



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

GOVERNMENT OFFICE FOR DEVELOPMENT
AND EUROPEAN COHESION POLICY

COMBINED STRATEGIC & ANNUAL PROGRAMME REPORT

ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EEA FINANCIAL MECHANISM AND NORWEGIAN FINANCIAL MECHANISM 2009 - 2014 IN SLOVENIA



Reporting period:

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Prepared by:

National Focal Point

**Government Office for Development and
European Cohesion Policy**

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SI01 (Technical assistance and the fund for bilateral relations at national level), SI02 (EEA financial mechanism programme), SI03 (Funds for non-governmental organisations), SI04 (EEA and Norwegian scholarship programme) and SI05 (Norwegian financial mechanism programme) are in full implementation.

Within the programmes SI03 and SI04, projects are entering the final phase and we predict that the programme objectives will be achieved. Programmes SI02 and SI05 were extended until 31 December 2017. Activities in all projects are currently under way. All project promoters have been informed about the possibility of extending their projects. Only 5 projects out of 36 decided not to extend project duration, and consequently we will be able to monitor the projects outcomes in the second half of 2016. In May 2015 GODC established a new division dedicated only to the donor programmes, namely Financial Mechanisms Division.

In 2015 the main focus of the SI02 programme was to conclude and sign contracts with project promoters of selected projects (public call) and to start implementation. The SI02 programme was extended until 31 December 2017. The project promoters were given the option of assessing the required length of extension. The predefined project “Modernisation of Spatial Data Infrastructure to Reduce Risks and Impacts of Floods” is being implemented in accordance with the Project Implementation Plan. In 2015 work on the SI03 programme was mainly devoted to monitoring the implementation of sub-projects as the programme moved into the sub-projects implementation phase. The selection process was concluded back in 2014, when contracts were signed with 33 beneficiaries in total. Under SI04, in January 2015 the third and last call of the Slovene Scholarship Fund EEA, NFM was concluded, with 27 applications received and 18 projects approved. These projects were started up on 1 April 2015. After three calls there were 39 mobility and 13 inter-institutional projects, and up to the date of reporting 186 mobilities of students and 166 mobilities of staff have been implemented in cooperation with 31 partner institutions from Donor States. In relation to the ongoing development of the programme and individual project activities that are being carried out, there is certainty that the programme objectives will be achieved. As for the programme SI05, the main focus in 2015 was on concluding and signing contracts with project promoters of selected projects (public call) and starting implementation. Due to the results-based and focused approach, the selected projects are seen as forming a good base on which to achieve programme outputs, outcomes and indicators in the coming years (2016 and first few months of 2017). The predefined project “Towards Better Health and Reducing Inequities in Health”, implemented by the Institute of Public Health of the Republic of Slovenia, and the predefined project “Towards Equalizing Power Relations between Woman and Men”, implemented by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal opportunities, are being carried out in accordance with the Project Implementation Plans.

One of the main objectives of the funds from the NOR and EEA Financial Mechanisms is to enhance relations between beneficiary countries and donor countries, and this is supported through the bilateral fund at the national level as well as through the programme level. In 2015 at the national level most activities were carried out in the field of gender equality, and we would also like to mention a study visit of members of the Slovenian parliament to Oslo. There have been certain activities on the programme level (study visits, conferences) and for the programmes SI02 and SI05 a call for proposals under bilateral funds will be published in early 2016. We also have to emphasise that project promoters and their project partners contributed to strengthening bilateral relations between Slovenia and the Donor States.

In 2015 we also had the opportunity to have a meeting with our colleagues from Lithuania (Programme Operator – CPMA) which we both found very positive, to have exchange of experiences, best practices and knowledge among institutions included within the Financial Mechanisms.

Since the active implementation phase at the project level and the closure of certain projects is in 2016, we are planning to organise closure events for all 4 programmes in Slovenia. We would like to present the results of the projects to a wider audience and ultimately to extend the visibility of the impact of the Norwegian and EEA funds in Slovenia.

2 ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECT OF THE GRANTS

2.1 Cohesion

In Slovenia the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy (GODC) coordinates the development documents of the Republic of Slovenia, monitors the implementation of development policies and its programmes and is also responsible for the coordination of documents pertaining to development planning and compliance of national development planning programmes, and to European Union and other international organisations' development documents. GODC is also managing the preparation and coordination of the strategic documents with the European Union.

At the end of 2015 our Government Office drew up (already confirmed by the European Commission) Slovenia's Smart Specialisation Strategy (S4) which, as stated in the Strategy, is a platform for concentrating development investments in areas where Slovenia has the critical mass of knowledge, capacities and competences and where there is innovation potential for placing Slovenia within global markets and thus enhancing its recognisability. Smart specialisation is a strategy aiming to:

- a) Strengthen the competitiveness of the economy by enhancing its innovation capacity
- b) Diversify existing industries and service activities
- c) Boost growth of new and fast-growing industries and enterprises.

S4 is also an implementing document relating to the already-adopted strategic documents. S4 addresses in a comprehensive manner a broad range of development policies related to innovation, in particular the policy of promoting research and innovation, industrial policy, entrepreneurship promotion and some parts of the education system, rural development policy, international relations, improved regulatory environment and so forth. For Slovenia it is important that all funds, including national as well as European Cohesion funds and those of the donors NOR and EEA FM focus on the objectives of economic and social development and development policies, and we also strive for the complementarity of funds.

EEA Programme (SI02)

Contribution of NOR and EEA FM

Environmental Monitoring and Integrated Planning and Control

The main goal of the project is modernisation of spatial data infrastructure (SDI) as a function of reducing the risks and impact of floods. The goals are being met up to the current stage of the project. Both-the grant and the partnerships with Norwegian and Icelandic experts have significantly contributed to a greater awareness of SDI and also to cooperation between different, equally important stakeholders in the area of implementing of the Inspire Directive as a standardisation framework and as a system of authoritative data provision with emphasis on reducing flood risks. The grant itself and the need for project oriented organisation in such a heterogeneous area have brought different professions to a much needed common understanding and collaboration to achieve the common goals contained in the project objectives. Outside those significant achievements of the grant and of the project the establishment of a technical base in the area of geographical data referencing (state geodetic reference system, standardised topographic database) and in the area of hydrography (provision of terrain data, harmonised hydrographical data, data on existing water infrastructure) have been achieved. Both-the financing from the grant and the achieved inter-organisational cooperation form a base without which

Slovenia certainly could not and would not make such progress in the relatively short period of project duration.

Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

In Slovenia's Smart Specialisation Strategy of 2015, well-preserved biodiversity represents a great potential, especially for the development of high-quality eco-tourism and for the field of sustainable food.

Slovenia is one of the EU countries with the highest biodiversity in Europe (UNEP – WCMC Biodiversity index 2001). This high biodiversity is reflected in the high proportion of the Natura 2000 network, a legal instrument of the EU for conservation of biodiversity features in the Union's interest – i.e. species and habitat types of European importance. Slovenia has designated 354 Natura 2000 sites covering 7,683 km² or 38% of the country, which is the highest (terrestrial) rate in the EU. In many areas the conservation status of these species and habitat types is good or exceptional compared to other EU members, but some are in unfavourable conservation status. The programme area focuses on improvement of conservation status of these habitat types and species, especially in agricultural (grassland) and wetland areas, and some forest habitat types, and to enlarge monitoring and surveys of species and habitat types.

Four selected projects (3 of them in regions with development constraints) aim to contribute to effective on-site measures to conserve 25 species and habitat types in unfavourable conservation status. Information and education activities accompany each of the projects to ensure the cooperation of key stakeholders and local communities.

Conservation and revitalisation of cultural and natural heritage

In Slovenia's Smart Specialisation Strategy of 2015 the key priority for tourism is the design of competitive and sustainable tourism, based on unspoilt nature and natural and cultural resources.

Natural heritage is an important part of Slovenia's tourist attraction. For sustainable tourism development connected to natural heritage sites, infrastructure for visitors that also protects natural heritage from being damaged should be provided. According to the Nature Conservation Act, what are termed valuable natural features include all natural heritage features within the territory of Slovenia.

Since the two selected projects are still in the implementing stage, it is difficult to assess the end effect of the EEA FM contribution to this area; however, more efficient conservation and preservation of valuable natural features within state-protected areas will be enabled through special emphasis on arranging public infrastructure for visitors. After completion of the two selected projects the public infrastructure in two national designated protected areas will be arranged.

Cultural heritage is a promising agent of integrated social and sustainable development and the promotion of cultural diversity and equal cooperation of individuals and communities in society. The objective is the protection and preservation of cultural heritage and the integration of cultural heritage into the sustainable development of Slovenia. The results expected are the renovation and preservation of cultural heritage and its improved availability to the public. After the completion of two selected projects, three cultural monuments will be arranged with the allocated funds.

Funds for non-governmental organisations (SI03)

Contribution of NOR and EEA FM

The economic crisis is affecting more civil society organisations (CSO) in Slovenia each year. Public funds and donations are decreasing, and CSOs are struggling to keep their programmes running. Public image and service provision improved in 2015. CSOs are increasingly present in national daily media, either as expert commentators or as the subjects of positive stories. Public authorities increasingly recognise service-providing CSOs and include them in national strategies and the implementation of public policies and services.

The number of NGOs is constantly rising, as well as their income and number of employees. There are more than 26,000 registered CSOs in Slovenia, including almost 23,350 associations (89.0%), 2,810 private institutes (10%) and 278 foundations (1%). However, not all registered organisations are active. According to the Agency for Public Legal Records and Related Services (AJPES) and the Statistical Office, 40.6% of CSOs are registered in urban municipalities and 59.4% of CSOs are registered in rural areas. There are also 59 registered social enterprises, although many more companies operate as social enterprises without registering as such.

CSO sector Slovenia 2015 in numbers

Number of <u>active</u> NGOs in the years of 2009 – 2014						
Legal form/year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Association	20,419	20,721	21,274	21,987	21,987	22,559
Private institutes	1,541	1,763	1,946	2,347	2,348	2,566
Foundations	196	212	222	240	240	236
TOTAL	22,156	22,696	23,442	24,574	24,575	25,361

The number of non-governmental organisations has been steadily growing, with the fastest growing number being private institutes (in 2014 - 11.3%), while the slowest growing number is associations (in 2014 only 2.6%). The overall index of annual growth in the number of non-governmental organizations in 2014 was 3.5%.

Number of employees in NGOs in the years of 2009 – 2014						
Legal form/year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Associations	2,956	3,050	2,887	2,913	3,090	3,289
Private institutes	2,693	3,083	3,238	3,274	3,517	3,737
Foundations	56	66	59	64	79	81
TOTAL	5,705	6,199	6,184	6,251	6,686	7,107

The total number of employees in NGOs grew in recent years despite the economic crisis, which is mainly the consequence of the growth of employment in private institutes. In 2011, associations and foundations for the first time hired fewer workers than the year before, while their number in institutes grew. The number of employees in associations and in foundations has been rising since 2012 and in 2013 exceeded the number of 2009.

NGO income (annual turnover) in the years of 2010 – 2014 in EUR					
Legal form/year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Associations	535,426,277	529,241,619	531,136,675	519,705,440	537,273,256
Private institutes	189,999,443	211,744,195	209,305,705	214,211,154	218,391,669
Foundations	8,674,306	7,841,320	8,586,686	8,915,116	8,393,319
TOTAL	734,100,026	748,827,134	749,029,066	742,831,710	764,058,244

The income of NGOs grew in recent years, despite the economic crisis, until 2013, when it was initially lower than the previous year.

Source: http://www.cnvos.si/article?path=/podrocjadela/zagovornistvo/nvo_sektor_dejstva_in_stevilke

CNVOS regularly generates and publishes data on NGOs on the basis of cooperation with the Ministry of Public Administration and the Agency for Public Legal Records and Related Services (AJPES).

EEA and Norwegian Scholarship programme (SI04)

Contribution of NOR and EEA FM

Continuing with the same focus on the national and EU area regarding internationalisation the Slovene Scholarship Fund EEA, NFM programme contributes to principal objectives and policies of the programme. The implemented measures and activities have proven to be adequate and successful at all levels of the education sector. In 2015 the Scholarship Fund SI04 still proved to be complementary to the new EU programme Erasmus+ and at the same time a reliable continuation of the former EU Lifelong Learning Programme.

Higher education institutions continued to run the programmes within their regular activities and strengthened their cooperation with institutions from the Donor States. The interest shown in the Call 2015 for activities in the field of higher education has stayed constant compared with the previous two calls. The activities of the scholarship fund (mobility, cooperation projects and preparatory visits) and eligible funds within each measure represent those incentives needed for bilateral cooperation between the beneficiary and Donor State to evolve, opening a dialogue about future cooperation.

Norwegian programme (SI05)

Contribution of NOR and EEA FM

Public Health Initiatives

The programme focuses on reducing inequalities among user groups, prevention and reduction of life-style related diseases and improving mental health services in Slovenia. By the end of 2015, the projects selected through the public call reached the peak of their implementation. The pre-defined project "Towards Better Health and Reducing Inequities in Health" will contribute to achieving both previously determined programme results in the field of Public Health Initiatives, which contribute to achieving the programme outcome – the reduction or prevention of lifestyle-related diseases.

Although a number of project outputs have already materialized, their impact on programme outcomes cannot yet be measured. Nevertheless the numbers already achieved regarding outputs and outcomes of the programme (trained professionals in life-style-related chronic diseases prevention, trained professionals in health inequality and related topics and issues, trained primary health care and other professionals in mental health) give us the basis for assessing that the selected projects form a good basis for achieving programme outcomes and indicators in the coming years (2016 and first few months of 2017).

Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Promoting Work-life Balance

The programme aims to raise awareness and promote research on gender equality issues by focusing on challenging unequal power relations between women and men in economic and political decision-making.

With all the activities carried out the pre-defined project "Towards Equalizing Power Relations between Women and Men" will contribute to achieving the previously determined programme output in the field of Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Promoting Work-Life Balance. We anticipate that the implementation of other projects regarding gender equality will raise awareness and promote research on gender issues and increase understanding of equal/unequal power relations between women and men.

2.2. Bilateral relations

In 2015 the funds available for bilateral relations made an important contribution to the strengthening of bilateral relations between Slovenia and the Donor States. Cooperation between them took place at the national as well as programme and project levels in various frameworks, namely cooperation among research institutions, universities, officials, non-governmental sector and politicians.

Within the programme level there have been several study visits and conferences (pre-defined projects, 3 study visits and one conference). Project Promoters and their project partners also contributed to strengthening bilateral relations between Slovenia and the Donor States. For the programme SI02 and SI05 a call for proposals under bilateral funds will be published in the first few months of 2016. The funds will be allocated only to already co-financed projects selected under the public call and the pre-defined projects.

SI03 and partnership projects with organisations from Donor States: Within the first call (large and medium projects) 111 project applicants applied in partnership with organisations from the Donor States (91 from Norway, 23 from Iceland, 2 from Liechtenstein). In the end, ten of them were selected.

The applications for small projects included 13 projects submitted with Donor States partners (11 from Norway, 2 from Iceland). Out of 18 supported small projects 3 have partners from the Donor States (2 from Norway, 1 from Iceland).

Programme SI04 - EEA AND NORWEGIAN SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME The main impact that the Programme Operator (PO) of the Slovene Scholarship Fund sees so far lies in increased bilateral cooperation and partnerships, which consequently contributed to the improved mutual understanding and personal competences of persons involved. As far as the bilateral indicators set out in the Programme Overview are concerned, it can be said at this point the objectives have been reached.

With regard to cooperation at the national level, in addition to study visits, two thematic seminars were held in Slovenia. The two seminars contributed to the enhanced visibility of the Norwegian and the EEA Financial Mechanism, and underlined and strengthened bilateral cooperation on various levels. Without doubt the Fund for bilateral relations at the national level strengthen the cooperation of various stakeholders within the given areas of cooperation at the national level, namely Cooperation in the field of health, Cooperation in the field of gender equality, Slovenian / EEA countries experiences in the past and future European integration.

In 2015, the following activities were performed and covered with the funds for bilateral relations at the national level :

In May 2015 two events were organised, with the purpose of the exchange of good practices between Slovenia, Norway and Iceland. The first thematic seminar Gender Equality - What have men got to do with it? was held in Ljubljana (8 May 2015) where the role of men in gender equality policy was presented. Two foreign experts, one from Iceland and one Norway participated at the seminar. The event was widely attended by academia, representatives of NGOs, policy and decision-makers and the general public. The second seminar Gender Equality: Think global, act local was held in Brdo pri Kranju (27th May 2015) with a focus on promotion of gender equality in local communities. One foreign expert from Iceland participated at the seminar. This event was mostly attended by policy and decision-makers at the local level.

The last activity was a study visit to Norway with the aim of exchanging good practices in the field gender equality in general, specifically in the areas of research and representation of women in media and in culture and the role of trade unions and other stakeholders in the implementation of gender equality policy.

The study visit was also a great opportunity to present activities of the project Towards Equalizing Power Relations of Women and Men, which is co-financed by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism, to the representatives of all institutions that will participate at the concluding international conference in

autumn 2016 and will present good practices to interested group. Representative of the Department of Information and Media Studies will share the Norwegian experience of the representation of women in the media at one of the thematic meetings which are also part of the project and will be organised in spring 2016.

The Royal Norwegian Embassy in Budapest in collaboration with The National Focal Point, organised a study visit to Oslo for members of the Slovenian Parliamentary Friendship Group with Norway. The "Nordic model" is a subject of interest in Slovenia, with its unique combination of social security and a thriving market economy. The balance between these two important considerations is high on the Slovenian agenda, and the Norwegian experience provided valuable input for Slovenian politicians interested in the topic. Three members of the Parliamentary Friendship Group with Norway had meetings at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Children, Equality and Inclusion, Ministry of Trade and Fisheries, Ministry of Education and Research and at the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee of the Norwegian parliament.

The study was financed through the remaining funds EUR 3,600 for "Other initiatives to be agreed with the donors" for 2015.

3 REPORTING ON PROGRAMMES

3.1 Overview of Programme status

The programmes SI01 (Technical assistance and the fund for bilateral relations at the national level), SI02 (EEA financial mechanism programme), SI03 (Funds for non-governmental organisations), SI04 (EEA and Norwegian scholarship programme) and SI05 (Norwegian financial mechanism programme) are in full implementation.

The SI01 programme is being operated by the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy. Within the Technical Assistance fund the funds are being used to cover programme management costs at the National Focal Point, the Certifying Authority and the Audit Authority and other activities related to the National Focal Point.

The SI02 programme covers three programme areas: "Biodiversity and ecosystem services", "Conservation and revitalisation of cultural and natural heritage" and "Environmental monitoring and integrated planning and control". The programme is being run by the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy. In 2015 the main focus was on concluding/signing contracts with project promoters of selected projects (public call) and on starting implementation.

The pre-defined project "Modernisation of Spatial Data Infrastructure to Reduce Risks and Impacts of Floods" is being implemented in accordance with the Project Implementation Plan. In 2015, the project promoter submitted four reports on the progress of the project.

The SI02 programme was extended until 31 December 2017. The project promoters were given the possibility of evaluating the required length of extension. The Programme Operator trusts their appraisals as well as affirmations that they will manage to reach the set targets.

In 2015 work on the SI03 programme was mainly devoted to monitoring the implementation of sub-projects as the programme moved into the sub-projects implementation phase. The selection process was concluded back in 2014 when contracts were signed with 33 beneficiaries in total. Of these 8 beneficiaries received funding for medium-sized projects (up to EUR 60,000), 7 beneficiaries received funding for large projects (up to EUR 120,000), and 18 beneficiaries received funding for small projects (up to EUR 20,000).

Upon completion of both planned open calls, practically all available funds have been distributed, and only EUR 4,185 remained unallocated and according to the activities foreseen in the selected projects we expect also good content coverage of selected outcomes.

The Programme Operator (REC and CNVOS) implemented several capacity building activities such as workshops for project implementation and reporting, workshops for building synergies between co-financed projects and individual consultations with beneficiaries.

Continuing with the same focus on the national and EU area regarding internationalisation, the Slovene Scholarship Fund EEA, NFM programme contributes to principal objectives and policies of the programme. The implemented measures and activities have proven to be adequate and successful at all levels of the education sector. In 2015 the Scholarship Fund SI04 still proved to be complementary to the new EU programme Erasmus+ and at the same time a reliable continuation of the former EU Lifelong Learning Programme. In January 2015 the third and the last call of the Slovene Scholarship Fund EEA, NFM was concluded with 27 applications received and 18 projects approved. These projects were started up on 1 April 2015 (except for three projects that were approved later from the reserve list).

Higher education institutions continued to run the programmes within their regular activities and strengthened their cooperation with institutions from the Donor States without major difficulties. The interest shown in the Call 2015 for activities in the field of higher education has remained constant compared to the previous two calls. The activities of the scholarship fund (mobility, cooperation projects and preparatory visits) and eligible funds within each measure represent those incentives needed for bilateral cooperation between the beneficiary and Donor State to evolve, opening a dialogue about future cooperation.

There were some initial problems with receiving a sufficient number of applications for mobility projects for the school sector (Measure 3) but according to the trends of each call it could be deduced that there is a greater interest in the preparation and implementation of inter-institutional projects (Measure 5) with the possibility of enhanced cooperation and achievement of tangible results, with greater impact.

After three calls there were 39 mobility and 13 inter-institutional projects and up to the date of reporting 186 mobilities of students and 166 mobilities of staff have been implemented in cooperation with 31 partner institutions from Donor States. The number of partner institutions is even higher since the applicants in Measure 2 did not have to identify their partners at the application stage because these partners vary, depending on the mobile person's interest and new bilateral agreements reached. The final number of partners will be known after the conclusion of all projects. Based on the activities of projects under Measure 2, partnerships for Measure 4 (intensive programmes) are frequently formed. Intensive programmes, or rather summer schools, have a stronger impact with regards to the principal objectives of the programme: through the activities, partners gain better knowledge of each other and thus strengthen their partnership. Participants, particularly students involved in the programme, receive a significant knowledge input related to a specific topic and work closely together, which ensures the enhancement of their knowledge base.

In relation to the ongoing development of the programme and individual project activities that are being carried out there is certainty that the programme objectives will be achieved. Some institutions are struggling to identify new potential partners and there are some communicational problems, but the Programme Operator is striving to resolve them as soon as possible with the support of national agencies from the DS and Norwegian embassy. The monitoring activities related to the risk and mitigation plan do anticipate these difficulties and adequate measures were scheduled – on-the-spot checks/visits, regular reporting, etc. any significant changes in the outputs/outcomes of the programme were not anticipated. As for administrative and financial changes, there were no significant alterations or difficulties; changes that have occurred were promptly resolved and redefined in accordance with the FMO instructions (reallocation of funds among projects, among measures and among calls).

The SI05 programme covers two programme areas: "Public Health Initiatives" and "Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Promoting Work-life Balance". The programme is being run by the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy. In 2015 the main focus was on concluding/signing contracts with project promoters of selected projects (public call) and on starting implementation. Due to the results-based and focused approach the selected projects are assessed as

forming a good basis for achieving programme outputs, outcomes and indicators in the coming years (2016 and first months of 2017). In 2015 the project promoters submitted 2 interim reports covering the implementation period up to 31 August 2015.

The pre-defined project “Towards Better Health and Reducing Inequities in Health”, implemented by the Institute of Public Health of the Republic of Slovenia, is being implemented in accordance with the Project Implementation Plan. In 2015 the project promoter submitted three reports on the progress of the project up to 31 August 2015.

The pre-defined project “Towards Equalizing Power Relations between Women and Men”, implemented by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal opportunities, is being carried out in accordance with the Project Implementation Plan. In 2015 the project promoter submitted three reports on the progress of the project up to 31 August 2015.

The SI05 programme was extended until 31 December 2017. The project promoters were given the possibility of evaluating the required length of extension of their projects. The Programme Operator trusts their appraisals as well as affirmations that they will manage to reach the set targets.

The Slovenian Cooperation Committee meeting concerning the SI05 programme was held on 3 November 2015. The Cooperation Committee members discussed programme implementation, the status and achievements of projects (in particular those with Norwegian partners), bilateral activities, complementary actions and activities concerning the promotion of Norway grants in Slovenia. The conclusion was that the projects are well on the way to reaching the set objectives.

The Programme Operator attended the PO’s meeting in Prague in December 2015.

3.2 Individual Programme reporting

3.2.1 Overall progress as regards implementation of the Programmes and their sub-projects; 3.2.1. Programme SI01 – TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND THE FUND FOR BILATERAL RELATIONS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

The purpose of the technical assistance programme is to contribute to the management cost at the National Focal Point, the Certifying Authority and the Audit Authority related to the implementation of the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms.

3.2.1.1. Overall progress as regards implementation of the Programme:

In 2015, the following activities were performed and covered with Technical Assistance funds:

- 4th Annual Audit Report and Opinion prepared;
- Audit strategy prepared;
- All requests submitted to the Certifying Authority certified;
- Monitoring committee organised by the National Focal Point (13 March 2015);
- Annual meeting organised by the National Focal Point (16-17 March 2015);
- Labour cost at the Certifying Authority, Audit Authority and National Focal Point;
- Participation of 1 representative of the National Focal Point at the Communication workshop (Prague, 14-15 April 2015);
- Participation of 1 representative of the National Focal Point at the workshop for the Scholarship Fund, (Tromsø, Trondheim 6-9 June 2015);
- Study visit of 1 representative of the National Focal Point, programme SI02 and Certifying Authority in Lithuania (10-14 October 2015) and the organisation of a study visit of the Lithuanian Programme Operator CPMA to Ljubljana (10-11 June 2015);
- Participation of 2 representatives of the NFP in Iceland, meetings regarding activities in the Norwegian and EEA FM programmes and discussions about priorities for the new financial period 2014-2021 (Iceland, 5-9 September 2015).

3.2.1.3. Outputs achieved:

- 1 representative of the National Focal Point acquainted with the communication activities regarding the presentation of projects, results and so forth;
- 1 representative of The National Focal Point acquainted with activities within the Scholarship Programme (lessons learned and future EEA grants, good practices, evaluation, Communication strategy);
- 2 representatives of the National Focal Point acquainted with the priorities of Iceland for the next financial period, the meetings were also an important contribution to the strengthening of bilateral relations.
- The aim of the study visits was to present the Lithuanian system pertaining to the implementation of the Financial Mechanisms and to visit the projects co-financed under the Financial Mechanisms. A representative of the National Focal Point, programme SI02 and Certifying Authority was acquainted with the experiences, best practices and difficulties of the Lithuanian Programme Operator CPMA, relating to the implementation of the Financial Mechanisms.

3.2.1.4. Potential risks that may threaten the achievement of the objectives set out in the Programme;

Human resources management is important for effective implementation. Each phase of implementation of the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanism requires an adequate number of appropriately skilled staff to carry out the required tasks. It is also important to have the support of all the supporting services within the office (i.e. the legal department, public procurement department, IT department, etc.).

3.2.1.5. The need for adjustments of plans, including actions for risk mitigation;

At the moment no adjustments of plans concerning activities within the Technical Assistance Fund are necessary.

3.2.1.6. The use of funds for bilateral relations

In 2015, the following activities were performed and covered with the funds for bilateral relations at the national level :

- thematic seminar *Gender Equality - What have men got to do with it?* where the role of men in gender equality policy was presented. Two foreign experts participated at the seminar: Jørgen Lorentzen, a Norwegian gender researcher, producer and writer and Ingólfur V. Gíslason, Assistant Professor of Sociology at the School of Social Sciences in Iceland. The event was widely attended by academia, representatives of NGOs, policy and decision-makers and the general public (Ljubljana, 8 May 2015);
- Second seminar Gender Equality: Think global, act local with a focus on the promotion of gender equality in local communities was attended by Halldóra Gunnarsdóttir, equality officer - specialist at Reykjavik Municipality in Iceland. She contributed to the seminar by explaining the role of the equality officer in Iceland and presenting examples of good practice in promoting gender equality in the local community. This event was mostly attended by policy and decision-makers at the local level (Brdo pri Kranju, 27th May 2015);
- a study visit to Norway with the aim of exchanging good practices in the field of gender equality in general, specifically in the areas of research and representation of women in the media and in culture and the role of trade unions and other stakeholders in the implementation of gender equality policy. Norway is a role model for gender equality and supports many interesting programmes and projects promoting equal opportunities for women and men (December 2015);
- The Royal Norwegian Embassy in Budapest, in collaboration with the National Focal Point, organised a study visit to Oslo for members of the Slovenian Parliamentary Friendship Group with Norway. The "Nordic model" is a subject of interest in Slovenia, with its unique combination of social security and a thriving market economy. The balance between these two

important considerations is high on the Slovenian agenda, and the Norwegian experience provided valuable input for Slovenian politicians interested in the topic (October 2015).

The proposed changes to the work plan – Fund for Bilateral Relations at the National Level:

In 2015 the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities and the Ministry of Health asked for changes to the work plan - Fund for Bilateral Relations at the National Level.

Regarding Priority 2 “Co-operation in the field of health” the Ministry of Health has requested the postponement of a study visit on public health and the International Conference on Public Health to 2016. Because of the key tasks of the participating representatives from the Ministry of Health and other objective circumstances the Ministry was not able to organise the abovementioned activities. In 2015 the Ministry of Health also requested a modification of objective of the conference (International Conference on Public Health).

Based on a study visit, where good practices in the field of public health will be exchanged, Slovenia will organise a conference where best practices and key challenges in the field of public health will be presented and discussed among professionals and the wider public. In dealing with the epidemic of chronic non-communicable diseases (cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer) it is crucial to maintain the functional abilities of the population, which will enable an increase in the retirement age, sustainability of the health system and active and healthy aging. These public health strategies, including the functioning of the health system, can significantly contribute to the goal of realising the potential of the individual by maintaining the good health, regardless of their socio-economic status.

Regarding Priority 3 “Co-operation in the field of gender equality”, The Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities organised an additional activity, a study visit to Norway which was financed by the remaining funds of the conference “Women – 20 Years after Beijing”. The study visit to Norway was intended for exchanging experiences and best practices with relevant national and especially local level Norwegian actors responsible for policy-making and implementation of programmes, projects and researches in the areas of work-life balance, violence against women, men and gender equality and women in decision-making positions in business and politics. The Ministry carried out the study visit in 2015.

Regarding priority 4 “Slovenian / EEA countries experiences’ in the past and future European integration”, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs planned to organise another conference (Slovenian-EEA Conference on Sustainable Tourism in Oslo) which would be financed by the remaining funds of the conference “Different models of past and future European integration – view from the inside and outside of the EU”. The Ministry was unfortunately not successful in finding a partner to co-organise of the conference in Norway and consequently will not organise the Conference on Sustainable Tourism.

3.2.2. Programme SI02 – EEA FINANCIAL MECHANISM PROGRAMME

3.2.2.1. Overall progress as regards implementation of the Programme and sub-projects;

The EEA Financial Mechanism Programme consists of three programme areas:

- Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, with the objective of “Halting biodiversity loss”,
- Conservation and Revitalisation of Cultural and Natural Heritage, with the objective of “Cultural and natural heritage for future generations safeguarded, conserved and made publicly accessible”,
- Environmental Monitoring and Integrated Planning and Control with the objective of “Improved compliance with environmental legislation”.

The main focus of work under the EEA Financial Mechanism in 2015 was on:

- preparation of Guidelines for Project Implementation and Reporting,
- carrying out meetings with project promoters;
- concluding/signing contracts with project promoters of selected projects (public call),
- endorsing of Partnership Agreements;
- starting of project implementation;
- monitoring of projects implementation,
- organisation of workshop for implementation of projects,
- providing support to project promoters,
- performing first-level control of expenditure,
- participation in events organised by the project promoters.

Implementation of 9 projects selected in the Call for proposals began in 2015, namely:

- 4 projects in the area of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
- 2 projects in the area of Natural Heritage
- 3 projects in the area of Cultural Heritage

In the first quarter of 2015 altogether 9 contracts were signed with project promoters of projects selected through the public call in the area of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, Natural Heritage and in the area of Cultural Heritage.

Activities relating to all the selected projects are in progress. First payments for the first interim reports were made in 2015. We have already received the remaining interim reports on project progress for all the projects (reports provide information on the implemented activities and the expenditure incurred up to August 2015).

In the area Environmental Monitoring and Integrated Planning and Control the pre-defined project “Modernisation of Spatial Data Infrastructure to Reduce Risks and Impacts of Floods” has been implemented since 2013 as planned.

A little over two years of project duration is coming to a close. All but a few planned activities are concluded and those will be finished in the coming period. With great probability the project will be finished and will achieve all the goals and outcomes.

In 2015 four interim reports were approved. For all 10 projects that are being implemented under the programme, a notice was sent providing information that the deadline for project closure can be extended. The deadline was extended for 8 out of 10 projects.

Table: Allocated funds for projects by individual area

Area	No. of projects	Total amount (in EUR)	Grant amount (in EUR)
Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services	4	2,119,532.73	2,013,001.80
Natural Heritage	2	1,401,844.90	1,271,242.28
Cultural Heritage	3	4,628,277.18	4,000,000.00
Environmental Monitoring and Integrated Planning and Control (predefined project)	1	3,060,000.00	2,085,882.00

TOTAL	10	11,209,654.81	9,370,126.08
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The EEA Programme particularly stresses observance of the principles of the following horizontal policies in implementing projects: good governance, sustainable development and gender equality.

In their project implementation plans, the selected projects had to explain how the project would affect the horizontal policies.

The principles of good governance, sustainable development, gender equality and equal opportunities are observed in all phases of project implementation.

3.2.2.2. Progress towards expected outcomes;

Environmental Monitoring and Integrated Planning and Control

For this area achievement of the outcome indicators “Increased exchange of information on environmental impact, status and trends between Beneficiary States and other EU Member States” is monitored on the basis of the implementation of the pre-defined project “Modernisation of Spatial Data Infrastructure to Reduce Risks and Impacts of Floods”.

In 2016 The final results of increased exchange of information on environmental impact, status and trends between Beneficiary States and other EU Member States will be reported in the forthcoming national report on Inspire implementation. Nevertheless, the main concern in general remains an insufficient awareness of the need for cooperation between public bodies and promotion of standardisation in the field SDI. This can be mitigated with (1) better promotion of achieved results with (2) support from credible partners with sound results, such as Norwegian SDI implementation and (3) establishment of data coverage for the whole of Slovenia (not only samples), such as in future digital terrain data or topographic data, which are used by every user in any part of the territory of Slovenia.

Outcome	Indicator	Indicator value		
		Baseline	Target	Achieved
Increased exchange of information on environmental impact, status and trends between Beneficiary States and other EU	Number of public authorities that link their spatial datasets to the INSPIRE network	1	3	3
	Implementation of INSPIRE implementation rules	0	3	3
	Accessibility of spatial data	1	3	3

Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

To achieve the overall programme objective (halt the loss of biodiversity) the programme focuses on the areas with the highest biodiversity, and on being part of the EU Natura 2000 network. Within the Natura 2000 network, the project selection procedure ensure that projects are implemented on sites with the greatest need to improve the conservation status of Natura habitat types and species (grasslands, wetlands and some forest habitat types). Additionally, projects are enlarging the existing monitoring and surveys to those Natura species, whose conservation status is unknown due to insufficient data. The challenges of the programme area are, therefore, to improve the conservation status of these habitat types and species, especially in agricultural (grassland) and wetland areas, and some forest habitat types, and to enlarge the monitoring and survey of species and habitat types. The four selected projects focus on three forest habitat types and five forest species, three wetland habitat types and five wetland species, and four grassland habitat types and five grassland species, all in unfavourable conservation status.

To support the implementation of conservation activities previously described and to achieve an added value effect, information, education and awareness activities have also taken place. Higher acceptance of implementation of the Natura 2000 site management programme, especially those implemented in

project activities, has already been noticed. The current situation in achieving programme indicators is shown below:

Outcome	Indicator	Indicator value		
		Baseline	Target	Achieved
Increased capacity to manage and monitor Natura 2000 sites effectively	Number of management plans for Natura 2000 areas implemented	109 plans, forestry (19.600 ha (agriculture))	115 plans forestry (+580 ha (agriculture))	110 plans forestry (+ 522 ha agriculture)
	Number of Natura 2000 species / habitat types monitored and the share of their population / range covered by monitoring	110 species/habitat types	116 species/habitat types	118 species/habitat types

* Data is from interim project reports and official data from government agencies

Another indicator, the number of Natura 2000 species/habitat types in favourable or improved conservation status can be calculated only after several years (in this case in 2017), therefore we cannot report on its values yet. However, the conservation status is calculated using four EU-agreed parameters (incl. conservation of species' habitat or structure and function of a habitat type and future prospects), and projects running have already contributed to improvement in the values of these indicators.

Conservation and Revitalisation of Cultural and Natural Heritage

As part of the programme area "Conservation and Revitalisation of Cultural and Natural Heritage" two projects are being implemented in the field of Natural Heritage. The objective of the two projects is to establish public infrastructure for visitors to the most important natural assets in protected areas. This infrastructure would link the principles of nature protection with the aim of improving environment-friendly public access to natural assets.

In the field of Cultural Heritage, three projects are being implemented. The objective of these projects is the renovation, preservation and restoration of cultural monuments representing immovable cultural heritage. Additional activities of the projects also aim to enhance access to cultural heritage.

Implementation of all five projects started in the beginning of 2015. Even though numerous results have already been achieved at project level, the achievement of the outcomes at programme level cannot be measured yet as the construction of the relevant infrastructure is still in progress for all the projects (the reports covering activities implemented up to August 2015 have been submitted).

The impact of projects on improving and enhancing access to natural assets and cultural heritage cannot be measured yet.

3.2.2.3. Outputs achieved;

Environmental Monitoring and Integrated Planning and Control

All output indicators set for monitoring progress and project success are either already fulfilled or well on the way to being fulfilled. The output indicators have been selected in such a way that the achievement of target values represents a necessary basis for evaluation of project success.

Output	Output indicator	Indicator value		
		Baseline	Target	Achieved
Establishment of modern State Geodetic Reference System compliant with ESRS	Measured normal level of high-order networks – no. of benchmarks	0	1500	0 *levelling and gravimetric measurements are finished. All benchmark will get new normal level after final network adjustment by mid-2016
Establishment of topographic database with respect to INSPIRE implementation rules)	Extended coverage of Slovenia with topographic data	1950 sheets	2280 sheets	1950 sheets Topographic data are in process of capturing. Final, edge-matched data on sheet edges will be available at the end of April
Inspire compliant hydrography dataset	Coverage of Slovenia with full INSPIRE compliant hydrographic data	0	320 sheets	320 sheets of completely INSPIRE compliant hydrography are imported into national topographic database
Components of NSDI in accordance with INSPIRE requirements	INSPIRE network services for topographical data	0	10	10

Biodiversity and Ecosystem Service

Output	Output indicator	Indicator value		
		Baseline	Target	Achieved
Adequate management (measures requested by the Natura 2000 management programme) is secured on low input (extensive) meadows and / or protective or flooded	Surface (area) of measures targeting grassland and /or forest species / habitat types	19.600 ha meadows, (252.540 ha (forests))	20.180 ha meadows (260.040 ha (forests))	20.122 ha meadows (255.018 ha (forests))

forests within Natura 2000 sites hosting important populations of Natura 2000 species / habitat types				
Adequate management (measures requested by the Natura 2000 management programme) is secured on wetlands within Natura 2000 sites hosting important populations of Natura 2000 species / habitat types	Surface (area) of measures targeting wetland species / habitat types	670 ha	700 ha	673 ha
Parameters for determining conservation status of grassland and/or forest and/or wetland species (distribution area, population size) and/or habitat types (are being monitored	Number of Natura 2000 species / habitat types monitored and share of these species / habitat type covered by monitoring	110 species/ habitat types	116 species/ habitat types	118 species/ habitat types
Acceptance of the implementation of Natura 2000 site management programme and conservation measures implemented in project activities	Number of key stakeholders accepting (agreeing) on the implementation of the Natura 2000 site management programme and conservation measures planned in project activities	4.500 people	4.750 people	4.683 people

* Data is from interim project reports and official data from government agencies

Project reports from this year show that activities contributing to each of the above indicators are in progress. It is expected that all output indicators will be reached by the end of the programme.

Conservation and Revitalisation of Cultural and Natural Heritage

In the framework of the programme area “Conservation and Revitalisation of Cultural and Natural Heritage” two projects are being implemented in the field of Natural Heritage. The objective of the two projects is to establish public infrastructure for visitors to the most important natural assets in national protected areas. This infrastructure would link the principles of nature protection with the aim of improving environment-friendly public access to natural assets.

Implementation of all five projects started at the beginning of 2015. Even though numerous results have already been achieved at project level, the achievement of the outcomes at programme level cannot be measured yet as the construction of the relevant infrastructure is still in progress for all the projects (all interim reports have already been submitted; the reports cover the activities implemented up to August 2015). The impact of projects on improving and enhancing access to natural values and cultural heritage cannot be measured yet.

3.2.2.4. Potential risks that may threaten the achievement of the objectives set out in the Programme;

Identified risks related to project implementation are:

- Poor project results and lack of sustainability;
- Failure to achieve programme outcomes / outputs indicator values;
- Insufficient interest of target groups in being involved in the project activities;
- Shortage and rapid turnover of staff.

In order to mitigate these risks the following measures are being taken:

- Approved extension of projects;
- Rapid and adequate response of Programme operator to identified risks and critical situations;
- Risk of not achieving programme outcomes / outputs indicators values could be identified (on the basis of project monitoring and project reports) in mid-2016, when the majority of projects will be in the final stage of implementation. This could lead to the possibility of modifications (if necessary) to the Programme Agreement.
- Systematic and regular involvement of key target groups and a good, target-based communication strategy.
- Regular assessment of required human resources and informing of superiors and National Focal Point about shortages;
- Better organisation of work and stimulation of staff.

3.2.2.5. The need for adjustments of plans, including actions for risk mitigation;

The SI02 programme was extended until 31 December 2017. The project promoters were given the possibility of evaluating the required length of extension of their projects. The Programme Operator trusts their appraisals as well as affirmations that they will manage to reach the set targets.

At the moment there is no need for adjustment of plans.

3.2.2.6. The use of funds for bilateral relations;

In 2015 the funds available for bilateral relations made an important contribution to the strengthening of bilateral relations between Slovenia and the Donor States.

In 2015, at the programme level, the following activities were performed:

- Participation of the representatives of the Programme Operator and the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning (members of the programme working group in the area of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) at the conference in Trondheim on mapping and evaluation of ecosystems and relevant services. Representatives of the states that financed projects in the area of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in the framework of the EEA FM were invited to attend the conference. The conference was also attended by the representatives of various organisations from Norway and representatives of the European Commission and the European Environmental Agency. We established new contacts predominantly to organise a bilateral conference on nature conservation in autumn 2015 in Slovenia.
- In line with the action plan for the programme's bilateral activities a study visit to Norway was organised in the framework of the programme area Environmental Monitoring and Integrated Planning and Control. The study visit was attended by representatives of the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning and the Slovenian Environment Agency. The aim of the study visit was to gain experience at the operational level of the NVE (Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate) and experience pertaining to Geoportal data management and publication/distribution of LIDAR data with which the NMA (Statens kartverk, Norwegian Mapping Authority) operates.

For 2015 a bilateral conference in Slovenia pertaining to the area of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and the area of Natural Heritage was planned. As we were not able to assure the participation of lecturers from Donor States due to their prior engagements, the conference is planned to take place in April 2016 (assuming we will be able to assure the participation of lecturers from Donor States).

Project Promoters and their project partners also contributed to strengthening bilateral relations between Slovenia and the Donor States, in particular in light of the fact that 50% of all the programme-related projects are being implemented in cooperation with donor project partners. In this regard cooperation partnership agreements were concluded in 2014 in the framework of 4 projects selected under the Call for proposals. The partnership agreement for the pre-defined project was concluded in 2013.

SI02 - Bilateral indicators achieved by the end of 2015

Indicator	Baseline	Achievement		Target
		2015	Total	
Number of articles published in one country about the other partner country	0	0	0	2
Number of European and international networks where project and programme partners participate together	0	0	0	1
Number of joint (bilateral) articles published, written by persons from an institution in both a beneficiary and Donor State, published in a national or international publications, originated from a project financed by the programme	0	0	0	3
Number of joint, sector-wide initiatives, in a beneficiary or Donor State, beyond the programme	0	0	0	1
Number of men involved in exchange visits between beneficiary and Donor States	0	6	10	7
Number of project partnership agreements in beneficiary civil society	0	0	0	0
Number of project partnership agreements in the beneficiary private sector	0	1	1	0
Number of project partnership agreements in the beneficiary public sector	0	3	4	2
Number of women involved in exchange visits between beneficiary and Donor States	0	4	5	6

A call for proposals under bilateral funds will be published in early 2016. The funds will be allocated only to already co-financed projects selected under the public call.

Complementary actions

In October 2015 the Lithuanian Programme Operator CPMA visited Slovenia. The aim of the visit was to present the Lithuanian system pertaining to the implementation of the Financial Mechanisms and to visit projects co-financed under the Financial Mechanisms. We exchanged experiences and best practices with the Lithuanian Programme Operator and discussed difficulties relating to implementation of the Financial Mechanisms.

3.2.3 NGO Programme SI03

3.2.3.1. Overall progress as regards implementation of the Programme and their sub-projects;

The NGO Programme in Slovenia pursues five outcomes: Active citizenship fostered, Cross-sectoral partnerships developed, Advocacy and watchdog role developed, Developed networks and coalitions of NGOs working in partnership and Empowerment of vulnerable groups. In order to focus project applicants on pursuing selected outcomes, the PO requested in the application form that they select (at least) one of the outcomes and to develop project proposal in a way to achieve the foreseen indicators as far as possible. The applied mechanism also ensured that the funds were more or less distributed according to outcomes. The financial allocation upon the outcomes shows that it is realistic to expect relevant coverage in compliance with PIA requirements. For the outcome Active citizenship fostered EUR 287,229€ were allocated, for Advocacy and watchdog role developed EUR 279,180, for Developed networks and coalitions of NGOs working in partnership EUR 444,008, for Empowerment of vulnerable groups EUR 345,597, and for Cross-sectoral partnerships developed EUR 237,736.

Horizontal concerns: among the horizontal concerns, hate speech, homophobia, tolerance and multicultural understanding, as well as Roma and trafficking are the themes directly addressed by the projects as major concerns. Like the Programme' outcomes and outputs, the horizontal concerns were defined as important issues and thus integrated into the application form as well as into the selection criteria.

Hate speech: hate speech is one of horizontal issues that is especially addressed within two priorities, democracy and human rights. In recent years many Slovenian official institutions, such as the Ombudsman and Parliament have expressed major concerns about increasing hate speech (against migrants, homosexuals, Roma, even Christians). For example, migrants are attacked daily on e-forums for stealing jobs, Roma for not working and living on social support, homosexuals for being against nature and so on. Through capacity building activities we encouraged applicants to address the problem of hate speech in the scope of their proposals. Among contracted projects the Peace Institute intends to set up an independent and sustainable system for regular public reaction to the problem of hate speech in Slovenia. They will establish and activate an Independent Conjunctive Body Responding to Hate Speech within their project.

Racism and xenophobia: both issues are quite pressing in Slovenia, especially against Roma and migrant workers from the area of former Yugoslavia. They are addressed with projects ideas aimed at these target groups as part of a of human rights priority. The Association for Culture and Education, PiNA, will deal with the question of tolerance and multicultural understanding by establishing a forum theatre and discussing it during the theatre of the oppressed performances. The Bosniak Youth Cultural Association will organise language and theatre workshops for the enhancement of language, communication and social skills of minority youth in Velenje.

Homophobia is addressed under the priority of human rights and social equality. Homophobia surged in Slovenia when the Family Act was passed in June 2011 and then put to a referendum in March 2012. Although the Family Act regulated the entire range of family rights, including very important children's rights, the referendum campaign focused very much on same-sex marriage and adoption of children by same-sex couples. There were also several physical attacks on members of the gay community. The Legebitra society will deal with empowerment of LGBT persons and NGOs for the elimination of systemic and structural discrimination of LGBT people. They plan to develop a sustainable system of advocacy and representation of vulnerable and marginalised LGBT groups.

Trafficking: Slovenia is perceived as a transit country. In recent years public institutions and some NGOs have worked closely together to address this problem and help the victims. The issue is addressed as a human rights priority, as well as under the provision of welfare and social rights. The society Ključ – centre to combat trafficking in human beings will tackle the issue of human trafficking. Their project is aimed at raising awareness of children and youth regarding the issue of human trafficking, and also at

raising awareness of the problem, faced by Roma children. They are trying to integrate the issue of human trafficking into the education system.

Roma: the issue of Roma is especially addressed in the priorities of human rights and social equality. Although quite a lot of work has been done in the past decade for and with Roma people, there are still big differences in the majority population's perception of Roma people and in inclusion of Roma people. This is especially the case in south-east Slovenia, where a lot of Roma settlements still lack running water and sewerage. The Roma NGO Romano Veseli plans to develop a network of Roma and non-Roma NGOs as well as other institutions to create conditions for the employment of Roma people. They plan to develop a social enterprise involved in Ethno-Eco Roma Fashion.

Extremism – hate crime: Fortunately, Slovenia has not yet experienced any violent actions that could be attributed to extremism.

Sexual harassment: this issue is similar to extremism, there are some emerging cases, but the issue has not been identified yet as a major problem by NGOs and the media.

A desk review of the interim reports shows that the following examples of specific actions have been completed so far:

- The younger population was acquainted with trafficking through a youth novel, which was published and disseminated to all Slovenian libraries and schools;
- 500 children actively participated in donating old toys to be redesigned as "Special needs friends" and were thus acquainted with the problem of disability;
- The incidence, forms and negative effects of hate speech, harassment and violence against women were researched;
- Law students were involved in consultancy work for LGBT persons;
- A series of workshops titled "Theatre of the Oppressed" was implemented;
- Young people were involved in active awareness-raising and the rapprochement of cultures, concerning Roma population.

3.2.3.2. Progress towards expected outcomes;

Judging from the activities foreseen in the selected projects we expect good content coverage of the selected outcomes. All five outcomes are covered, but the most popular seems to be the first one (Active citizenship fostered) as it is addressed by different activities in 18 projects. Many projects are addressing vulnerable groups, which is probably a consequence of the current situation in the country, since the selected projects are anticipated to reach more than 500 beneficiaries and involve them in project activities. Within 5 of the selected projects developing cross-sectoral partnerships is foreseen, while 8 of them are addressing the development of advocacy and a watchdog role.

PO is satisfied to select projects that feed the outcomes, although we had some difficulty as outcomes are mixed – some of them are infrastructural and others are content-related. Some of the selected projects involve several outcomes, but they need to fit one. We expected to have more projects dealing with democracy and human rights, as there is almost no funding available for it from national sources, but it turned out that the NGOs working on this are very underdeveloped and were not able to prepare good project proposals, therefore we needed to reallocate the funds.

If we could decide on the priority topics again, we would strongly consider country specifics and develop a more focused programme, supporting deficit areas such as democracy, human rights and environmental protection, which are not covered from other sources. We would avoid social services and youth.

A detailed review of selected projects shows that all 5 outcomes are addressed and that target values were quite realistic (or modest in some cases).

Outcome	Standard indicator	Baseline	Target	Achieved in 2015
Active citizenship fostered	Evidence of decision-makers responding to citizens' actions	0	10	27
Cross-sectoral partnerships developed, particularly with government organisations at local, regional and / or national level	Number of mechanisms fostering dialogue between citizens, civil society and local/national institutions	0	11	20
Advocacy and watchdog role developed	Number of laws, policies or practices changed or improved as a consequence of NGO advocacy activities	0	6	10
Developed networks and coalitions of NGOs working in partnership	Number of NGO networks/ platforms/ coalitions developed	0	20	26
Empowerment of vulnerable groups	Number of beneficiaries engaged in the strategic planning/ implementation of activities	0	55	850

3.2.3.3. Outputs achieved;

Outputs achieved were not yet reported by the PO.

3.2.3.4. Potential risks that may threaten the achievement of the objectives set out in the Programme;

During the application process the Programme Operator met with an unexpectedly large response of applicants to the published open calls. Instead of the expected 310 applications there were more than 600 applications received. This resulted in a huge work load and in a lack of funds for the external evaluator's payment.

The Programme Operator assesses implementation of the SI03 in 2015 as very successful. With the exception of the aforementioned problems with oversubscription, PO has not encountered major difficulties or any new apparent risks.

3.2.3.5. The need for adjustments of plans, including actions for risk mitigation;

In 2015 the following modifications of the PIA were made:

Allocation of funds per outcomes: after concluding the two open calls and selecting the projects it was recognised that the number of projects received per specific outcome differed considerably. Allocation of funds for Outcomes 2, 3 and 5 differed from the planned budget by more than 10 %, which is why the PO requested programme modification and reallocation of funds.

Reallocation of funds (EUR 5,140) for external evaluators: due to unexpectedly high number of received applications, the PO did not manage to secure the funds for external evaluators from the planned budget line and requested a budget reallocation.

Additional instalments for some project promoters of medium and large projects: although the instalment timeline was known to project promoters from the beginning, some of the projects are of such nature that spending is higher at the beginning of project implementation. Therefore, at the thematic workshop, held on 15 September 2014, some project promoters expressed concerns regarding

the financial flow and difficult project implementation. The PO requested the introduction of an additional instalment.

3.2.3.6. The use of funds for bilateral relations

As the Slovenian applicants were highly motivated to establish project partnerships with donor country organisations, the indicator measuring partnership agreements was exceeded.

Bilateral indicators	Baseline	Target	Achieved in 2015
Number of project partnership agreements in beneficiary civil society	0	10	13
Number of projects with expected shared results (both partners are involved professionally in planning and implementation and can claim credit for achieved results)	0	5	13
Number of articles published in one country about the other partner country	0	1	5

During the application process, the PO was also focusing on establishment of cooperation on the project level (facilitation of donor project partnerships) in order to foster long-term bilateral partnerships between different NGOs. It seems that Slovenia will also be successful as regards bilateral relations in the 2009-2014 period as approximately one third of the selected projects involve partners from the Donor States. Several contacts were made through the cooperation of the PO and Norwegian Helsinki Committee (NHC), moreover those the applicants that applied in partnership with organizations from the Donor States were rewarded with (up to) an additional 5 points (depending on the quality of partnership cooperation).

In addition to re-granting funds, EUR 16,235 were available within the Fund for bilateral relations aimed at selected beneficiaries that implement projects in partnership with organizations from the Donor States. The Fund provides additional funding for networking, sharing experiences and knowledge transfer between Slovenian NGOs and organisations from the Donor States. The Bilateral Fund is one of the tools put in place to achieve the objective of strengthened bilateral relations between the donor and beneficiary countries and will contribute to strengthening cooperation between the donor and beneficiary states in areas of mutual interest. All the funds were used in 2015 and 10 project promoters benefited from the bilateral Fund.

3.2.4. Programme SI04 - EEA AND NORWEGIAN SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME

3.2.4.1. Overall progress as regards implementation of the Programme and their sub-projects;

Currently there are 9 on-going projects from the last two calls (2014 and 2015) that are implementing activities concerning mobility in higher education – student mobility for studies and internships and staff mobility for teaching and training (Measure 2). In accordance with the numbers approved in the agreements with the project promoters there is a reasonable certainty that the outputs set out in the Programme proposal will be reached. Although some higher education organisations have complained regarding unresponsiveness and lack of interest (and non-familiarity with the programme) from DS institutions, the PO is trying to address these issues on time in cooperation with the national agencies and Norwegian embassy in Budapest. The projects are implemented according to the experience from European mobility programmes, therefore all students obtain ECTS and will have the mobility entered in their Diploma Supplement. In 2015 fourteen projects from Calls 2013 and 2014 were concluded with 154 student mobilities and 154 staff mobilities.

Within Measure 3 there are 4 projects running and 9 projects concluded with 52 mobilities completed with 12 partners from DS. One project was terminated because the partner cancelled the cooperation

and despite the PO's intervention they were not able to find a new partner on time. There were no other major issues with projects under this measure.

If we focus on inter-institutional projects within Measure 4 and 5 with a total of 9 projects concluded, 4 running projects and 17 partners, it can be summarized that the output set in the Programme proposal is going to be realized. The projects address topics that are already integrated into the regular implementation of the programme and have a long term effect. In part because of the financial specifics of the projects, the PO expects concrete results and positive feedback from the mobile participants. In general the projects are successfully implementing their activities and enhancing their partnership cooperation. There might be some changes in the timetable of their activities or in partner institutions, but nothing that would seriously influence the outcome or success of the project.

The projects of the Slovene Scholarship Fund SI04 do not address horizontal concerns directly.

3.2.4.2. Progress towards expected outcomes;

3.2.4.3. Outputs achieved;

The presented numbers are just an approximation since the detailed analysis still needs to be done. So far 154 student mobilities have been realised (70% of planned output) of which only 112 filled in the PO's questionnaires. Out of these 112 students, 71 received ECTS credits, which represents 65% of the planned outcome. Under Measure 2 a total of 154 staff mobilities have been realised, which means that 62% of planned outputs have been reached so far. Out of the planned 110 mobilities with students involved in work placements 95 have been realised (86%).

The PO will learn how many new agreements have been signed from the final analysis, which will be done after all the projects of call 2015 are concluded.

The outcome standard indicator set for the number of joint summer schools/intensive courses organised will be exceeded with 6 intensive programmes.

The risk for Measure 3 was identified after the first Call - the small number and poor quality of applications - but it turned out that schools are much more interested in the implementation of inter-institutional cooperation projects, thus funds were transferred from Measure 3 to Measure 5 for the Call 2014. These projects also ensure a number of joint products and services. Management of the risk of lack of interest in cooperation from donor county institutions is a real-time activity and requires a rapid response from the POs' project coordinator. These issues are tackled on a daily basis.

3.2.4.4. Potential risks that may threaten the achievement of the objectives set out in the Programme;

The possible risks preventing attainment of the planned results could lie in the inability to find a partner from DS or losing a partner, which is usually solved through the PO's help in finding another partner with the support of DS national agencies and support of the Norwegian embassy.

The other possible risk is the overly ambitious planning of the projects promoters and the later inability to fulfil all the planned mobilities. In such cases the PO offers the opportunity to either change the type of planned mobilities (i.e. if staff is too busy or reluctant to go on exchange, the PP can do more student mobilities) or to lower the number of mobilities - and accordingly to lower the funds, which are then reallocated to projects on the reserve list or to Measure 1 for study visits.

3.2.4.5. The need for adjustments of plans, including actions for risk mitigation;

The only adjustment done was the reallocation of funds among projects, among measures and among calls in cooperation with the FMO and NFP.

3.2.4.6. The use of funds for bilateral relations

As far as the bilateral indicators set out in the Programme Overview are concerned, it can be said at this point that the objectives have been reached. Since there will be no more calls for the programme PO concluded preparatory visits. It made 17 preparatory visits, which offered a chance for beneficiaries to make new partnerships or to strengthen the existing partnership with organisations from DS with the aim of future sustainable projects. However the PO also opened the calls for study visits (so far 6 realised) with the goal of sharing good practices as outcomes of the projects under Measures 2-5 and further strengthening of bilateral relations.

The PO is planning to organise more study visits for 2016, including group study visits of school principals/leadership planned in at least one of the DS with the goal of networking and strengthening bilateral relations.

Complementary action

With the help of complementary action funds the PO prepared and organised a SHARE workshop in cooperation with CNVOS (PO for NGOs) and NFP, where our PPs shared good case practices and brainstormed about possible future co-operations and projects.

The PO also enabled a study visit of 2 members of the National Selection Committee to the DPP, specifically Rannis, which took place in August 2015.

The PO also hosted a delegation from Lithuania in June 2015 as well as a delegation from the donor countries (Norway and Iceland) in March 2015 where practices in managing the Fund were exchanged and good projects and cases were shown.

3.2.5. Programme SI05 – NORWEGIAN FINANCIAL MECHANISM PROGRAMME

3.2.5.1. Overall progress as regards implementation of the Programme and their sub-projects;

The SI05 programme covers two programme areas: "Public Health Initiatives" and "Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Promoting Work-life Balance". In the field of "Public Health Initiatives" the programme focuses on reducing inequalities among user groups, prevention and reduction of life-style related diseases and improving mental health services in Slovenia. In the field of "Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Promoting Work-life Balance" the programme aims to raise awareness and promote research on gender equality issues by focusing on challenging unequal power relations between women and men in economic and political decision-making.

The main focus of work under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism in 2015 was on:

- Carrying out meetings with project promoters;
- Preparation of Guidelines for Project Implementation and Reporting;
- Verification of the adequacy of Partnership Agreements that have been submitted by the project promoters;
- Concluding/signing contracts with project promoters of selected projects (public call);
- Workshop on implementation of projects for project promoters;
- Starting of project implementation;
- Providing support to project promoters;
- Monitoring of project implementation;
- Participation at events organised by project promoters;
- Performing of first level control of expenditure;
- The Slovenian Cooperation Committee meeting concerning the SI05 programme was held on 3 November 2015;
- Programme Operator attended the PO's meeting in Prague in December 2015.

In the first quarter of 2015 a total of 24 contracts were signed with project promoters of projects selected through the public call in the area of Public Health Initiatives and in the area of Gender Equality.

Area	Sub-area	No. of projects	Total amount (in EUR)	Grant amount (in EUR)
Public Health Initiatives		20	11,337,373.37	10,751,091.89
	Reducing inequalities between user groups	7	3,834,493.13	3,597,010.07
	Prevention of life-style related diseases	7	4,924,642.68	4,745,838.38
	<i>Selected projects</i>	6	2,571,701.68	2,392,897.38
	<i>Pre-defined project</i>	1	2,352,941.00	2,352,941.00
	Improved mental health services	6	2,578,237.56	2,408,243.44
Gender Equality		6	1,715,353.69	1,626,951.00
	<i>Selected projects</i>	5	1,215,353.69	1,126,951.00
	<i>Pre-defined project</i>	1	500,000.00	500,000.00
TOTAL NOR		26	13,052,727.06	12,378,042.89

Activities within all projects are currently under way. In 2015 disbursements related to the first interim reports were made. The second interim reports covering the reporting period up to 31 August 2015 have also been received and are currently being checked.

All project promoters have been informed about the possibility of extending their projects. Only 3 projects out of 26 decided not to extend project duration. The Programme Operator trusts their appraisals as well as affirmations that they will manage to reach the set targets.

The SI05 programme stresses the importance of cross-cutting issues such as good governance, sustainable development, gender equality and equal opportunities. In their applications under the call and later in their project implementation plans, the project promoters had to define how the project would affect individual horizontal policies. The cross-cutting issues of good governance, sustainable development, gender equality and equal opportunities are observed in all phases of project implementation.

3.2.5.2. Progress towards expected outcomes;

By the end of 2015, the projects selected through the public call reached the peak of their implementation. Although a number of project outputs have already materialised, their impact on programme outcomes cannot yet be measured. Due to the results-based approach it is estimated that the selected projects form a good basis for achieving programme outcomes and indicators in the coming years (2016 and first few months of 2017).

The expected outcomes of SI05 the programme are:

Outcome	Standard outcome indicators	Baseline	Target value	Achieved value
Reduced inequalities between user groups	Number of actions taken to reduce inequalities in health through increased access	0	10	9
Lifestyle related diseases prevented or reduced	Number of actions/activities aiming to reduce or prevent lifestyle related diseases at national/local level	0	15	1
Improved mental health services	New local structures for mental health	0	3	3

Outcome	Standard outcome indicators	Baseline	Target value	Achieved value
Awareness raised and research on gender issues promoted	Attitudes towards gender roles changed	0	60	39

3.2.5.3. Outputs achieved;

The expected outputs of the SI05 programme are:

Output	Standard output indicators	Baseline	Target value	Achieved value
New equity oriented programs and services for different user groups developed and implemented	Number of actions taken to reduce inequalities in health through increased access	0	10	9
Capacity of professionals for health equity and work with vulnerable groups improved	Number of trained professionals in health inequality and related topics and issues	0	500	377
New integrated programmes and services for life-style related chronic diseases prevention for different user groups developed and implemented	Number of actions aiming to reduce or prevent lifestyle related diseases at national/local level	0	15	1
Capacity of professionals for work with vulnerable groups in lifestyle related chronic diseases prevention improved	Number of trained professionals in life style related chronic diseases prevention	0	300	115
Local capacity for mental health improved	Number of local structures for mental health developed	0	3	3
Capacity of primary health care and other professionals in mental health improved	Number of trained primary health care and other professionals in mental health	0	100	13
Understanding of equal/unequal power relations between women and men in order to identify adequate responses to imbalances that persist in a gender-based power structure in society increased	Number of target audience reached (in %)	0	50	25
	Number of implemented policies (action plans, measures)	0	2	0
	Number of good practices identified and assessed	0	2	4
Understanding of equal/unequal power relations between women and men increased	Number of reports disseminated to target groups	0	500	0
	Level of satisfaction (in %)	0	60	39
	Number of target audience reached using TV, radio spots and other means of communication (in %)	0	50	25
	Number of implemented policies (action plans, measures)	0	2	0
	Number of good practices identified and assessed	0	4	4

The pre-defined project “**Towards Better Health and Reducing Inequities in Health**” will contribute to achieving both previously determined programme results in the field of Public Health Initiatives, which contribute to achieving the programme outcome – the reduction or prevention of lifestyle-related diseases. In 2015 the expert material was prepared, trainings were carried out and the pilot testing of new models was initiated. The first experiences with pilot actions have been presented at two working meetings and the interim evaluation of pilot actions has been launched. The project was extended by five months.

The pre-defined project **“Towards Equalizing Power Relations between Women and Men”** will contribute to achieving the previously determined programme output in the field of Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Promoting Work-Life Balance. The fourth thematic conference took place on 8 May 2015. The main theme of the conference aimed at the role of men in achieving gender equality. On 27 May 2015 a conference on Gender Equality - think globally, act locally took place. The main theme of the conference was to discuss the role of local communities in achieving goals of gender equality policy. At both events the representatives of donor countries presented examples of good practices.

So far the pre-defined project is achieving the set objectives. The remaining resources under some objectives will allow additional activities to be implemented. The project was extended by six months.

3.2.5.4. Potential risks that may threaten the achievement of the objectives set out in the Programme;

Identified risks related to project implementation are:

- Poor project results and lack of sustainability;
- Failure to achieve programme outcomes / outputs indicator values;
- Insufficient interest of target groups in being involved in the project activities;
- Shortage and rapid turnover of staff.

In order to mitigate these risks the following measures are being undertaken:

- Approved extension of projects;
- Rapid and adequate response of the Programme Operator to identified risks and critical situations;
- Risk of not achieving programme outcomes / outputs indicators values could be identified (on the basis of project monitoring and project reports) in mid-2016, when the majority of projects will be in the final stage of implementation. This could lead to the possibility of modifications (if necessary) to the Programme Agreement.
- Systematic and regular involvement of key target groups and a good, target-based communication strategy.
- Regular assessment of required human resources and informing of superiors and the National Focal Point about shortages;
- Better organisation of work and stimulation of staff.

Pre-defined project “Towards Better Health and Reducing Inequities in Health”

Since all the conditions for successful project implementation were established (especially the signing of contracts and the publication of instructions for project implementation and reporting), the project has been implemented smoothly and successfully. The contract custodian at the Programme Operator has regular contacts with the project manager and offers continuous support. No major risks to project implementation are expected.

Pre-defined project “Towards Equalizing Power Relations between Women and Men”

Since all the conditions for successful project implementation were established (especially the signing of contracts and the publication of instructions for project implementation and reporting), the project has been implemented smoothly and successfully. The contract custodian at the Programme Operator has regular contacts with the project manager and offers continuous support. No major risks to timely and high-quality project implementation are expected.

3.2.5.5. The need for adjustments of plans, including actions for risk mitigation;

The SI05 programme was extended until 31 December 2017. The project promoters were given the possibility of evaluating the required length of extension of their projects. The Programme Operator trusts their appraisals as well as affirmations that they will manage to reach the set targets. At the moment there is no need for adjustment of plans.

3.2.5.6. The use of funds for bilateral relations;

Mechanism A of the bilateral fund was not used by the project promoters in the phase of preparing project applications. Nevertheless the rate of donor partnership projects is satisfactory (17 projects have Norwegian partners).

Within the pre-defined project in the area of Public Health Initiatives no bilateral activities were carried out in 2015. According to the plan a study visit and a conference are planned for 2016.

Within the pre-defined project in the area of Gender Equality two study visits were carried out. Since there are some funds left, three events will be carried out in 2016 (two study visits and a conference).

A call for proposals under bilateral funds will be published in early 2016. The funds will be allocated only to already co-financed projects selected under the public call and the predefined projects.

SI05 - Bilateral indicators achieved by the end of 2015 (results of public call, study visit (bilateral fund) and predefined projects)

Indicator	Baseline	Target	Achieved
Number of project partnership agreements in beneficiary civil society	0	0	0
Number of project partnership agreements in the beneficiary private sector	0	0	0
Number of project partnership agreements in the beneficiary public sector	0	2	2
Number of projects with expected shared results (both partners are involved professionally in planning and implementation and can claim credit for achieved results)	0	2	18
Number of women involved in exchange visits between beneficiary and donor states	0	30	75
Number of men involved in exchange visits between beneficiary and donor states	0	25	28
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	0	4	1
Number of joint (bilateral) scientific papers written with co-researchers in at least one beneficiary and one donor state, and published in a national or international scientific publication, originated from a project financed by the programme	0	3	0
Number of new technologies/new practises, including IT-systems, adopted in a beneficiary state, as a result of transfer of knowledge from a donor state partner	0	2	2
Number of professional networks between institutions in beneficiary and donor states established and operational	0	1	2

Complementary action

A study visit of representatives of the Lithuanian Ministry of Health took place from 10 to 11 December 2014. The visit focused on the exchange of practices in the field of primary health care of children and adolescents.

A Summer School on mental health is planned for September 2016. The representatives of participating countries will present their national activities concerning mental health. The following countries are expected to participate at the event: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal and Romania. The summer school will combine the national and programme level of the bilateral relations fund and the Complementary Action fund.

In 2016 as part of complementary actions the Programme Operator would like to visit some countries that serve as good examples in the public health sector. The Donor Programme partners pointed out Norway, Estonia, Portugal and Poland.

4 MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

4.2 Management and control systems

Programme SI02 – EEA FINANCIAL MECHANISM PROGRAMME

Management and control systems for the EEA Financial Mechanism Programme 2009-2014 (SI02) were approved in 2014. In May 2015 GODC established a new division dedicated only to the donor programmes, namely Financial Mechanisms Division.

Programme SI04 - EEA AND NORWEGIAN SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME

No major changes in the management and control system occurred in the last year. There have been a few minor changes in order to improve the fulfilment of the programme and its goals that have been agreed with the FMO and NFP:

- Reallocation of funds from projects not achieving their plans (based on their reports) to the projects on the reserve list.
- Allowing PPs to reallocate funds from their Call 2014 projects to their Call 2015 projects.

In approving projects from the reserve list of Call 2014 close to the end of the eligibility period, prolonging their eligibility period in line with the eligibility period of Call 2015

Programme SI05 – NORWEGIAN FINANCIAL MECHANISM PROGRAMME

The Management and control system for the Norwegian Financial Mechanism Programme 2009-2014 (SI05) were approved in 2014. In May 2015 GODC established a new division dedicated only to the donor programmes, namely Financial Mechanisms Division.

4.3 Compliance with EU legislation, national legislation and the MoU

The implementation of EEA and Norway grants 2009 – 2014 will be in compliance with EU legislation and national legislation, focusing on public procurement and eligibility of expenditures and the provisions of the Memoranda of Understanding. Environmental legislation will be fully respected.

Controls for compliance with the legislative framework will be performed by the Programme Operators, which includes the provisions for controls in the description of management and control systems, which was submitted in 2014.

4.4 Irregularities

Based on the performed audit verifying of the eligibility of expenditure under the 2nd and the 3rd IFR under the Programme SI04, the Budget Supervision Office (BSO) found the below described irregularity, which was not a systemic irregularity, but an inconsistency with the Slovenian legislation, where all appropriate measures were taken for the recovery of ineligible expenditure.

The BSO found that under eligible expenditure CMEPIUS declared the expenditure of those employees whose salary is part-financed under the Programme SI04 as part of the increased workload, despite the fact that CMEPIUS declared the entire amount of the labour cost related to regular work for the same employees and for the same period under the European Programme ERASMUS+. The reports on work performed by employees whose increased workload was paid for does not demonstrate a proper

calculation of the value of the hourly rate and consequently of the claimed amounts under the heading labour costs.

The BSO recommends that Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy (GODC) excludes the expenditure in the amount of EUR 4,618.70 from the eligible expenditure under the Programme SI04, and also that it recovers such expenditure from CMEPIUS. The BSO also recommends that GODC checks again other certified payment claims which were submitted by CMEPIUS, and that it excludes all ineligible expenditure pertaining to ineligible labour costs.

The BSO recommends that in future CMEPIUS calculates and declares expenditure in accordance with GODC Guidelines on eligible costs pertaining to programme management and implementation of bilateral activities for the Norwegian and EEA Financial Mechanism 2009-2014. Following the recommendation of The Budget Supervision Office the GODC excluded expenditure in the amount of EUR 4,618.70 from the eligible expenditure under the Programme SI04 and recovered this expenditure from CMEPIUS. GODC checked again other certified applications for payment that were submitted by CMEPIUS. After this examination GODC found another EUR 4,746.64 of ineligible expenditure pertaining to labour costs and excluded them from the applications for payment.

GODC decided to excluded EUR 9,365.34 from the applications for payment for programme management costs, through a settlement procedure. The NFP also informed the BSO about the measures taken for the recovery of ineligible expenditure.

4.5 Audit, monitoring, review and evaluation

On 18 December 2015, the Audit Authority (Budget Supervision Office of the Republic of Slovenia) issued the 4th Annual Audit Report describing the work done by the Audit Authority in the period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015:

- In the reporting period the AA performed a System Audit at the National Focal Point (hereinafter: NFP) and Programme Operator (hereinafter: PO) for SI02 and SI05, namely at the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy (hereinafter: GODC), European Territorial Cooperation and Financial Mechanism Office as well as other GODC units responsible for performing the tasks relating to the individual area of work.
- In the period between 6 November 2014 and 18 November 2014, the AA performed an audit of the expenditure under SI02 – IFR;
- In the period between 5 January 2015 and 23 January 2015, the AA performed an audit of the expenditure under SI04 – IFR No. 2 and 3.;
- In the period between 5 January 2015 and 13 February 2015, the AA performed an audit of the expenditure under SI05 - IFR No. 1, 2 and 3.;
- In the period between 3 March 2015 and 13 March 2015, the AA performed an audit of the expenditure under programme SI 01 – IFR No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

The Audit Plan for 2015 was submitted to the Financial Mechanism Office and the National Focal Point on 12 January 2016. In 2016 BSO is planning to carry out:

- system audits of
 - MF DMEUF – CA
 - CMEPIUS – PO for SI04
- project audit of expenditure incurred up until 30 April 2015¹.

Indicative timetable for the implementation of audit assignments for the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanism:

Auditee	Function of the bodies	Type of Audit	Period	Auditors	Planned Audit days
MF DMEUF	CA	System Audit	January - February	Valerija Rogelj, Božidar Hlebec	25
CMEPIUS	PO for SI04	System Audit	February - March	Valerija Rogelj, Božidar Hlebec	25
Not established yet ²	Project Promoter	Project Audit of expenditure	April – May	Valerija Rogelj, Božidar Hlebec	46
Together Audit days					96

4.6 Information and publicity

The National Focal Point developed a Communication Strategy covering EEA and Norway Grants. The Communication strategy was approved by the Financial Mechanism Office on 13 July 2012.

The Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy developed the website (www.norwaygrants.si and www.eeagrants.si), which is available in Slovenian and English and provides information on specific programmes, relevant documents (including reports, guidelines and logo), latest news and upcoming events.

Together with setting up the website we updated our Facebook profile EEA and Norway Grants Slovenia with more links to different events, new photos etc. The FB profile and webpage address are placed on the Government Office's website.

We have carried out the public procurement for upgrading the website, at the moment we are in the process of cooperation (providing informations, content) with the selected contractor.

In the second half of 2016, we will organise an event with Project Promoters (programmes SI02 and SI05) to present the projects results and the programmes outcomes. We were planning to organise a common event with the PO for SI03 and SI04. Due to the project extension under SI02 and SI05, it is foreseen that programmes SI03 and SI04 will organise a common event in June 2016 and the PO for SI02

¹ Project(s) will be selected in accordance with the risk assessment from the sample of expenditures incurred in the period from 1May 2014 until 30 April 2015 and which are declared in the IFR and sent to donors.

² The number of audited projects will be specified on the basis of assessment of the functioning of the management and control system.

and SI05 in the second half of 2016. We will monitor all events foreseen within the bilateral relations, and they will also be published on our website and Facebook profile.

4.7 Work plan

National Focal Point

1st quarter 2016:

- Monitoring committee;
- Annual meeting with the donors;
- Update of the webpage <http://norwaygrants.si/>;
- Carry out the public procurement for promotional material;
- Reporting on irregularities;
- Review of PO's (Scholarship Fund) monitoring system;
- Monitoring implementation of the projects for SI02 and SI05;
- Preparations for the next financial period.

2nd quarter 2016

- Monitoring implementation of the projects for SI02 and SI05;
- Reporting on irregularities;
- Preparations for the next financial period.

3rd quarter 2016

- Monitoring implementation of the projects for SI02 and SI05;
- Reporting on irregularities;
- Preparations for the next financial period.

4th quarter 2016

- Monitoring implementation of the projects for SI02 and SI05;
- Reporting on irregularities;
- Organisation of closing event, presentation of projects SI02, SI05;
- Preparation for closing the programmes.

Programme SI02 – EEA FINANCIAL MECHANISM PROGRAMME

1st quarter 2016:

- Signing of annexes to contracts with project promoters of selected projects;
- Monitoring implementation of the projects for SI02;
- Update of the website <http://eeagrants.si/>;
- Monitoring Committee meeting;
- Annual meeting.

2nd quarter 2016

- Monitoring implementation of the projects for SI02;
- On-site monitoring visit of projects.

3rd quarter 2016

- Monitoring implementation of the projects for SI02;
- On-site monitoring visit of projects.

4th quarter 2016

- Monitoring implementation of the projects for SI02;
- On-site monitoring visit of projects.

Programme SI05 – NORWEGIAN FINANCIAL MECHANISM PROGRAMME

1st quarter 2016

- Signing of annexes to the contracts with project promoters due to extension of projects;
- Update of the website <http://norwaygrants.si/>;
- Monitoring of SI05 project' implementation.
- Monitoring Committee meeting;
- Annual meeting.

2nd quarter 2016

- Monitoring of SI05 project' implementation;
- Cooperation Committee meeting (mid May);
- Project completion;
- On-site monitoring visit of projects.

3rd quarter 2016

- Monitoring of SI05 project' implementation;
- Project completion;
- PO meeting (June);
- On-site monitoring visit of projects.

4th quarter 2016

- Monitoring of SI05 project' implementation;
- Project completion;
- On-site monitoring visit of projects;
- Final payments to project promoters.

5 SUMMARY LIST OF ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following issues and/or recommendations concerning management and control of EEA and Norway grants 2009 – 2014 in Slovenia have been identified in 2015:

After the Project promoters submitted the first interim reports, certain ambiguities were encountered and contract managers within the programme SI02 and SI05 decided to organise individual meetings with the lead partners and control unit. These meetings were very useful and a lot of open issues have been resolved, but due to the above-mentioned there have been certain delays in the reimbursement of incurred expenditure. We are also aware that some partnerships consist of a large number of partners, therefore it can take several months before the incurred expenditure is reimbursed, and in order to assure regular payment flow and smooth implementation of projects, one additional person has started working at the control unit.

4 ATTACHMENTS TO THE STRATEGIC REPORT

Attachments for each Programme

1. Monitoring Plan, see section 7.3 in the Programme Operators' Manual
2. Risk assessment of the programme. See proposed template in Annex.

Annex: Monitoring plan

Programme SI02	Monitoring action	Planned timing	Criteria for monitoring	Potential risk	Comments
	On-site monitoring visit of at least 1 project selected in the public call per each outcome defined within the programme	From March to November 2016	Projects with significant impact on the overall objective of the Programme Project grant exceeds EUR 750,000 Projects with higher identified risk of implementation	/	/

Programme SI04							
Type of Measure	Analysis of final reports	Desk check of supporting material		On the spot check during the action		On the spot check (audit) upon completion	
	Frequency	Frequency	Minimum N°	Frequency	Minimum N°	Frequency	Minimum N°
Preparatory Visits	100%	10%	10	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Mobility in HE	100%	10%	10	5%	3	5%	1
Mobility in non HE	100%	10%	10	5%	3	5%	1
Cooperation projects in HE	100%	10%	10	5%	3	5%	1
Cooperation projects in education/training	100%	10%	10	5%	3	5%	1

Programme SI05	Monitoring action	Planned timing	Criteria for	Potential risk	Comments
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			monitoring		
	Predefined projects (2)	First half of 2016	Projects with significant impact on the overall objective of the Programme	/	/
	Projects (3-6) selected in the public call	Second half of 2016	Projects with significant impact on the overall objective of the Programme Projects with higher identified risk of implementation	/	/

Annex: Risk assessment at the national level

The risk assessment at the national level regards risks to the two overall objectives and overall operations of the Grants.

Type of objective ³	Description of risk	Likelihood ⁴	Consequence ⁵	Mitigation planned/done
Cohesion objective:				
Reduction of economic and social disparities	Poor implementation/management of awarded projects/activities	2	1	Efficient monitoring of project promoters
	Lack of sustainability			Plan to monitor the projects after the closure
Bilateral objective:				
Strengthening long-term bilateral cooperation between Slovenia and donor countries	Lack of interest for co-operation with donor countries	1	1	Increase cooperation with the donor countries institutions
Operational issues:	Shortage of staff	2	1	Flexibility in assuring human resources in terms of quantity and skills according to actual needs
				Adequate reorganisation and education of staff

³ The risks should be categorised in one of 3 ways, depending on whether it poses a risk to the cohesion objective, the bilateral objective, or is more of an operational issue.

⁴ Each risk should be described as to whether it poses a risk to the cohesion objective, the bilateral objective, or is more of an operational issue, where 4 = Almost certain (75 – 99% likelihood); 3 = Likely (50 – 74%); 2 = Possible (25 – 49%); 1 = Unlikely (1 – 24%)

⁵ Assess the consequence(s) in the event that the outcomes and/or crucial operations are not delivered, where 4 = severe; 3 = major; 2 = moderate; 1 = minor; n/a = not relevant or insignificant.

Annex: Risk assessment of the programme

Programme SI02 and SI05	Type of objective ⁶	Description of risk	Likelihood ⁷	Consequence ⁸	Mitigation planned/done
		Poor project results and lack of sustainability	2	2	Rapid and adequate response of Programme operator to identified risks and critical situations.
		Failure to achieve programme outcomes / outputs indicator values	2	2	Risk of not achieving programme outcomes / outputs indicators values could be identified (on the basis of project monitoring and project reports) in mid 2016, when the majority of projects will be in the final stage of implementation. This could lead to the possibility of modifications (if necessary) to the Programme Agreement.
		Insufficient interest of target groups in involvement in the project activities	1	1	Systematic and regular involvement of key target groups and good, target-based communication strategy.
	Bilateral outcome(s):				
	Operational issues:	Shortage and rapid turnover of staff	2	2	Regular assessment of required human resources and informing of superiors and National Focal Point about shortages Better organisation of work and stimulation of staff

Programme SI03	Type of	Description of risk	Likelihood ¹⁰	Consequence ¹¹	Mitigation planned/done
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⁶ The risks should be categorised in one of 3 ways, depending on whether it poses a risk to the cohesion objective, the bilateral objective, or is more of an operational issue.

⁷ Each risk should be described as to whether it poses a risk to the cohesion outcomes (programme outcomes), the bilateral outcome or crucial operational issues 4 = Almost certain (75 – 99% likelihood); 3 = Likely (50 – 74%); 2 = Possible (25 – 49%); 1 = Unlikely (1 – 24%)

⁸ Assess the consequence(s) in the event that the outcomes and/or crucial operations are not delivered, where 4 = severe; 3 = major; 2 = moderate; 1 = minor; n/a = not relevant or insignificant.

	objective⁹				
	Cohesion (Programme) outcomes:	Non-achievement of OUTCOME 2: Cross-sectoral partnerships developed, particularly with Government institutions at local, regional and/or national level	Unlikely	Moderate: Difficulties in achieving the outcome	Extensive capacity building activities: Individual assistance, on-the spot assistance, thematic workshops of beneficiaries; promotion through communication activities of FO
		Non-achievement of OUTCOME 3: advocacy and watch-dog role developed	Unlikely	Moderate: Difficulties in achieving the outcome	Extensive capacity building activities: Individual assistance, on-the spot assistance, thematic workshops of beneficiaries, additional capacity building workshop for monitoring and advocacy if needed
	Bilateral outcome(s):	Lack of interest in donor project partnerships	Unlikely	Major: Bilateral cooperation not fostered, missed opportunity for cooperation with EEA countries	Active facilitation of partnerships, cooperation with NHC, motivation in project documentation, funds available for partnership projects
	Operational issues:	Problems with time management in programme implementation	Likely	Moderate: Delays in evaluation process and reporting	Problems with time management in programme implementation
		Low management costs vs. high oversubscription	Possible	Major: There is a risk of overspending management costs if re-allocation is not allowed.	Low management costs vs. high oversubscription
		Low quality of evaluators	Unlikely	Major: Proposed projects for funding not in line with programme's objectives and outcomes	Low quality of evaluators
		reporting documentation too complex and administratively burdensome	Possible	Moderate: Bigger workload for NGOs, too much time spent on reporting and less on content work	Project documentation too complex and administratively burdensome
		Low interest of journalists in NGO stories	Possible	Moderate: Projects, project promoters and NGO programme insufficiently presented and known to the general public	Low interest of journalists in NGO stories
		Lack of interest for capacity building activities	Possible	Moderate: Project applications not in line with programme's	Lack of interest in capacity building activities

¹⁰ Each risk should be described as to whether it poses a risk to the cohesion outcomes (programme outcomes), the bilateral outcome or crucial operational issues 4 = Almost certain (75 – 99% likelihood); 3 = Likely (50 – 74%); 2 = Possible (25 – 49%); 1 = Unlikely (1 – 24%)

¹¹ Assess the consequence(s) in the event that the outcomes and/or crucial operations are not delivered, where 4 = severe; 3 = major; 2 = moderate; 1 = minor; n/a = not relevant or insignificant.

⁹ The risks should be categorised in one of 3 ways, depending on whether it poses a risk to the cohesion objective, the bilateral objective, or is more of an operational issue.

				outcomes and outputs, lower quality of project applications, missed opportunities to share experience with other project promoters	
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Programme SI04	Type of objective ¹²	Description of risk	Likelihood ¹³	Consequence ¹⁴	Mitigation planned/done
Slovene Scholarship Fund	Cohesion (Programme) outcomes:				
	Increased higher education student and staff mobility between Beneficiary and EEA EFTA States	<i>Lack of interest from eligible institutions</i>	2	4	Promotion/Motivation activities far in advance, organised support to institutions during application phase in time, enough time between publication of Calls and application deadline
		<i>Lack of interest from individuals</i>	2	4	Information/Promotion activities Monitoring of the beneficiary
		<i>Poor quality of applications / projects</i>	3	3	Training workshops before deadlines with presentation of the call, application form Instructions on "how to fill out an application" E-mail and phone help-desk Individual support for Measure 3
		<i>Poor implementation / management of awarded projects/activities</i>	2	2	Organised support to implementing institutions, regular reporting, monitoring activities (meetings, on-the-spot visits, phone calls) On time reporting about difficulties from PP's
	Increased and strengthened institutional cooperation at all levels of education sector between Beneficiary and EEA EFTA States	<i>Lack of interest from eligible institutions</i>	1	2	Promotion/Motivation activities far in advance, organised support to institutions during application phase in time, enough time between publication of Calls and application deadline
		<i>Poor quality of applications / projects</i>	1	2	Training workshops before deadlines with presentation of the call, application form Instructions on "how to fill out an application" E-mail and phone help-desk
		<i>Insufficient dissemination of results</i>	3	3	Contractual obligation for beneficiaries Thematic workshop organised Handbook on dissemination distributed Organised events – SHARE/DELI Use of study visits
		<i>Lack of sustainability</i>	3	4	Information to beneficiaries regarding different possibilities for long term cooperation E+

¹² The risks should be categorised in one of 3 ways, depending on whether it poses a risk to the cohesion objective, the bilateral objective, or is more of an operational issue.

¹³ Each risk should be described as to whether it poses a risk to the cohesion outcomes (programme outcomes), the bilateral outcome or crucial operational issues 4 = Almost certain (75 – 99% likelihood); 3 = Likely (50 – 74%); 2 = Possible (25 – 49%); 1 = Unlikely (1 – 24%)

¹⁴ Assess the consequence(s) in the event that the outcomes and/or crucial operations are not delivered, where 4 = severe; 3 = major; 2 = moderate; 1 = minor; n/a = not relevant or insignificant.

					Encouragement to beneficiaries for establishment of bilateral agreements Identification and exchange of good practices – DELI/SHARE events Use of study visits
	Increased mobility of education sector staff at all levels of education between Beneficiary and EEA EFTA States	<i>Lack of interest from eligible institutions/organisations</i>	2	2	Direct promotion via established channels Allocation of funds
		<i>Poor quality of applications / projects</i>	2	3	Training workshops before deadlines with presentation of the call, application form Instructions on “how to fill-out an application” E-mail and phone help-desk Individual support for Measure 3
Slovene Scholarship Fund	Bilateral outcome(s):				
	New bilateral agreements and cooperation established	<i>Lack of interest from eligible institutions/organisations</i>	2	4	Promotion/Motivation activities far in advance, organised support to institutions/individuals during application phase in time, enough time before publication of Call 2015 and application deadline
		<i>Poor quality of applications / projects</i>	3	3	Instructions on “how to fill out an application” E-mail and phone help-desk
		<i>Lack of sustainability</i>	3	4	Information to beneficiaries regarding different possibilities for long term cooperation Encouragement to beneficiaries for establishment of bilateral agreements Identification and exchange of good practices Use of study visits
Slovene Scholarship Fund	Operational issues:	Sudden change/departure of staff	2	4	Established back-up team Suitable staff
		Reallocation of funds	2	4	Desk check of all interim and final reports > committing projects on the reserve list, transfer of funds to other measures On-time response Communication with the FMO