinance no. 86/2014 regarding certain measures of reorganization at the level of the central public administration.

#### 4.2 Compliance with EU legislation, national legislation and the MoU

The European, national and the specific regulatory framework of the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms is complied with at all levels of implementation. The management and control systems developed will also provide a special focus on providing adequate tools for ensuring the observance of public procurement and state aid legal provisions (if applicable).

The Programme Agreements and the Programme Implementation Agreements include also provisions aiming at ensuring that national and EU legislation are complied with at all levels during the implementation of the programmes. The same obligations are transferred to project promoters by way of the project contract. Observance of said legislation will be checked during project monitoring and verification.

The EU legislation on state aid is directly applicable in Romania, therefore all grantors have the obligation to comply with its provisions (if applicable). The Romanian Competition Council must ensure that all the conditions regarding state aid granting, monitoring and reporting, including compliance with the accumulation rules, are included in the regulatory/administrative documents which establish state aid measures.

According to the national legislation in force, the Romanian Competition Council monitors the state aids awarded in Romania based on the reports, information and data sent by state aid grantors within set deadlines. The Competition Council keeps and updates the State Aid Inventory, elaborates the Annual State Aids Report, and any other report necessary to fulfilling Romania's commitments in the field of State Aid as a EU Member state.

#### **Irregularities**

During 2013 and 2014 CPA reported the irregularities and suspicions of irregularities to FMO, according with the provisions of the Implementing Regulations, based on the reports on irregularities received from POs.

In 2014 CPA reported via Doris System three suspicions of irregularities that have been detected for RO02, RO04 and RO06 programmes.

The irregularity suspicion alerts for equipment purchased prepared by PO (August 2014) for RO02 and RO04 programmes were investigated and confirmed by the General Directorate of Economic and Financial Inspection from Ministry of Public Finance (December 2014), according with the national legislation.

CPA submitted to FMO in November 2014 the reports on new irregularities for RO02 and RO04 programmes for the period July-September 2014 and the amounts of the expenditures wrongfully incurred by the irregularities were : 15.490,08 lei – total value paid (grant +state budget co-financing) for RO02 programme and 15.162,72 lei – total value paid (grant + state budget co-financing) for RO04 programme. These amounts were not included in any IFR submitted to FMO and have been recovered and the EEA grant bank accounts have been replenished on December, 29, 2014.

The irregularity suspicion alert for RO06 programme prepared by PO (June 2014) was investigated and was not confirmed by the General Directorate of Economic and Financial Inspection from Ministry of Public Finance (March 2015), according with the national legislation.

CPA submitted to FMO in August 2014 the report on new irregularity for RO06 programme for the period April-June 2014 noting that the irregularity amount was not established. Taking into account that the suspicion of irregularity has not been confirmed the total amount paid by PO during January-December 2014 for salaries is declared in the IFR (Part A) that will be submitted to FMO during March 2015 according with the instructions received from FMO.

### 4.3 Audit, monitoring, review and evaluation

During 2014, the main activities performed by Programmes Operators have been the preparation and carrying-out of calls for proposals and/or the follow-up of the approval and contracting of predefined projects. As such, the NFP carried out a consistent and permanent monitoring of the implementation of programmes through regular monitoring meetings, quarterly monitoring reports submitted by POs, reviews of implementation calendars, as well as permanent contact with POs in order to be able to take corrective measures where needed.

Quarterly programme reports submitted by the POs constitute the basis for the discussion of the monitoring meetings organised by the NFP with all POs representatives; each Programme Officer within the NFP performs an analysis of the reports.

The NFP also keeps updated information on the following topics, based on reports from POs: payments made by POs (monthly), implementation of the Fund for Bilateral Relations at Programme Level (quarterly), progress of calls and predefined projects (monthly), Roma issues.

In 2015, in addition to above mentioned monitoring activities, the NFP will also conduct monitoring visits at Programme Operator level, for the verification of progress in programme implementation, financial management and compliance the Regulation and national legislation.

### Information and publicity

#### **Activities undertaken by the NFP**

According with the NFP's responsibilities stipulated in the Regulations on the implementation of the EEA and/or Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2009-2014 and with the Annex 4 of these regulations, during the reporting period the following main activities were implemented:

1. Conferences, seminars
2. Press releases
3. Production of promotional materials
4. Working group for information and publicity
5. Public opinion survey

All these main activities respect the general objectives of the NFP Communication Strategy which are to:

- Ensure recognition of the role and results of the EEA Financial Mechanism and of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism;
- Support the strengthening of the bilateral relations between the Donor States and Romania
- Inform target groups about funding opportunities that Romania can benefit from EEA and Norway Financial Mechanisms, about objectives, conditions and benefits upon completion;
- Support optimum use of these funds.

## **1. Conferences, seminars**

One of the most possibilities to spreading the information regarding the EEA& Norway Grants is to implement the conferences mixed with the press conference.

The NFP task managers collaborate with the PO teams for the Programme launching conferences and the events were organised according with the requirements from Communication and Design Manual. The relevant information about the events was posted on the PO website and NFP website. All POs produced promotional materials on the occasion of the launch.

Also, The NFP organised the seminars on horizontal issues:

- two seminars on the issue of Roma objective;
- a seminar on DORIS (training for POs);
- a seminar on irregularities (training for POs).

## **2. Press releases**

After the launching events/conferences organised within the programmes, the NFP posted on the website press releases.

In this context the statistics is the following:

- 17 news about launching the call for proposals within the EEA and Norway Grants;
- 4 news about launching the call for proposals within the National Bilateral Fund;
- More than 9 news about activities at Programmes level.

Also, the NFP website contains all information regarding the annual meeting, two seminars on the issue of Roma objective, call for proposals launched on EEA & Norway Grants in Romania, etc. Moreover, the POs have transmitted press release for the launch of every call for proposals, which was also posted on the NFP the website.

The NFP performs daily on-line press monitoring.

Important news and events are also published on the website of the Ministry of European Funds [www.fonduri-ue.ro](http://www.fonduri-ue.ro), the main information source for non-reimbursable funds in Romania.

## **3. Production of promotional materials**

In order to promote the priority areas within the EEA & Norway Grants in Romania, in March 2014 the NFP produced a promotional brochure where the relevant information related to each programme are presented. The brochure was printed in two versions Romanian (600 pieces) and English (150 pieces) and distributed to the relevant stakeholders. Also, the electronic version is posted on the NFP website.

## **4. Working group for information and publicity**

In order to coordinate properly the informational and publicity activities the NFP organise the working group on this area. The working group is formed by persons responsible with this task from PO and NFP and also the responsible from the Norwegian Embassy at Bucharest.

The purpose of the working group is to implement correctly the requirements from the Communication and Design Manual and to discuss any problems occurring during implementation. Also, NFP has followed-up the fulfilment of the requirement related to the development of Programmes dedicated websites, launching events, seminars, leaflets and press releases for the programmes. The promotional materials produced on each programme are designed by the PO together with the NFP.

The first working group was organised in February 2014 and trained the PO representatives on the Communication and Design Manual.

## **5. Public opinion survey**

A public opinion survey, in accordance with the Communication Strategy, was carried-out in 2014. The related service contract was implemented between March-May 2014. The opinion survey conducted 1,054 questionnaires, men and women aged over 18 and the margin of sampling error was  $\pm 3\%$ . The

sample is both national and regional representative and enables the analysis of the information at regional and national level. The results of the surveys were transmitted to the FMO.

A second public opinion survey will be implemented at the end of the 2016 in order to see the differences between the public perception at the beginning and at the final implementation period of EEA & Norway Grants 2009-2014.

#### ***Activities which will be implemented in the next period***

In accordance with the Communication Strategy, the following activities will be implemented in the next period:

1. Continuing to uploads data on the website
2. Cooperation with the other information centres
3. Press releases
4. Press monitoring service
5. Promotional materials
6. Thematic seminars/workshops for journalists
7. Trainings for the communication officers in the NFP and POs
8. Conference focusing on the programmes implementation.

The NFP will continue to respect all the obligations from the Regulations and the Annex 4.

#### ***Update of the Communication Strategy***

Following the reallocation process of October 2014, the funds for Technical Assistance have been diminished with a total amount of 2 million euro (1.5 million euro from TA funds allocated to the NFP and 0.5 million euro from TA funds allocated to the Certifying Authority) and the total budget allocated to information and publicity was decreased with 219,666 Euro. The current amount is 450,334 Euros.

The Communication Strategy will be revised by the National Focal Point and sent to the Financial Mechanism Office in the next period of time.

#### ***Information and publicity activities implemented by the Programme Operators***

All the POs have ensured an appropriate level of communication of the launching of calls for proposals, through press releases and posting information on the Programme website, NFP website and eeagrants.org.

On a number of Programmes, in addition to the launching event, POs have also organized public information sessions for potential applicants in order to achieve maximum visibility and also help clarify any aspects regarding the application process, as follows:

- Programme RO10 – 17 sessions organized for the 3 components of the programme, reaching the entire country at local level, website: [www.granturi-corai.ro](http://www.granturi-corai.ro) ,
- Programme RO12 - 6 information sessions in 6 major cities representative for the main Regions of the Romania. Website: [www.fonduri-patrimoniu.ro](http://www.fonduri-patrimoniu.ro)
- Programme RO13 – 6 information sessions in 6 major cities representative for the main Regions of the Romania. Website: [www.fonduri-diversitate.ro](http://www.fonduri-diversitate.ro)
- Programme RO05 – 3 information sessions in 3 major cities of Romania [www.minind.ro](http://www.minind.ro)

All the POs have set-up dedicated websites/webpages for the Programmes, constantly updated with relevant information.

#### ***Assessment of the results of the communication and publicity activities***

Based on the above, the NFPs assessment is that the communication and measures undertaken have ensured an appropriate level of knowledge regarding the Grants both for potential applicants and the general public. As the Grants are progressing in terms of results achieved, the impact and interest raised by communication activities will become more significant.

#### 4.4 Work plan

In 2015, as selection and contracting of projects will be finalised, the main activities in programmes will be related to implementation of projects – monitoring, verification of expenditure, payments, etc.

The NFP will continue the monitoring of programmes through quarterly progress reports and meetings with POs. In addition, the NFP will conduct monitoring visits at the level of all Programme Operators, for the verification of progress in programme implementation, financial management and compliance the Regulation and national legislation:

| <b>Activity:</b>  | <b>Implementation period</b>  |
|---|---|
| Meetings between NFP and Programme Operators  | Quarterly or as needed  |
| Meetings NFP - each Programme Operator on programme specific issues   | As needed   |
| Preparation of the Annual Programme Reports by the Programme Operators, verification by NFP                         | February 2015   |
| Preparation and submission of the Strategic Report  | March 2015  |
| Monitoring Committee meeting  | April 2015  |
| Selection of projects   | RO 02, RO 04 – March<br>RO 05 – August-September  |
| Evaluation, selection and contracting of applications under the second call of the Bilateral Fund at National Level | January – December 2015   |
| Annual Meeting on the EEA and Norway Grants   | June 2015   |
| Modifications of Programme Agreements   | RO18 – April 2015<br>Ro 19 – March 2015<br>RO 20 – February 2015<br>RO 24 – January 2015<br>As needed |
| Cooperation Committee meetings organised by the Programme Operators   | As established by the Programme Operators   |
| Information activities: launching events, press releases, information seminars, etc.                                | As established by the Programme Operators or the National Focal Point                                 |

#### NFP monitoring visits - plan for 2015

| <b>Programme Operator</b>                                  | <b>Month</b> |
|--|--------------|
| Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (RO 02, 04, 07) | May          |
| Ministry of Economy (RO05)                                 | March        |
| The Environment Fund Administration (RO06)                 | September    |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| The Romanian Social Development Fund (RO10)   | June      |
| Ministry of Labor, Family and Social Protection and the Elderly (RO11)                                | February  |
| Ministry of Culture (RO12, RO13)  | June      |
| Ministry of Education and Research - NASRI (RO14)   | October   |
| The National Agency for Community Programmes in the Field of Education and Vocational Training (RO15) | September |
| Ministry of Health (RO19)   | March     |
| Ministry of Justice (RO20, 23, 24)  | May       |
| Ministry of Internal Affairs (RO21)   | October   |

## 5 SUMMARY LIST OF ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the status of progress present herewith, the main reason for concern related to the successful outcome of the 2009-2014 EEA and Norway Grants in Romania is the insufficient time remaining for the implementation of projects. As a risk mitigating measure, a Donors' decision concerning the extension of the period of eligibility of expenditures in projects until 31 December 2017 is necessary.

Another issue to be followed-up closely is the functioning and staffing of the PO structures, especially in Programmes registering a low progress in implementation – environment (RO02, RO04, RO07), energy efficiency (RO06), initiatives in public health (RO19).

Special measures should be taken regarding the implementation of the funds for bilateral relations at programme level, benefiting from a significant budgetary allocation but with an inadequate current and prospective rate of implementation. It should be taken under consideration that, as projects begin implementation, the time and resources for both the project promoters and donor project partners for additional bilateral activities will be extremely limited.

### ATTACHMENTS TO THE STRATEGIC REPORT

1. For each Programme, a table showing the breakdown in respect of applications received and projects selected / contracted. – **Annex 1**
2. Types of intervention supported. [DoRIS report] – **Annex 2&3**
3. For each Programme, a table providing information in respect of donor partnership projects (names of Donor State entities, number and proportion of partnership projects). [DoRIS report] – **Annex 2&3**
4. A summary table on Donor partnership projects on the Beneficiary State level. [DoRIS report] **Annex 2&3**
5. A list of irregularities detected at the Beneficiary State level and at Programme level during the reporting period and financial corrections made. Provide an update on previously reported irregularities. [DoRIS report] - **Annex 4**
6. For each Programme, a list of irregularities detected at project level during the reporting period and financial corrections made. Provide an update on previously reported irregularities. [DoRIS report] - **Annex 5**
7. A plan setting out the monitoring and audit activities in the Beneficiary State for the coming reporting period - **Annex 6**
8. A risk assessment at the national level - **Annex 7**
9. Report on Roma target - **Annex 8**
10. Overview of Calls for Proposals - **Annex 9**
11. Overview of Predefined Projects - **Annex 10**
12. Disbursements and payments – **Annex 11**
13. Overview of activities under the Fund for Bilateral Relations at National Level - **Annex 12**
14. TA report – 2014 - **Annex 13**

