

Fifth Annual Meeting
Financial Mechanism 2014-2021
EEA GRANTS PORTUGAL
Funchal, October 25th 2022

Adopted by 24th November 2022

According to Article 2.7 of the Regulation on the implementation of the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism (EEA FM) 2014-2021, the fifth Annual Meeting between the **Financial Mechanism Committee (FMC)** and the **National Focal Point (NFP)** was held in Funchal, on October 25th 2022.

On behalf of the Portuguese delegation the meeting was chaired by Ms **Susana Ramos**, Coordinator of the National Management Unit, appointed as **NFP**.

Ms **Torill Johansen**, Deputy Director at the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, co-chaired the meeting on behalf of the **FMC**.

The meeting was also attended by the Secretary of State for Planning, Mr. **Eduardo Pinheiro**, the Ambassador of Norway to Portugal, Ms. **Tove Bruvik Westberg**, the Deputy Permanent Representative at Embassy of Iceland in Paris, Mr. **Pétur Skúlason Waldorff**, the Deputy Managing Director of the FMO, Mr. **Borgar Einarsson** as well as other representatives from FMO, the Norwegian and Portuguese Ministries for Foreign Affairs, the Audit Authority, the Programme Operators (PO) and the Active Citizens Fund (ACF) manager. The Honorary Consul of Norway in Madeira, Mr. **Andrew Zino**, was present as an observer.

A full list of participants is attached to the present minutes. These minutes summarize the main issues discussed.

Opening statements by NFP and FMC

Susana Ramos opened the meeting with a welcome address to all participants explaining the importance of holding the annual meeting in Madeira and highlighting projects which are promoted in an outermost region.

The **Secretary of State for Planning** underlined the significant progress achieved in the implementation of the EEA FM 2014-2021, despite the challenging context due to COVID-19 pandemic and the consequences of the war in Ukraine. It was mentioned the progressive financial execution and the expected acceleration as well as the high expectations for the new EEA FM 2021-2027.

Torill Johansen, on behalf of the Donors, thanked the NFP for hosting the Annual Meeting and for the organization of all the activities and on-site visits in Madeira. It was highlighted the importance of exchanging information regarding the Programmes status, considering the Covid-19 pandemic and the challenges resulting from the war in Ukraine. The importance of flexibility measures was mentioned to increase the execution of the EEA FM 2014-2021 which is in the final stage of implementation. The strong bilateral cooperation and the partnerships in the different Programmes was also noted.

Tove Bruvik Westberg highlighted the importance of EEA Grants and appreciated the good cooperation with the NFP and the PO. The active and good work and exchange of knowledge in the communication area was also referred to as being of great importance.

Borgar Einarsson referred to the critical months ahead and the importance of flexibility measures to increase Programmes execution. The cooperation between NFP and PO was also noted. It was highlighted that the Portuguese communication work is an example for all the other NFP.

Susana Ramos briefly reviewed the Programme of the Annual Meeting.

Strategic Report 2021/2022 – Presentations and Discussions

On the topics of the Agenda of the Annual Meeting **Susana Ramos** started by highlighting the main milestones over the reporting period such as the significant development with the launching of the last open calls and progress with the selection and contracting of projects. A total of 27 open calls were launched receiving 635 applications with candidates requesting 4 times over the available funds. It was also underlined that 73% of the projects were in collaboration with entities from the donor countries, which represents the commitment in the promotion of Bilateral Relations.

Regarding the remaining budget, **Susana Ramos** proposed that any remaining amount not spent by the end of 2022 should be transferred to the FBR.

a) Status of the Programmes and ACF

At this stage **Susana Ramos** gave the floor to the representatives of each PO and the ACF Manager to present a brief status on the progress of the Programmes. All Programmes reported the main milestones achieved on the implementation period.

Torill Johansen noted the good progresses in all the Programmes and at the level of bilateral partnerships. **Susana Ramos** stated the possibility to assess the execution rate at the end of the first quarter of 2023 to have a clearer perspective of the execution in each Programme.

Regarding the Blue Growth Programme, **FMC** mentioned the encouraging level of partnerships, giving the example of the Business Opportunities event and matchmaking that will take place in Oslo on 8th November.

Regarding the Environment Programme, the interesting activities in the different fields were noted by **FMC**, in particular in the climate change adaptation projects, since Norway doesn't have the same experience. FMC also underlined the added-value of synergies between the Blue Growth and Environment programmes in the area of marine litter.

Regarding the Culture Programme, **FMC** underlined that the risk in projects execution was not just a problem in Portugal. Considering the limited period remaining for the EEA FM 2014-2021 implementation, and although flexibility is encouraged, it is important to have a realistic analysis of the feasibility of the projects, and particularly those involving construction works, guaranteeing a close contact between DPP, FMO and NFP.

Regarding the Work-life Balance Programme, the feedback on best practices was noted by **FMC** as very positive.

Regarding the Active Citizen Fund, the programme is following the plan and is achieving very encouraging results.

João Telha from the Norwegian Embassy in Lisbon stated that, given the overlapping areas covered (e.g. domestic and gender-based violence), there could be room for cooperation between the Work-Life Balance programme and the Active Citizens Fund, similar to the one established between the Blue Growth and Environment programmes.

Then **Borgar Einarsson** provided a brief status on the regional funds directly managed by the FMO, since it is important to mention this support beyond the programmes operated in the Beneficiary countries - Fund for Youth Employment (60,61M€) and Fund for Regional Cooperation (31,89M€), highlighting the presence of Portuguese entities in the selected projects.

Susana Ramos thanked for the useful information provided.

b) Status of the Fund for Bilateral Relations

On the use of the Fund for Bilateral Relations (FBR) it was highlighted that in the years of 2021 and 2022 the implementation of this fund was still particularly affected by the pandemic COVID-19 context, as expected. The main consequences arose from the need to postpone or cancel trips and to extend the planned implementation periods. However, bilateral initiatives have continued, and promoters have shown a capacity to accommodate the planned activities, without prejudice to the outlined results.

A brief updated status on the open calls, pre-defined initiatives and allocations to Programmes was provided.

Torill Johansen commended the good work of JCBF, the good cooperation through the Embassies and the solid assessment on the initiatives provided by the NFP.

Pétur Skúlason Waldorff also commended the good cooperation in progress.

c) Commutation

Susana Ramos stated that the NFP has continued to actively promote the communication aiming to broaden the knowledge of the EEA Grants in Portugal.

It was given an overview of the communication activities and explained the various activities carried out with the goal of having strategic and aligned communication.

The structured planning for the social media implemented showed a continuous increase of the number of followers in the updated results.

On the **main activities for the next 12 months** it was explained the preparation of a new Communication Strategy (2023-2025) intended to come into force in the last quarter of the year.

Torill Johansen stated that Portugal is an excellent example for communication activities and thanked the good work developed in this area.

d) Management and implementation Issues

On general **implementation issues** it was highlighted the joint procedure to procure the setting up of a joint IT system which is in the phase of loading project data and with entry into production by end of the year. It was also highlighted the absence of relevant changes in the National Level Management and Control Systems. Regarding NFP staff, the Deputy coordinator was replaced in April 2022.

On **monitoring activities**, it was highlighted that NFP has been promoting continued support to all PO in the different stages and aspects of the implementation, such as:

- Quarterly reports from the PO;
- Monthly reports from new projects (Culture and WLB) and regular meetings with PO teams;
- A particular outlook on the results framework on Programmes and identification of adjustments to be discussed with the FMO.

Susana Ramos underlined that the NFP continues to actively promote joint training sessions involving the PO in the different stages of implementation of the Programmes by setting up workshops on relevant issues for the work planning and promoting joint training sessions.

Torill Johansen noted the efficient functioning of Management and Control Systems. It was reminded the importance of accurate and realistic forecasts because the Donors rely on this information in order to plan the annual budget and to communicate the budget needs. The Donors are happy to see no irregularities in the Financial Mechanism.

Issues for the Annual Meeting

Susana Ramos continued on to the agenda point on **issues for the Annual Meeting**, namely the **constraints that affect the implementation of the projects**: the crises resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequences of the war. Additionally, the price increases and material costs have negative consequences on the projects and Programmes, especially in the Culture Programme because of the significant infrastructure component of the six projects selected under Outcome 1.

Susana Ramos asked the FMC to consider the possibility of moving these projects to EEA FM 2021-2027, without increasing funding from the EEA Grants.

Regarding **Results and Evaluation**, **Susana Ramos** stated that the NFP will work with PO to implement the best strategy to communicate/disseminate the results and achievements in each Programme. On the Evaluation Plan it was stated that the framework of the EEA FM 2014-2021 evaluation is being prepared to launch the public procurement procedure in 2023. If possible, the PO will be responsible for the evaluation payment and the NFP will ensure that all principles relating to good governance and impartiality are considered.

On the **next funding period 2021-2027**, **Susana Ramos** mentioned the expectations of a fruitful period of negotiations and the internal reflection about the strategic priorities in each area.

Torill Johansen noted that the negotiations are in an early phase. Considering the different priorities in the EEA FM 2014-2021, it is expected that the new Programme titles continue but in a more focused manner. The chance of a financial gap between the 2 periods was mentioned as a possibility and hence the importance of flexibility measures proposed by the FMC as described in the recent letters sent to the NFPs which will be followed by a new letter from FMO aiming at clarifying which expenses will be eligible to be covered beyond the eligibility period.

The Risk Assessment was discussed under the restricted part of the Annual Meeting.

Any Other Business

Pétur Skúlason Waldorff thanked the NFP and the FMO for organizing the meeting and highlighted the good cooperation. Iceland shares interests with Portugal in areas such as Gender Equality and looks forward to strengthening the cooperation further.

Tove Bruvik Westberg highlighted the good work of JCBF as a strong tool for strengthening bilateral relations and that once the Evaluation Plan starts it would be important to consider all the experience and projects of working together to strengthen democracy.

Sum-up and conclusions

Torill Johansen thanked the NFP for hosting the Annual Meeting and confirmed the formal approval of the Strategic Report 2021.

The meeting was closed by 13.30.

List of Participants



EEA Grants Portugal
 Mecanismo Financeiro do Espaço Económico Europeu
 European Economic Area Financial Mechanism
 Unidade Nacional de Gestão
 National Focal Point

EEA Grants Portugal 5th Annual Meeting | October 25th, 2022

List of Attendances

Entity	Representative	Signature
NMFA	Torill Johansen	
NMFA	Geir Atle Bringedal	
Ambassador at Norwegian Embassy	Tove Bruvik Westberg	
Norwegian Embassy in Lisbon	Ellen Aabø	
Norwegian Embassy in Lisbon	João Telha	
IMFA	Pétur Skúlason Waldorff	
FMO	Borgar Einarsson	
FMO	Mualla Cirakli	
FMO	Roger Bymolt	
MNE	Lúisa Fragoso de Almeida	
NFP	Susana Ramos	
NFP	Maria Mineiro	
NFP	Mónica Ângelo	
NFP	Rita Soares	
NFP	Filipa Rodrigues	
NFP	Ricardo Perdigão	



R. Prof. Gomes Teixeira, n.º 2
 1399-022 Lisboa | Portugal
 geral@eeagrants.gov.pt
 www.eegrants.gov.pt
 EEAGrantsPortugal

IGF	Ana Cristina Rodrigues	<i>Ana</i>
DGPM	Marisa Lameiras	<i>Marisa Lameiras Silva</i>
DGPM	Sandra Silva	<i>Sandra Silva</i>
SG MAAC	Alexandra Carvalho	<i>Alexandra Carvalho</i>
SG MAAC	Susana Escária	<i>Susana Escária</i>
DGPC	Catarina Gonçalves	<i>Catarina</i>
DGPC	Margarida Reis	<i>Margarida Reis</i>
DGPC	José Miguel Marques	<i>José Miguel Marques</i>
DGARTES	Pedro Barbosa	<i>Pedro Barbosa</i>
DGARTES	Joana Branco	<i>Joana Branco</i>
CIG	Sandra Ribeiro	<i>Sandra Ribeiro</i>
CIG	Joana Marteleira	<i>Joana Marteleira</i>
Active Citizens Fund	Lúcia Santos	<i>Lúcia Santos</i>
	ANDREW ZILG	<i>Andrew Zilg</i>