

Strategic Report in 2018

EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2014-2021

Romania

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1 Status of Programmes

1.1 Summary of Programme preparation and implementation

The process of Programmes development started after the signing of the Memoranda of Understanding, on 13 October 2016, with the preparation of the Concept Notes. All Programme Operators organized stakeholders' consultation meetings, with the participation and direct involvement of the FMO, between December and March 2017 and all Concept Notes have been developed and formally submitted by August 2017, with the exception of the "Environment" Programme (as detailed in Annex).

Cooperation Committees were organized for all Programmes and the Donor Programme Partners and IPOs were duly involved in the Programme development process.

The submitted concept notes have been positively assessed by the end of October 2018 and Programme Operators prepared and submitted the additional information required for the preparation of the Programme Agreements (detailed status - Annexed). At the time of submission of the report, 8 Programme Agreements have been signed.

The agreements for the Fund for Bilateral Relations and for Technical Assistance were signed on 23.08.2017.

The preparation of the "Environment, Climate Change Adaptation and Ecosystems" Programme is severely delayed. The Programme Operator submitted several draft versions of Concept Note for consultation to the FMO, considered both by the FMO and NFP of insufficient level of quality. The Concept Note, as well as the Plan for ensuring the management capacity of the PO were sent to the FMO on 27.06.2018 in order to be assessed by the Donors.

The PO continues to demonstrate a significant lack of capacity, as underlined during the 2009-2014 period, and, as a result, the implementation of this Programme is under severe risk.

The development of the "Energy" Programme is also considered delayed, due to discussions between FMO and Donors about possible pre-defined projects. The Fund Operator – Innovation Norway organised several video meetings with Programme partners in the period November 2016-March 2017 to get input for the development of the Concept Note. The first version of Concept Note submitted to FMO in April 2017. Based on FMO's comments small updates were made in June and in September, and the final version was submitted to FMO in December 2017. FO received information from FMO on 27.04.2018 that FMO/Donors have accepted the Concept Note and request for input to PIA.

The national legal framework necessary for the implementation of the Grants was adopted in May 2017, through Government Emergency Ordinance no. 34/2017 on the financial management of the external non-reimbursable funds related to the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021, approved by Law no. 206/2017, as well as the related implementation rules, approved by Minister's Order no. 2840/2017.

Up to 30.06.2018, 7 open calls, of a total value of approx. 42,000,000 euros were launched under three Programmes.

1.2 Individual Programme Summaries

Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeships and Youth Entrepreneurship // ANPCDEFP
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a) Development of the Concept note

Consultations

Several consultation meetings with stakeholders were organized by the PO:

- 16.09.2016 - meeting with the network of inspectors in charge with European educational cooperation Programmes, as main stakeholders at local level for the following fields: SE, VET.:
 - Expectations:
 - complementarity with Erasmus+, not to duplicate the existing opportunities;
 - School Education and Adult Education sector needs: professional development mobility (attending courses, seminars, conferences, job shadowing, study visits) for inspectors, trainers in Teacher Training Houses, counsellors in County Centers for Resources and Educational Assistance, all of them being left aside by the actual Erasmus+ mobility projects;
 - VET needs: support for the dual-VET learning, for the schools that have already formalized partnerships established with companies, but the companies do not receive incentives to allocate tutors for the traineeships;
 - From administrative point of view: simple rules, unit costs;
 - Challenges:
 - difficulties in finding enough hosting organizations (course and training providers, suitable courses, hosting schools for job shadowing) in only 3 countries, if the mobilities have to be only between RO and DS
 - difficulties in finding partners in general in the DS (need of a platform to facilitate the matching)
 - the level of the grant could be a challenge for mobility in expensive countries
 - strong difficulties in implementing the projects and managing the funds if the rules are not similar with Erasmus+ (schools do not have strong financial services/departments)
- 23.09.2016 - meeting with the coordinators of Erasmus+ offices in HEIs, as the main local stakeholders for HE sector
 - Expectations:
 - HEIs want to continue the actual mobility programme (otherwise, RO students cannot go in mobility in DS with Erasmus+ grant, which is too low as compared with the living costs);
 - complementarity with Erasmus+ for cooperation projects: to finance projects that aim to organise Intensive Programmes, to exchange/transfer knowledge and good practices (without the obligation to create innovative intellectual outputs) or to develop the institutional capacity;
 - to maintain the actual level of the grants for mobility (as in the present programme);
 - Challenges:
 - the difficulties in finding partners in DS;
 - the big differences in size between the HE systems in BS and DS and competition with the other BS in attracting the same DS HEIs for cooperation;
 - the lack of interest of DS students to come to RO;
 - the differences between the calendar of the academic year in RO and DS;
 - the enormous burden put on the financial services of the HEIs in managing the grants in national currency and through the State Treasury, under the national framework, as compared with the management of Erasmus+ grants;
 - for the cooperation projects: too complicate to use real costs, as compared to the unit costs in Erasmus+.
- 26 - 27.10.2016 - ECVET seminar for curricula developers for IVET and Romanian Dual System
 - Expectations:
 - complementarity with Erasmus+, not to duplicate the existing opportunities (not to finance VET placements for initial training abroad);
 - to take into account the actual VET needs: support for work based learning in IVET and dual system, joint trainings for VET teachers, tutors from companies, VET schools legal

representatives and legal representatives of companies, study visits for the above mentioned persons

- from administrative point of view: simple rules, unit costs

Challenges: too complicated rules

- 02.11.2016 - consultations with UNICEF and the Foundation “Together”, concerning Roma issues
- 04.11.2016 - national conference for valorization of Erasmus+ and EEA grants projects
 - 245 participants: inspectors in charge with European educational projects, Erasmus+ coordinators in HEIs, Erasmus+ network of coordinators of Erasmus+ and EEA cooperation projects, as examples of good practice, schools or NGOs that have not been involved so far in projects, potential future beneficiaries, representatives of various central institutions connected with the education in general (including ministries)
 - Working groups focusing the topic: Internationalization of education in Romania, considering both Erasmus+ and EEA grants programmes as main financial instruments

Points for discussions:

- Already existing elements of internationalisation in the participating organisations/institutions;
- Challenges and opportunities in internationalisation so far;
- Concrete measures and targets in view of year 2030 in using internationalisation. as an instrument for organisational development, inclusive education and facilitating the access on the labor market
- In addition, a focus group was organised, involving representatives of: the Ministry of Education, the National Centre for the Development of Initial VET, Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in School Education, Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in HE, Institute for Educational Sciences, National Authority for Qualifications, the PO for Research programme, the Unit for implementing the ESF Human Capital programme in education.
- 07.11.2016 - bilateral consultation with the PO for Research -decision on how to ensure synergy

Concept Note drafting process:

The synthesis of these consultations and of the bilateral discussions with stakeholders for Roma issues and Research Programme offered a basis for the PO to propose the most relevant areas of intervention for the new Programme, so as to support the actual national policies in education and VET, without duplicating the existing instruments/programmes:

1. For HE: mobility programmes for students and staff between RO and DS, with a dedicated component for mobility of doctoral (or master) students involved in the future selected Research projects
2. For SE/AE sector: mobility projects for professionals/experts of the institutions that are part of the education system with the role of supporting the schools: County School Inspectorates, Teacher Training Houses, County Centers for Resources and Educational Assistance-with the aim of professional development and institutional development
3. For VET sector: projects dedicated to VET schools that have concluded partnerships with companies for the practical stages of the students (traineeships), financing 2 types of measures: one national component for providing, on one side, incentives for the staff of the companies who are acting as tutors of the students during the practical stages and, on the other side to provide adequate training for them and one transnational mobility component, to allow small teams composed by the tutors from companies and the responsables from the VET schools to run study visits in similar VET schools in DS-accompanied by one translator
4. For the conditionality related to Roma: national projects submitted and implemented in consortia,

composed from one coordinator (usually, one organisation having strong experience and expertise in this field) and 8-10 schools where there is a significant percentage of Roma children, the focus of the projects being on 3 levels: adequate training for their teachers, organising learning activities with the parents and extra-curricular activities for the children in order to develop social competences for them.

Submission of the Concept Note:

The first preliminary draft of the CN was submitted on 6.12.2016 to the DPPs and FMO, for comments before its official submission to NFP. In the same time, the draft was published on the website of the PO, open to public consultation.

Following the changing of the structure and responsibilities within FMO, the process of receiving and incorporating the comments that came from many parts (DPPs, several officers from FMO) into several versions of the draft was considerably slowed down, as a result the submission of the CN to NFP was on 31-st of March. The process went probably so slowly also because this CN was the 1st one to be submitted to FMO in the new generation of EEA grants 2014-2021.

Assessment of the Concept Note:

Positive assessment of the Concept Note was confirmed on 29.05.2017.

b) Development of the Programme Agreement

- additional information for PA sent on 03.07.2017;
- finalization of the PA: 27.09.2017;
- signing of PA / PIA: 24.10.2017.

Note: The delay in processing all the documents-starting with the first draft CN until the approval of the PA leads to changes in the timetable of the scheduled Calls.

c) Cooperation with DPPs

Cooperation Committee meetings organized:

- date: 17.11.2016
- participants: DPP, FMO, NFP, PO
- main conclusions - inputs for developing the draft of the CN

d) Programme implementation

Programme launch

Launching conference held on 5 December 2017, streamed event with the participation of the NO ambassador in RO and of the minister of European Funds ; development and launching of the dedicated website-www.eea4edu.ro and of the e-platform for managing the preparatory visits and the projects in HE; working visit in NO (November 2017) for promoting the programme to various stakeholders for the school education and VET fields

Development of description of management and control system

The Audit Authority has started the audit mission on 16th of April 2018. The Audit Report prepared following the Audit Mission on the Conformity Assessment of the Management and Control System established at the level of the National Agency for Community Programs in the Field of Vocational Education and Training (Programme Operator for the Education programme) was sent to NFP on 22.06. 2018. The conclusion of the report is that the MCS established at the level of OP is in line with the provision of the EEA Regulation and the requirements of the system are proportionate to the

effectiveness of program objectives.

Calls for proposals

Call 1 - Outcome 1: Improved skills and competences of students and staff in Higher Education (mobility in Higher Education HE)

- Launched: 05.12.2017, Closed: 05.02.2018
- Budget: 1,000,000 Euro
- No. of applications received: 16 (13 eligible)
- No. of contracts awarded: 13
- Total value contracted: 1.000.000 Euro
- Payments made: 800,000 Euro

Call 1 - Outcome 2: Strengthened institutional cooperation in Higher Education HE area, based on common needs

- Launched: 08.01.2018 Closed: 27.04.2018
- Budget: 570,000 Euro
- No. of applications received: 23 (21 eligible)
- No. of contracts awarded: 5 (with a value of 559.832 Euro)
- Total value contracted: process not yet started

Call 1 - Outcome 3: Improved skills and competences of educational experts (school inspectors, counsellors, teacher trainers)

- Launched: 15.02.2018 Closed: 31.05.2018
- Budget: 300,000 Euro
- No. of applications received: 25 (23 eligible)
- No. of contracts awarded: in the evaluation process
- Total value contracted: process not yet started

Call 1 - Outcome 4: Improved quality of work-based learning (Vocational Education and Training, VET)

- Launched: 15.02.2018 Closed: 08.06.2018
- Budget: 420,000 Euro
- No. of applications received: 5
- No. of contracts awarded: in the evaluation process
- Total value contracted: process not yet started

Call 1 - Outcome 5: Increased institutional capacity of schools to ensure an effective inclusion of Roma children

- Launched: 15.02.2018, Closed: 31.05.2018
- Budget: 811,764 Euro
- No. of applications received: 16 (10 eligible)
- No. of contracts awarded: in the evaluation process
- Total value contracted: process not yet started

Bilateral Fund - Enhanced collaboration between BS and DS institutions involved in the programme

- Open Call Launched: 09.11.2017 Closed: N/A
- Budget: 50,000 Euro
- No. of applications received: 35 (20 eligible 14 ineligible, 1 rejected-lack of quality)
- No. of contracts awarded: 19
- Total value contracted: 30,560 euro

- Payments made: 23,750 Euro

Local Development and Poverty Reduction, Enhanced Roma Inclusion // Romanian Social Development Fund

a) Development of the Concept note

Public consultation

According to applicable Regulations, PO developed the Concept note of the Programme in cooperation with the FMO and in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

The Programme has been developed following a strategic planning process that encompassed (1) an investigation of the existing challenges/needs in the Programme Areas (PA), (2) a structured and participative analysis of the key issues identified, (3) the formulation of the programme strategy and approach respond to (4) objectives and targets and (5) the setup of implementation modalities and financing means.

The analysis and prioritisation of the key issues that lay the foundation of the proposed programme has been addressed by the means of a series of stakeholder consultations that have been organized by the PO during programme preparation.

In this respect, 3 meetings with the participation of central authorities were organized in December 2016, several bilateral consultations with national and international organisations were organized during December 2016 - March 2017 (The National Authority for the Protection of the Rights of the Child and Adoption, UNICEF Romania, National NGOs Federation for Children Rights', Roma experts, National Authority for Personnas with Disabilities, National Centre for Roma Culture, Impreuna Agency, Sastipen Association) and a large stakeholders consultation on Local development, Good governance and Roma Inclusion, in March, 17th, 2017.

During programme preparation, discussions between General Secretary of the Government, OECD, NFP and OP were held, in view of identifying possible direction of assistance from OECD in order to increase good governance, transparency and accountability at the level of national authorities, three rounds of consultations between PO and in line ministries and national authorities, facilitated by the Prime Minister Chancellery and focused mainly on the Integrated Package for Combating Poverty, respectively the strategic measures uncovered by national or EU funds, and as recommended in the MoU, several consultations with the Council of Europe were also organized, to "explore ... the possibility of pre-defining project(s)".

On January 25, 2017, PO participated at a presentation of the preliminary results of the RO25 programme on "Poverty Alleviation", facilitated by FMO. Following that meeting, direct communication between the PO and the promoters of the projects implemented under the RO25 programme has started, PO inviting them to propose modalities for further developing the results of projects funded under this programme, according to the MoU.

The stakeholders consultations on Local Development, Good Governance and Roma Inclusion, organized by PO on March 17th, 2017 and facilitated by FMO experts, was attended by 37 participants, representatives of public authorities and institutions from central and local level, academic environment, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations that are operating in Romania in these programme areas. The format of the event included discussions in plenary and thematic groups, to identify the main problems, but also their causes and possible intervention strategies in these three programme areas (PA 10, PA 16 and PA 07). The conclusions of the consultations were reflected in the Concept Note.

Drafting of the Concept Note

The first meeting between POs and DPPs, IPOs was facilitated by the Ministry of the European Funds and FMO during 16-18 November 2016. Back to back to this meeting was organised the meeting for DEVLOC Programme, on November 17, 2016, at PO's headquarters. In addition to representatives of OP, DPP and IPO, participated representatives of the NFP, the FMO, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs /Norway, the Norwegian Embassy in Romania. The meeting was an opportunity for partners to know each other and discuss general aspects of cooperation and the next steps for the development of the new Programme.

During 2017, other several meetings of Programme stakeholders were organized with the purpose of drafting the Concept note of the Programme:

- On January 26, 2017, in Bucharest: the first draft of the Concept Note was presented. The participants felt the need to ask for additional information to the FMO about the expected objectives and results at the level of this Programme. The discussions took place on a general level on the topics covered by the Programme and the content of the Concept Note.
- On March 3, 2017, in Oslo: the second draft of the Concept Note was analysed. The participants made recommendations in order to elaborate more on the strategic framework the introductory part, the international and national context, development of the local development component. As a result, the participants requested clarifications on the expectations of the donors regarding RO25 package.
- On March 16, 2017, in Bucharest: the third draft of the Concept Note was analysed. The participants agreed that the Concept Note reached a nearly final form and is embedded almost all items are contained, but RO25 to be presented as 7 pre-defined projects.

On April 4, 2017, PO sent the fourth version of the Concept Note for feed-back, by e-mail, to the partners, NFP, and FMO.

On April 11, 2017, FMO provided comments to the Concept Note and proposed to host a drafting workshop in Brussels, in order to finalise the drafting process.

The meeting was organised on May 11-12, 2017, with the participation of NFP, FMO, PO, KS, and CoE. The discussions were based on the fifth draft of the Concept note. Other communications, including a skype meeting on the Results Framework were held after the meeting, in order to refine the agreed Concept Note.

On June 9, 2017, PO sent the Concept Note of the Programme to the FMO. The Concept Note was also approved by the Steering Committee (as highest decisional level in RSDF) and agreed with the NFP.

On June 21, 2017, FMO informed PO that the FMO Programme Committee gave its greenlight to the Concept note of the Programme to be submitted to the NFP with a main comment: to reduce the management cost with the amount that exceeds the maximum amount calculated as a percentage of the total eligible expenditures of the Programme as per Article 8.10.2 of the Regulations and to reallocate it to another activity within the outcome budget of the Programme.

Submission of the Concept Note

On June 26, 2017, PO submitted to the NFP the final version of the Concept Note together with the Capacity plan and, on the same day, the NFP submitted it to the FMO, with a letter of support for the already proposed management budget.

Assessment of the Concept Note

On July 17, 2017, FMO informed PO that the Concept Note received FMO's green light at the Programme Committee meeting and it was sent to the Donors on written procedure.

On October 6, 2017, FMO informed PO and partners about the fact that the Donors assessed the Concept Note and made some comments:

- They did not agree to the proposal on increased management costs at programme's level, as PO requested (the exceeding amount to be reallocated to another activity within the outcome budget of the Programme)
- PO should act in coordination and synergy with the Health Programme and the Active Citizens Fund

Supplementary information were requested for the PA drafting process and the cooperation of donor partners was requested for the development of the budgets for pre-defined projects.

b) Development of the Programme Agreement

Additional information for PA

On December 22, 2017, provided to NFP and FMO the first round of supplementary information as requested (including details on PdPs, Communication plan for the programme, revised Plan for enhancing the management capacity of the PO, description of all processes, PO structure, detailed estimation of costs, calls, eligibility, etc.).

On February 15, 2018, FMO informed PO about remaining requests for clarification in the process towards finalising the Programme Agreement (included in the Supplementary information document and in the Communication plan).

On February 28, 2018, PO provided to NFP and FMO the information as requested (including revised Supplementary information, revised Communication Plan at programme level, information about the envisaged partnership of UNEFS with a partner from Norway, revised budget of the predefined project promoted by ACoR and redistribution of 90,000 euro from the predefined project where KS is DPP to the local development area).

On March 3, 2018, FMO informed PO and partners about starting preparing the PA.

Finalization of the PA

PO answered at several other requests for additional information/ clarifications between March and May 2018.

On May 3, 2018, RSDF provided to the NFP its final observations on the two annexes of the PA regarding the programme. At its turn, the NFP informed FMO about the agreement on the final draft of the PA and annexes.

Signing of PA/ PIA

Subsequently, on June 12, 2018, the FMO informed the NFP and the PO that NMFA approved the support of the programme, on June, 07, 2018. The PA was signed by NMFA representatives on June 13, 2018. The PIA and the PA were signed by the NFP representative on June, 19, 2018.

c) Cooperation with DPPs

Within the programme, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) was appointed as Donor Programme Partner and the Council of Europe (CoE) as International Partner Organisation (IPO).

PO, DPP and IPO established a Cooperation Committee (CC) of the programme. During the reported period one meeting was held, in Bucharest/Romania on December 12, 2017

Main conclusions:

- The PO should submit the additional information about the programme to the NFP and afterwards to FMO, until the end of December, 2017. Having in mind that the approval process may be lengthy, NFP recommended to the PO to continue with the preparation of the management & control manual and of the operational procedures for the programme as to be ready to start the implementation as soon as possible.

- In order to access the exceptional advance from the FMO for the bilateral fund, the PO will submit the application in an agreed format as soon as possible (during December, 2017). A meeting for preparing the bilateral plan will be organized at the beginning of the year 2018, in Oslo. Also PO plan to inform potential donor partners about the future opportunities of partnership and to make funding available to facilitate meetings between pre-defined projects with Norwegian partner to further develop the pre-defined projects.
- The participants agreed on the content of the General principles guiding the activity of the Cooperation Committee. This is a working tool guiding the CC activity and completes the provisions of the Regulations by setting up the rules of the committee work.

Bilateral meetings were held with the DPP and IPO, back to back to other events or on the occasion of RO10 events organised by PO. During the meetings, the relevant pre-defined projects were discussed, as well as the planning for the programme.

Also, on 8 and 9 February 2018, in Oslo/Norway, PO met the programme partners during the event on drafting the action plan for the use of the bilateral funds. The meeting was also an opportunity to address topics related to the programme preparation (i.e. providing additional information to FMO, including information related to the predefined projects, preparing procedures etc.).

<p>Cultural Entrepreneurship, Cultural Heritage and Cultural Cooperation // Ministry of Culture</p>
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a) Development of the concept note

Public consultation

Between December 8th 2016 – January 16th 2017 the PO carried an online consultation regarding the needs and challenges of the cultural sector in Romania. 484 organizations (NGOs – 44%, cultural institutions – 22%, education institutions – 6%, SMEs – 6%, individuals - 6%, local authorities – 4%) filled in the questionnaire and the needs which were highlighted referred to: low level of available funding for the cultural sector; weak protection of the built and movable cultural heritage; cultural cooperation at international level; vocational training / professional development (mentorship, job shadowing, etc); increased cultural education; cultural history documented of cultural, social and ethnic minorities.

Between 14 – 15th February 2017 the PO organized 5 meetings in order to consult cultural players on the challenges and opportunities the Romanian cultural and creative sectors are currently facing. 65 organizations (NGOs - 68,75%, SMEs - 9,38%, cultural institutions - 20,31%, public authorities - 1,56%) took part in these consultations, highlighting the following: precarious state of conservation of monuments, museums, cinemas, libraries; need for trained and qualified personnel for restoration works; poor endowment of cultural spaces; lack of cultural infrastructure for artistic activities; need for multidisciplinary cultural spaces; reduced capacity of the cultural players to generate financial sustainability and increase the outreach of their productions; need for professional development through cooperation, mentorship, job shadowing, master classes, workshops; need for upgrading the management and marketing skills; need to create a flexible framework for peer learning; need to promote and document cultural values through ICT; need to finance interdisciplinary and integrated projects (fusion projects); scientific research techniques used for documenting cultural history; need for development of innovative and unconventional approaches (e.g. mobile apps, video blogging, gaming, non-traditional venues, etc.).

On March 7th 2017 the stakeholder consultation facilitated by FMO's representatives was organized in Bucharest. The discussions gathered over 20 relevant stakeholders who suggested the following funding priorities: mentorship and pilot project implementation, non-formal education and skills development, partnership development, development of platforms of knowledge on cultural /

heritage, increased involvement of local communities, create spaces for artistic manifestations, bilateral cooperation with universities and local authorities, residences for artists.

Concept Note drafting process

The PO submitted more than 7 versions to FMO for feedback, starting March 31st 2017 while the final version was submitted on May 15th 2017.

Besides the official versions of the Concept Note, the PO had extended debates and negotiations with FMO regarding the outcomes and outputs of the Programme, as well as the modalities, the eligibility of applicants, etc.

Submission of the Concept Note – CN submitted on 15.05.2017

Assessment of the Concept Note – conformation of positive assessment on 24.06.2017

The Donor Programme Partners were very supportive and responsive in the development process of the Concept Note.

b) Development of the Programme Agreement

Additional information for PA

The First version of the PA was submitted to FMO on October 12ve 2017. More than 20 versions were submitted to FMO and several telephone conferences were held, with DPPs participation, in order to finalize the Programme Agreement. Furthermore, the PO representatives attended a meeting in Bruxelles on January 22nd 2018 in order to explain in detail to the new FMO management team the PO's perspective regarding the Programme design and implementation.

Finalization of the PA – 23.04.2018

Signing of the PA / PIA – 05.06.2018

c) cooperation with DPPs

No formal Cooperation Committee meetings were organized, but the DPPs representatives were closely involved in the development of the Concept Note and Programme Agreement. Extensive communication with the DPPs took place via e-mail and telephone during the preparation process.

d) Programme implementation

Programme launch – information and publicity activities

On June 20 2018 the PO officially launched the Programme at national level level. The event gathered over 200 cultural operators from Romania (NGOs, public authorities, public cultural institutions, education institutions etc.) interested in the funding opportunities available within the Programme.

Furthermore, between September 12 – 13 a Matchmaking seminar will be organized by PO, in order to contribute to the strengthening of the bilateral cooperation between cultural operators from Romania and the Donor States. Participants will have the opportunity to meet and dialogue for partnership projects development in the field of culture and heritage and compete for grants within the calls for projects. The PO will organize other two matchmaking events during 2019 and 2020.

Since the bilateral cooperation between Romanian and Norwegian cultural operators is strongly encouraged in the Programme, a call for bilateral actions will be launched in the beginning of July 2018. The financial support will be provided in order to facilitate the search for partner organizations from Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein and prepare partnership projects.

Development of description of management and control system

Considering the fact the PA was signed on June 6, 2018, the PO will submit the description of the management and control system according to art. 5.7.2. and 5.7.3. in Regulation.

a) Development of the concept note

Public consultation

The Ministry of Health as Programme Operator assisted by FMO and DPPs carried out stakeholder consultations in February and March 2017 in order to establish the main needs and challenges of the Romanian health system and suggested solutions to how these could be addressed through different measures with the most possible impact on the various target groups. Additional consultation meetings between the MoH and the promoters of PDPs which are stipulated in the MoU, as well as with the WHO and UNICEF have been carried out on several occasions.

The main stakeholder consultation took place 13th March 2017 with approx. 50 persons representing the most important public institutions, NGOs, higher education institutions, International organisations, professional associations, patients' organisations, research institutions, etc. in Romania. The main topic of the stakeholder consultation was to identify the needs and challenges of the Romanian health system that will be addressed by the programme. The conclusions of the stakeholder consultation were used by the PO, FMO and DPPs to identify the most cost-effective measures which may be financed by the programme and has fed into the development of the concept note.

The list of key topics and concerns arising from the stakeholder feedback can be summarized as follows:

- Systemic health policy issues: lack of financing or inappropriate use of funds available, mapping of needs were underdeveloped, limited impact of the national health programs, limited capacity of decision makers on systemic issues, poor coordination, poor communication, lack of integrated approach, weak partnerships between NGOs and public institutions, shortage of human resources, suboptimal use of available IT&C systems, etc.;
- Health services capacity issues: limited infrastructure in terms of volume and distribution, inadequate access to safe and good quality healthcare services, limited primary care and community-based services, limited capacity in rural areas, lack of networks, lack of medical equipment, etc;
- Health education and awareness issues: poor prevention education for beneficiaries, anti-discrimination, ineffective health communication and lack of public awareness on health issues, poor communication skills of professionals, lack of community based health education, health illiteracy among vulnerable groups, etc.

The list with key topics was used in the process of developing the CN.

Drafting process

5 versions of the CN were developed with the following details:

- CN draft 1: date of submission 09th February 2017; FMO feedback 15-16 February 2017;
- CN draft 2: date of submission 25th March 2017; FMO feedback 29th of March 2017;
- CN draft 3: date of submission 13th April 2017; FMO feedback 28 April 2017;
- CN draft 4: date of submission 25 May 2017; FMO feedback 02 June 2017;
- CN draft 5: date of submission 13 June 2017; FMO feedback 20-25 June 2017

Submission of the Concept Note

The final CN version was submitted on 03 July 2017.

Assessment of the Concept Note

The positive feedback on the CN was received on 14th September 2017.

b) Development of the Programme Agreement

Additional information for PA

On 24 September 2017, FMO asked for further clarification concerning the programme management details and detailed descriptions and budgets of predefined projects. This was a necessary step toward signing the PA.

Finalization of the PA

Between October 2017 and June 2018 there was an intense communication between PO, NFP, FMO and DPPs on the PA development. The final versions of the annexes of PA were agreed on 11th of June 2018.

Signing of PA / PIA

The process of signing of the PA was initiated in June 2018. FMO informed on 28.06.2018 that the Donors approved support to the programme "European Public Health Challenges" on 27.06.2018. The Donors have also approved the final draft of the Annexes to the Programme Agreement and the PA was sent to the Donors for signing.

c) Cooperation with DPPs

Between October 2016 and June 2018, 3 Cooperation Committee meetings were organized with the following details:

CC meeting no 1 on 15-16 February 2017 (Bucharest) with participants: PO, DPPs, NFP, FMO

Main conclusions:

- The CN must be reviewed based on the comments;
- There was a need to ensure a better balance between the predefined project and calls for proposal;
- There was a need to enhance the public health profile;
- There was the need to ensure a good balance between soft and hard measures;
- MoH has to provide evidence on why this is the best way to address the health problems;
- MoH should ensure a better synergy between the projects within this programme but with another programmes;
- To provide more clarifications and breakdowns of budgets especially for the National Institute of Public health projects;
- FMO will further analyse the MoH proposals, but the discussions were very good;
- To enhance to link between prevention and community based activities from the introduction part with the measures proposed by MoH;
- There was a need to describe of the involvement of the educational sector, the NGOs in different areas like sport for example;
- How the projects will fit into the outcomes;
- The deadline for the submission of the revised CN version is 1 week;
- There was a need to prepare a roadmap of stakeholder consultation; FMO will send an examples of roadmap for consultation next week;
- To have consultation with other ministries;
- There are relevant examples from other countries which MoH could follow;
- The CN should be shortened to 10 pages;
- MoH will propose to have around 8-9 predefined projects.

CC meeting no 2 on 6 December 2017 (Oslo) with PO, DPPs, FMO

Main conclusions:

The PO Programme management details were considered reasonable, but there was a need that certain aspects to be better explained. The FMO and DPPs will analyse the document and will sent their comments and observations.

Concerning the predefined projects, MoH proposed to make several changes in order to ensure the complementarity and overlapping with other external financing as follows:

- to remove the cancer screening registry from PDP 1 due to the fact that the MoH intends to develop this registry under structural funds on cancer screening projects (Human Resources Operational Programme 2014-2020);
- to change the objectives of the PDP 3 on diseases registries due to the fact that MoH intends to apply for financing for developing national diseases registries under structural funds (Competitiveness Operational Programme). There were debates to find the most appropriate way to deal with this project due to the fact that the project is compulsory by MoU. There are 2 possibilities, namely to abandon the project, but in this case there will be needed to change the MoU and most probably this will take time or to reshape the project in order to still be valuable for MoH. In this way MoH proposed to develop under this project an e-health agency in Romania with will be in charge with the collection of data from the health system. The MoH could be the promotor, but it must comply with the rules regarding the verification of the payment claims;
- to abandon PDP 4 on diabetes registry or to find another suitable promotor because Paulescu Institute doesn't seems interested;
- there were some concerns related to PDP 8 and 9 mainly due to institutional capacity.
- The PDP 9 must be maintained giving the fact that it is a public health concern and maybe should add technical advice from WHO and ECDC.

CC meeting no 3, on 22 June 2018 (Bucharest), with participants: PO, DPPs, NFP, Royal Norwegian Embassy

Main conclusions:

- the annexes of the PA were agreed and the process of signing of the PA started;
- 7 of 8 predefined projects are still under development and most probably will be ready for contracting in autumn 2018;
- 1 predefined project is ready to be contracted;
- the development of the call and SGSs will begin in autumn 2018;
- the PO team will be nominated after PA signing;
- bilateral plan is under development and will be finalized in the autumn of 2018;
- the launching conference is foreseen for mid-autumn 2018.

Justice // Ministry of Justice

a) Development of the concept note

Public consultations

According to the Memorandum of Understanding on the Implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021, the Ministry of Justice is appointed Programme Operator for the "Justice" Programme, which consists of pre-defined projects, including: 1. Correctional Services, 2. Judiciary Training and Capacity Building, 3. Project on Domestic and Gender Based Violence addressing recommendations of Council of Europe based on the Istanbul Convention, 4. Fighting Criminality and

Corruption.

On November 17th, 2016, the Ministry of Justice, as Program Operator, organized a first working meeting for making of the "Justice" Programme with the participation of the relevant Romanian institutions concerned – the National Administration of Penitentiaries (NAP), the National Probation Directorate (NPD), the Superior Council of Magistracy (SCM), the National Institute of Magistracy (NIM), the National School of Clerks (NSC), the Public Ministry (Prosecutor's Office attached to the High Court of Cassation and Justice), the National Anticorruption Directorate (NAD), the Directorate for Investigating Organized Crime and Terrorism (DIOCT), the donors programme partners - the Norwegian Courts Administration (NCA), Directorate of Norwegian Correctional Service (KDI), Norwegian Ministry of Justice as well as the Council of Europe (CoE) as International Programme Organization (IPO), the Financial Mechanism Office (FMO), the Norwegian Embassy, the National Focal Point (NFP), During this meeting, the main challenges regarding the projects identified in the MoU under the Justice programme were discussed as well as the main concerns identified thereto. A working schedule and clear tasks regarding the development of the Concept Note were set by the Programme Operator. Also, the public consultation with the relevant stakeholders (public institutions, academia, and non-governmental organizations), in the thematic area of the programme was decided in terms of format and calendar, in order to ensure a transparent process and better identification of the needs and priorities the future projects would address. The PO, benefitting of the FMO support, organized 3 stakeholder consultations for each of the programme¹ areas, as follows:

Correctional Services

The two main institutions concerned by the programme area were NAP and NPD that organized in December 2016 local public consultations with the participation of local authorities and civil society in the locations selected for the project implementation (Botosani, Vaslui, Baia Mare and Târgu Mureş).

In February 2nd, 2017, in Bucharest, the PO along with the FMO organized the public consultation on this programme area with the participation of relevant stakeholders from the public administration², university environment and civil society, as well as of the DPPs, IPO, Norwegian Embassy in Bucharest and NFP.

The concept of the pre-defined projects having as promoter the NAP and its main partner NPD has been presented to the audience in terms of novelty and impact sought. As well, the contribution of the partners to the project concept was shared with the audience, the proposed motto of the cooperation being "see, learn, adapt".

Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Judicial System, Strengthening Rule of Law, Access to Justice

In February 16th, 2017 a public debate was organised by the PO with the support of the FMO in order to discuss upon the proposed activities to be financed under the two pre-defined projects ("Training and capacity building in the Judiciary" and "Fighting criminality and corruption"), with the participation of relevant stakeholders: NCA, CoE, NFP, the project promoters and national project partners, other central institutions (Judicial Inspection, National Agency for Roma/NAR,

¹ Programme Area: Correctional Services and Pre-trial Detention, Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Judicial System, Strengthening the Rule of Law, Domestic and Gender Based Violence, Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency.

² Ministry of Labour and Social Justice, Ministry of Education, Health Ministry, National Agency for Employment, General Secretariat of the Government

MIA, GIRP), judges from first instance courts, tribunals and courts of appeal, representatives of universities, NGOs etc. the PO and the FMO moderated the public consultations.

The conclusions on the training and capacity building project were consistent about the training needs of the judiciary (joint training sessions with different actors on the same topics, train the trainers sessions for sustainability purposes). Also, the other needs of the Romanian judiciary were expressed by the courts' representatives such as the IT endowment or the international judicial cooperation topic.

The debates on the "Fighting criminality and corruption" project addressed wider issues than training, such as GRECO and Moneyval recommendations to Romania, integrating the proposed project trainings into the NIM curricula, performing a clear delimitation of trainings topics described in the proposals for PdP#4 of the Justice Programme and PdP#1 of the Home Affairs Programme.

The access to justice for vulnerable groups including Roma was discussed in terms of the recommendations arising from the project implemented by the SCM in the 2009-2014 NG cycle on this topic. Thus, the main conclusion was the need of continuing the efforts in view of further improving the legal advice granted by the public institutions through better coordination and adequate response to the specific needs of vulnerable groups, including Roma.

Domestic and Gender-based Violence

Consultation meetings in the domestic and gender-based violence area were organized by the PO during the preparation process of the concept note. The first consultation meeting was held on December 16th, 2016 with the participation of state institutions with attributions in the field of combatting domestic violence³ and the CoE. The main consultation meeting was held on February 1st, 2017 with the participation of FMO, NFP, state institutions with attributions in the field and NGOs⁴, and the Norwegian Embassy in Bucharest.

A consultation paper was prepared by the PO as a basis for discussion with representatives of the relevant institutions and NGO's in order to reach a consensus in relation to the interventions that would be supported under this programme area. The public awareness component and the training of the specialists were proposed as priorities to be tackled also in the context of the new programme.

In the aftermath of stakeholder consultations, the programme concept note has been drawn up by the PO based also on the feedback received from the Donor Programme Partners/DPP (KDI, DA, NMoJ), the International Partner Organisation/IPO (CoE), the Financial Mechanism Office/FMO, the National Focal Point/NFP, and from the future project promoters and national project partners.

Drafting process of the Concept Note

The Concept Note drafting was an iterative process, 4 intermediary versions being prepared, as follows:

³ Ministry of Justice, Law Drafting Department, Ministry of Labour, Public Ministry - Prosecutor's Office Attached to the High Court of Cassation and Justice, Ministry of Interior, General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police

⁴ 11 NGOs - Asociația Necuvinte, Asociația Front - Feminism Romania, Centrul FILIA, Fundatia pentru Dezvoltare Locală și Regională, Asociația ANAIS, Asociația Zonta Club Valea Prahovei, Asociația Transcena, Asociația GRADO, Asociația NOVAPOLIS, Fundatia SENSIBLU, Asociația E-Romnja

1. The first version was submitted for comments and observations to the FMO, NFP and DPPs/IPO in March 2017. The observations received envisaged the need to revise the estimated initial budgets of the four pre-defined projects following clarifications received on the allocation of national co-financing and the use of the remaining amount (EUR 8.3 million) for new pre-defined projects according to the purpose of the programme. Secondly, CoE expressed its intent to act as project promoter instead of partner in the pre-defined projects.
2. The second version was submitted in April 2017, adapted to the comments received, observing also the recommendations made on the programme indicators. Additionally, the PO decided to finance a complementary project under the Correctional services aiming at promoting the principle of normality in serving a sentence, implemented in the Norwegian detention system, according to which the smaller the difference between life inside and outside prison is, the easier the transition from prison to freedom shall be.
3. The third version was submitted in June 2017. It included 2 additional pre-defined project proposals:
 - The CoE project proposal in the field of access to justice to improve the situation of the Roma population and other vulnerable groups to continue the progress already achieved in the project financed under the NG 2009-2014 programming.
 - The NAP “CHILD– Children’s Inclusion by Learning and Developing” project proposals, submitted initially for financing under the Local Development and Poverty Reduction, Enhanced Roma Inclusion Programme, but redirected for financing under the Justice programme due to its inner links with the Correctional service area as it aims to facilitate the social reintegration of minors and youngsters serving an educational measure at Târgu Ocna Educational Centre.
4. The fourth version was also the last to be submitted, on July 4th, 2017. The last version was also the one approved by the Donor. The PO has developed the program concept note defining the intervention areas and planned outcomes, the pre-defined projects that will contribute to their achievement, the indicators, the risks, the target group, and the estimated total budget. The programme foresees the financing of 7 pre-defined projects, as it resulted throughout the development of the concept note.

Submission of the Concept Note – July 4th, 2017

Assessment of the Concept Note – September 5th 2017

b) Development of the Programme Agreement

Additional information for PA

In preparation of the programme agreement, the FMO requested the PO to submit the supplementary information and its annexes, together with the upgraded versions of all pre-defined projects.

During the CC meeting held on March 20th, 2018, the donors confirmed that pre-defined projects have reached a mature version, and thus, it can be initiated the drafting of the programme agreement.

On May 17th, 2018, based on the above-mentioned documents, the FMO submitted to the PO for comments a first draft of the Annexes to the Justice PA, pointing out some issues that needed to be clarified, such as: Roma allocation, partnerships and management costs at project level.

On May 24th, 2018, the PO submitted the updated Annexes 1 and 2 to the PA comprising small modifications and the PO’s explanations to the FMO comments. As for the Roma allocation, 10% of the total programme allocation was set aside for measures that will directly and specifically target the Roma population, namely the entire budget for PdP#7, plus PdP#1 - no less than €300,000, PdP#2 - no less than €2,035,000, PdP#3 - no less than €500,000, PdP#4 - no less than €110,000, PdP#5, no less

than €350,000, while for PdP#6, no funds were allotted for improving the Roma situation, given its specificity. On the management costs, the PO requested all PPs to limit these costs to maximum 10% of the project budget.

Finalization of the PA

A final agreement on the annexes for the Justice PA was reached on May 31st, 2018.

Signing of the PA / PIA

The PA was signed by NMFA representatives on June 13, 2018 and by NFP representative on June 19, 2018. The PIA was signed on June 19, 2018.

c) Cooperation with DPPs

A Cooperation Committee meeting was organized on March 20th, 2018 (Bucharest, Romania). The Cooperation Committee meeting was attended by representatives of the Programme Operator, Norwegian Courts Administration (NCA), Directorate of Norwegian Correctional Service (KDI), Norwegian Ministry of Justice, Council of Europe (CoE), Financial Mechanism Office (FMO), Norwegian Embassy, National Focal Point (NFP), National Administration of Penitentiaries (NAP), National Probation Directorate (NPD), Superior Council of Magistracy (SCM), National Institute of Magistracy (NIM), National School of Clerks (NSC), Public Ministry (Prosecutor's Office attached to the High Court of Cassation and Justice), National Anticorruption Directorate (NAD), Directorate for Investigating Organized Crime and Terrorism (DIOCT), Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Main conclusions:

- The discussions during the CC meeting focused on the development of the pre-defined projects, the preparation of the Programme Agreement and the use of the bilateral fund.
- The pre-defined projects were well received by the members of the CC, punctual comments and suggestions for improvement being discussed on each project. Special attention was given to projects lacking donor partners and the reason residing behind.
- Regarding the PDP 7, the CoE was asked to provide more information on the draft budget submitted to the PO as well as on the envisaged project partners.
- The FMO pointed out that the 10% Roma target at the level of the programme needs to be better explained in the pre-defined projects so as to clearly demonstrate that the minimum 10% allocation is ensured, the PPs having a crucial role in this endeavour.
- As regards the fund for bilateral relations, the PO presented a draft call, aiming at supporting actions in accordance with activities mentioned at art 8.8 of the Regulation. 5 ideas of bilateral actions of interest for the correctional area and 2 ideas in the area of domestic violence have been mentioned.

d) Programme Implementation

Development of description of management and control system

The management and control system is being prepared by the PO team. It is estimated to be finalised in the third quarter of 2018.

The PO established its structure and team, which were approved by Minister Order on January 5th, 2018.

Information regarding evaluation/selection and contracting

The PO proposed a set of criteria to be used for the appraisal of the pre-defined projects, in accordance with art. 6.5.3 of the Regulation. The criteria were briefly presented during the CC meeting held on March 20th, 2018, as they were sent to all members of the CC.

Financial progress

The PO received an advance payment of € 50,000, on September 8th, 2017, from the bilateral fund for the purpose of covering the costs of the activities referred to in Article 8.8 of the Regulation.

The PO advanced the amount of € 1,579.33, on March 30th, 2018, for organizing the first Cooperation Committee meeting on March 20th, 2018, from own budget (state budget), following to recover 85% of the total amount spent (the other 15% up to 100% representing national co-financing) when the advance payment on programme management costs will be received from the FMO.

Home Affairs // Ministry of Internal Affairs

a) Development of the concept note

Consultations

During the preparation stage of the Concept Note, the PO, in cooperation with the FMO, organized on January 12-13, 2017 public consultation meetings with all relevant stakeholders for the three programme areas within the programme (PA 18 Asylum and Migration, PA 20 International Police Cooperation and Combating Crime and PA 23 Disaster Prevention and Preparedness). The events brought together representatives from the FMO, CoE, Royal Norwegian Embassy, DPPs, NFP, PPs for the predefined projects included in the MoU, governmental and non-governmental organizations, civil society, mass-media, research institutes, Roma National Agency and Roma NGOs. The results consisted in identifying and prioritizing the needs that the programme should address.

Furthermore, a series of focused meetings between the PO, potential promoters, stakeholders and DPPs on each programme area were conducted in Norway and Romania, in order to discuss the key elements regarding the specific needs, expected measures and different critical aspects of the future cooperation between all parties.

The consultations with the Norwegian National Police Directorate (POD) performed in 2016 and 2017 by the Romanian Police and the PO have defined the framework for the joint police cooperation activities to be included in the project. Also, a visit has been organized at the Gjøvik Campus of Norwegian University for Science and Technology (NTNU), resulting into defining the contribution of NTNU in the field of fighting money laundering through cyber currencies, which has been added to complement the training activities in the area. A meeting with the experts from the Council of Europe focused the project activities more towards the MONEYVAL Report recommendations, as well as adding a policy support and risk analysis components, in order to check out the priority issues underlined in the previous evaluation of the situation in Romania. The input from the beneficiary police structures has been integrated either as the result of evaluation activities of a completed police cooperation project between Norway and Romania, or as a series of consultations aiming to define the needs and define most adequate solutions to address them for the structures that are fighting money laundering and economic crimes.

The Romanian Police performed a regional conference with researchers and practitioners on

victimization of vulnerable groups, revealing the need for a more solid incorporation of evidence based approach, as well as the need to test innovative means to tackle hate crimes, such as establishing dedicated anti-hate crime/hate speech units.

The General Inspectorate for Immigration (GII) met with NGOs and international organizations (IOM, UNHCR) in the context of the preparation of the Programme, identifying needs concerning the quality of reception facilities and services for asylum seekers, capacity building, including preparedness for the situation of a massive influx of migrants.

Concept Note drafting process

The CN has been finalized based on an intensive public consultation, as well as inputs from stakeholders, the DPPs, NFP and FMO, during November 2016 – July 2017.

On November 17th 2016, the PO organized a kick – off meeting for starting the programming process for the Home Affairs Programme, attended by FMO, CoE, DPPs, NFP and PPs representatives with the aim of scheduling the future activities of the programming process and settle the timetable to follow.

During February – August 2017, the draft CN was circulated and discussed by the PO with the NFP and FMO by email, being successively improved by the inputs provided.

Also, on March 23rd 2017, the CC1 meeting was organized and held in Bucharest, gathering representatives from FMO, CoE, the Norwegian Embassy, DPPs, NFP and PO. With this occasion, the key elements of the CN were agreed in principle, and the draft document was disseminated to all the relevant stakeholders.

On June 19-21 2017, a delegation from PO and NFP met the FMO in Brussels, discussed the draft CN with reference to aspects of the document requiring improvements. Furthermore, several technical meetings were organized by the PO with the PPs, providing them assistance in harmonizing their applications with the Regulation, the Blue Book and the donor's requirements in general.

As it follows from the above mentions, drafting the CN was a complex process that implied, on the one hand, meeting all the Donors expectations, and on the other hand addressing the beneficiaries' identified needs in the Programme's areas.

Submission of the Concept Note

On 08.08.2017 the PO submitted the final version of the CN to the FMO through the NFP. The National Focal Point assessed and declared the documents provided as being compliant with the provisions of the MoU and Regulation and, therefore, according to provisions of article 6.2.2, send the CN to FMO in order to be evaluated by the Donors.

Assessment of the Concept Note

On 04.10.2017, the FMO informed the NFP and PO that the final version of the CN was assessed by the Donors and asked the PO to provide supplementary information in order to proceed further with the drafting of the PA.

b) Development of the Programme Agreement

- Additional information for PA: The document was finalized based on the intensive and fruitful collaboration between PO, NFP, FMO, DPPs and PPs. On April 24th 2018 FMO reviewed the additional information submitted and based on that compiled a first draft of the PA for the Home Affairs Programme.
- finalisation of the PA - On May 25th 2018 NMFA approved to support the programme "Home Affairs" and also approved the final draft of the Annexes to the PA.
- signing of PA / PIA - On June 18th 2018, the PA was signed by the NMFA, and on June 19th by the NFP representative. The PIA was signed on June 18th by the PO and on June 19th by the NFP.

c) Cooperation with DPPs

On March 23rd 2017, the Cooperation Committee meeting took place in Bucharest, gathering representatives from FMO, CoE, the Norwegian Embassy, DPPs, NFP and PO. With this occasion the main elements of the CN were agreed in principle and the draft document was ready to be circulated between all the relevant stakeholders. Also, the rules of procedures for the CC meetings were agreed by the members.

Research // UEFISCDI

a) Development of the concept note

Public consultations

4 events were organized by the PO in 4 regions with relevant scientific community, as follows: (1) Bucharest – 21.02.2017; (2) Iasi – 24.02.2017; (3) Cluj-Napoca – 28.02.2017; (4) Timisoara – 02.03.2017. The results from all 4 events have been presented and discussed between Romanian and Norwegian experts in a final meeting held in Oslo (Research Cooperation Working Group) on 08.03.2017.

Representatives from academia, research and business sectors, national authorities, other participants such as: representatives from Programme Operator (PO), FMO, NFP, DPP (video), and Norway Embassy participated in the event.

Participants at national events and type of institutions involved - 215 experts from; 26 universities; 41 research institutes; 34 companies; 2 NGOs; 2 Romanian Academy branches

The stakeholder consultation process identified needs and challenges in the field of research at national level and suggested answers to how these problems could be solved by the Programme. The input from the stakeholders has been used to develop the concept note, and to support the further development of calls' documents. The following questions have been addressed: Which are the main challenges and needs identified for the Romanian Research area? How could the needs be met by the programme? What are the potential risks to be considered at the programme level? How and where could this programme make a difference and/or fill a financial gap?

Concept Note drafting process

The final version of Concept Note (CN) has been submitted by UEFISCDI (as PO) to the NFP on 12th of April 2017 (hard copy); NFP sent the final form of CN to FMO on 14th of April 2017.

On 15th of June 2017 FMO informed UEFISCDI (by email) about Donors recommendation that the RO-research concept note be moved forward to the Programme Agreement phase.

The final form of CN agreed by Donors (including their comments) together with the template for additional information requested have been send by FMO to us on 20th of June 2017.

Other relevant data:

Apart of the meetings organized during the stakeholder consultation process, in the period October 2016 – June 2017 there have been organized 12 internal meetings (at UEFISCDI level), 6 videoconferences with DPPs, NFP or FMO, 1 teleconference, 2 meetings for establishing the synergies with other Programmes, other 4 different events where UEFISCDI representatives participated.

b) Development of the Programme Agreement

The elaboration of Programme Agreement started by completing the additional information template related to the management of the Programme and Annexes (received from FMO on 20th of June 2017).

On 21st of July 2017, PO sent to DPPs, NFP and FMO by email the first draft of additional document, Annex 1 – Risk, Annex 2 -Programme Management cost details and the draft of Communication Plan as based for developing the Programme Agreement and Annexes.

Other relevant dates until the PA approval:

- 29th of September 2017: FMO sent the draft form of PA and Annex I – Table with outcomes and indicators and Annex II – Operational Rules in order to be discussed and completed;
- 15-16 November 2017: UEFISCDI sent to FMO the final version of PA and Annexes and on 20th of November 2017 PO considered the discussions with FMO finalized;
- 30th of November 2017 – PA + Annexes have been approved at FMO and sent the documents to the Donors (officially, the Donors will send their response in two weeks);
- 15th of December 2017 : the Donors approved PA and Annexes and FMO informed NFP about this;
- 18th of December 2017: UEFISCDI sent comments and corrections on the documents to NFP and NFP sent to FMO their official point of view (the discussions focused mainly on indicators table);
- 09th of January 2018 : FMO sent to UEFISCDI and NFP the PA signed by the FMC chairman;
- In the period July 2017 – January 2018, there have been organized: 4 videoconference with DPPs, 2 skype meetings with FMO, one phone discussion with DPP Norway, other 4 different events where UEFISCDI representatives participated.

On 15th of January 2018 the Programme Agreement and Annexes has been signed by the parties.

c) Cooperation with DPPs

The Programme Operator (PO) set up the Programme Committee (PC) in accordance with the provisions of *Guideline for Research Programmes – Rules for the establishment and implementation of programmes falling under the Programme Area “Research” of the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2014-2021*. The members of the PC carry out the activities starting with 15th of January 2018 until the Research Programme completion (December 2024).

The first PC meeting organized: Bucharest, on 30th of January 2018, UEFISCDI headquarter.

18 Participants attended the meeting: UEFISCDI representatives (6); DPPs (3); PC members (7); NFP (1); Norwegian Embassy (1).

Conclusions:

- PC members adopted the PC Rules of Procedures by vote;
- discussions on the call EEA Grants Call for proposals 2018, CRP (call document, Guide for Applicants, Guide for Evaluators):

d) Programme Implementation

Development of description of management and control system

At the moment of the present report, the documents are evaluated by UCAAPI (21 May – 29 June 2018 UCAAPI mission).The mission of UCAAPI started with its first meeting on 21st of May 2018 (UEFISCDI headquarter).The requested documents have been sent to UCAAPI (25th of May 2018).

Open call launched

- Date of approving the documents and the call by NFP: 03rd of April 2018;
- Date of launching the call: 18th of April 2018;
- Deadline for submission of applications: 01st of October 2018;
- Evaluation process: October 2018 – February 2019;
- Funding decision/contracting phase: March 2019 (estimated)
- Budget of the call: 16,312,500 euro;
- Min/max amount of grant per project: 500,000/1,500,000 euro;

Call for Mobility Grants (Fund for Bilateral Relations) - 2018

Objective: to facilitate establishment of bilateral partnerships between researchers from the Donor States and Romania in order to submit a collaborative research proposal funded under EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021;

Thematic areas: Energy; Environment; Health; Social sciences and humanities, including gender studies and social inclusion studies; ICT; Biotechnology;

- Date of approving the documents and the call by NFP: 5th of April 2018 approval of call document;
- 16th of April 2018 – approval of launching the call;
- Date of launching the call: 18th of April 2018;
- Deadline for submission of applications: until depletion of the available budget but no later than 14th of September 2018;
- Budget of the call: 70.000 euro (*the budget has been requested to NFP and transferred to UEFISCDI on 20th of April 2018*);

It is estimated that a maximum of 10 mobilities for each thematic area will be awarded.

No. of applications submitted in the online platform/thematic area: total 53

- Biotechnology: 12
- Energy: 9
- Environment: 8
- Health: 5
- ICT: 6
- Social sciences and humanities, including gender studies and social inclusion studies: 13
- No of applicants from RO: 47
- No of applicants from DS: 6
- No of projects recommended for funding: 36
- No of contracts signed: 31
- The budget contracted: 37.935 euro

The payments done until the moment of present report:

- 4.850,50 RON (it will be calculated in EURO using InforEuro exchange rate)
- 1,200 EURO

Carbon Capture and Storage Workshop - EEA and Norway Grants 2014 - 2021 (Bilateral Relations)

- Type: Workshop of common interest on thematic areas
- Date: 20th of June 2018;
- Objective: enhance bilateral relations

- No of registered persons: 67
- No of participants: 62 (out of which 3 participants were from Norway and one expert from Czech Republic)
- Estimated budget: 15.000 euro (*the budget has been requested to NFP and transferred to UEFISCDI on 08th of June 2018*);
- Social media dissemination: UEFISCDI website (<https://uefiscdi.ro/news-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11>), Facebook, Google+, Twitter, newsletter, DPPs website

Communication and dissemination (events related to the EEA Call)

Programme website is developed and available at: <https://uefiscdi.ro/eea-norway-grants> (RO and ENG section on UEFISCDI website)

Launching the EEA call:

- UEFISCDI website NEWS
- Widespread and EEA Grants Newsletter 2018
- Post article FB; Googl+; visual post launching competition FB
- Press release
- Publication of the announcement on DPPs, FMO and NFP websites

Info-day: 12th of June 2018:

- Venue: ASE Bucharest
- No. of registered persons: 289
- No. of participants: 215
- No. of online participants: 110
- Social media dissemination:
 - o <https://www.facebook.com/uefiscdi/> ;
 - o <https://twitter.com/uefiscdi> ;
 - o <https://plus.google.com/b/101592554730832260023/101592554730832260023>;
 - o 12 June 2018 - Live event Facebook;
 - o 12 June 2018 Tweet – link live event – Twitter;

Home Affairs // Ministry of Internal Affairs

a) Development of the concept note

Consultations

During the preparation stage of the Concept Note, the PO, in cooperation with the FMO, organized on January 12-13, 2017 public consultation meetings with all relevant stakeholders for the three programme areas within the programme (PA 18 Asylum and Migration, PA 20 International Police Cooperation and Combating Crime and PA 23 Disaster Prevention and Preparedness). The events brought together representatives from the FMO, CoE, Royal Norwegian Embassy , DPPs, NFP, PPs for the predefined projects included in the MoU, governmental and non-governmental organizations, civil society, mass-media, research institutes, Roma National Agency and Roma NGOs. The results consisted in identifying and prioritizing the needs that the programme should address.

Furthermore, a series of focused meetings between the PO, potential promoters, stakeholders and DPPs on each programme area were conducted in Norway and Romania, in order to discuss the key elements regarding the specific needs, expected measures and different critical aspects of the future cooperation between all parties.

The consultations with the Norwegian National Police Directorate (POD) performed in 2016 and 2017 by the Romanian Police and the PO have defined the framework for the joint police cooperation activities to be included in the project. Also, a visit has been organized at the Gjøvik Campus of Norwegian University for Science and Technology (NTNU), resulting into defining the contribution of NTNU in the field of fighting money laundering through cyber currencies, which has been added to complement the training activities in the area. A meeting with the experts from the Council of Europe focused the project activities more towards the MONEYVAL Report recommendations, as well as adding a policy support and risk analysis components, in order to check out the priority issues underlined in the previous evaluation of the situation in Romania. The input from the beneficiary police structures has been integrated either as the result of evaluation activities of a completed police cooperation project between Norway and Romania, or as a series of consultations aiming to define the needs and define most adequate solutions to address them for the structures that are fighting money laundering and economic crimes.

The Romanian Police performed a regional conference with researchers and practitioners on victimization of vulnerable groups, revealing the need for a more solid incorporation of evidence based approach, as well as the need to test innovative means to tackle hate crimes, such as establishing dedicated anti-hate crime/hate speech units.

The General Inspectorate for Immigration (GII) met with NGOs and international organizations (IOM, UNHCR) in the context of the preparation of the Programme, identifying needs concerning the quality of reception facilities and services for asylum seekers, capacity building, including preparedness for the situation of a massive influx of migrants.

Concept Note drafting process

The CN has been finalized based on an intensive public consultation, as well as inputs from stakeholders, the DPPs, NFP and FMO, during November 2016 – July 2017.

On November 17th 2016, the PO organized a kick – off meeting for starting the programming process for the Home Affairs Programme, attended by FMO, CoE, DPPs, NFP and PPs representatives with the aim of scheduling the future activities of the programming process and settle the timetable to follow.

During February – August 2017, the draft CN was circulated and discussed by the PO with the NFP and FMO by email, being successively improved by the inputs provided.

Also, on March 23rd 2017, the CC1 meeting was organized and held in Bucharest, gathering representatives from FMO, CoE, the Norwegian Embassy, DPPs, NFP and PO. With this occasion, the key elements of the CN were agreed in principle, and the draft document was disseminated to all the relevant stakeholders.

On June 19-21 2017, a delegation from PO and NFP met the FMO in Brussels, discussed the draft CN with reference to aspects of the document requiring improvements. Furthermore, several technical meetings were organized by the PO with the PPs, providing them assistance in harmonizing their applications with the Regulation, the Blue Book and the donor's requirements in general.

As it follows from the above mentions, drafting the CN was a complex process that implied, on the one hand, meeting all the Donors expectations, and on the other hand addressing the beneficiaries' identified needs in the Programme's areas.

Submission of the Concept Note

On 08.08.2017 the PO submitted the final version of the CN to the FMO through the NFP. The National Focal Point assessed and declared the documents provided as being compliant with the provisions of the MoU and Regulation and, therefore, according to provisions of article 6.2.2, send the CN to FMO in order to be evaluated by the Donors.

Assessment of the Concept Note

On 04.10.2017, the FMO informed the NFP and PO that the final version of the CN was assessed by the Donors and asked the PO to provide supplementary information in order to proceed further with the drafting of the PA.

b) Development of the Programme Agreement

- Additional information for PA: The document was finalized based on the intensive and fruitful collaboration between PO, NFP, FMO, DPPs and PPs. On April 24th 2018 FMO reviewed the additional information submitted and based on that compiled a first draft of the PA for the Home Affairs Programme.
- finalisation of the PA - On May 25th 2018 NMFA approved to support the programme “Home Affairs” and also approved the final draft of the Annexes to the PA.
- signing of PA / PIA - On June 18th 2018, the PA was signed by the NMFA, and on June 19th by the NFP representative. The PIA was signed on June 18th by the PO and on June 19th by the NFP.

c) Cooperation with DPPs

On March 23rd 2017, the Cooperation Committee meeting took place in Bucharest, gathering representatives from FMO, CoE, the Norwegian Embassy, DPPs, NFP and PO. With this occasion the main elements of the CN were agreed in principle and the draft document was ready to be circulated between all the relevant stakeholders. Also, the rules of procedures for the CC meetings were agreed by the members.

Environment, Climate Change Adaptation and Ecosystems // Ministry of Environment

a) Development of the concept note

Public consultations

The PO - Ministry of Environment together with FMO and DPP organised two stakeholder consultation meetings to collect input from interested parties on 21.02.2017. The stakeholders were representatives from public sector, private sector, research and academia, NGOs gathering a total of 67 persons together with the representatives of PO, FMO, NFP.

First step for the participants was defining the problem tree using the RBM problem tree methodology seeking the answer to the question what are the core needs/problems related to Environment and Ecosystems, Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation (the exercise conducted by the FMO representatives) and Reduction of hazardous substances in Romania today (second part) and then, based on the identified and grouped needs/problems to identify the causes.

All needs and challenges resulted into this exercise had been discussed the next day during a meeting between FMO, PO, DPP and NFP in order to identify which from all could be appropriate to the Program. Another technical meeting was organized back to back to the Cooperation Committee in 14.03.2017 for technical discussion on CN with FMO, DPP and NFP.

Also, the Concept Note has been prepared in line with the technical discussions from different working groups organised by EC (e.g. CGBN, MAES WG, Reporting WG etc.) details regarding the CN drafting process (CN versions submitted - date of submission, FMO feedback, any other information considered relevant)

Submission of the Concept Note

The final version of the Concept Note was submitted to the National Focal Point on 25.06.2018 together with the Management plan for the Programme Operator.

The Concept Note, as well as the Plan for ensuring the management capacity of the PO were sent to the FMO on 27.06.2018 in order to be assessed by the Donors.

b) Cooperation with DPPs

One Cooperation Committee meeting was organized on 14.03.2017.

Main conclusions:

- The Concept Note contains the future programme structure and it will be almost impossible to be changed later.
- Methodologically there is a long way to go as it should contain as few outcomes as possible.
- Basically the structure of the Programme should contain 3 fields (components) and the predefined project. Consequently it should have 4 outcomes.
- A Predefined Project can only be proposed in absence of the competition – as for example when a certain entity/organisation has the legal obligation of doing something that is exclusive; or it is the national competent authority in a certain field that has the legal obligation of fulfilling certain activities.
- Donor Programme Partner should also be a partner within the predefined project.
- The assessment of the PDP should be made by a third party.
- The proposed/expected activities should have measurable and visible impact during the lifetime of the programme.
- Based on the proposal already made it is clear that the “wish list” is too long compared to resources. Given that the financial resources available are limited it is important to prioritize what is mostly needed in order to use the allocated funds as effective and efficient as possible.
- According to the MoU, the programme must include a Small Grant Scheme related to PA11.
- The coordinator of the PO’s implementation team for EEA grants asked the representative of FMO whether the programme managers can be part of the evaluation committee for the applications submitted under their own programme. And the FMO’s representative agreed as long as there are no conflicts of interest.

Business Development, Innovation and SMEs - SMEs Growth Romania // Innovation Norway

a) Development of the concept note

Public consultations

During the process of designing the Concept Note for the Programme Area “Business Development, Innovation and SMEs”, consultation meetings were organized in Romania and Donor States: Bucharest on 17 January 2017, Reykjavik on 15 December 2016 and Oslo on 1 February 2017. Other smaller sectorial meetings have been also organized by the Fund operator during December 2016- March 2017, where representatives of various industries had the opportunity to present the current situation of different economic fields (shipbuilding, ICT, aquaculture and fishery, research field, port operations etc.). Stakeholders categories included companies, clusters, professional organizations, business networks, NFP, Ministry for Business Environment, Commerce and Entrepreneurship, other relevant Romanian ministries, other Programme Operators for EEA and Norway Grants (for Research programme, for Education programme). The stakeholders’ consultation meeting from Bucharest was facilitated by FMO, where the stakeholders participated in an exercise about the main focus areas set in the Blue Book. The meeting helped the Fund Operator to narrow down what are the most relevant focus areas for Romania. The relevant focus areas have been selected based on key criteria, such as: business potential in Romania for this focus area, the need for this focus area in Romania, the potential for education and research in this area, innovation, and relevance related to potential

environmental results. The focus areas selected for SMEs Growth Programme Romania are: green industry innovation, blue growth and ICT.

First version of the Concept Note was submitted to FMO in March 2017, final version submitted in June 2017 and accepted by FMO/Donors in September 2017.

b) Development of the Programme Agreement

The text of the Programme Agreement, as well as annex I and annex II, were agreed upon between FMO and Innovation Norway. The Programme Agreement was presented to the Programme Committee in FMO on 27 April 2017 and thereafter sent to FMC/Donors for acceptance. The Programme Agreement was signed on 16 May 2018.

c) Cooperation with DPPs

Kick-off planning meeting for the Programme held in Bucharest, on 17 November 2016

Topics discussed: specific measures that could be included in the programme, modalities of implementation, programme indicators, bilateral funds, stakeholders for Programme, cooperation committee. The meeting has set the main steps necessary in the establishing the cooperation at programme level and in the process of concept note preparation.

1st Cooperation Meeting, organised in Bucharest, on 14 March 2017

Topics discussed: Cooperation meetings, possible Beneficiary State Programme Partner, organization of the work of the Committee, the development of the Concept Note (focus areas, target groups, innovation, modalities).

2nd Cooperation meeting organized in Bucharest, on 17 November 2017

Topics discussed: preparations for Programme Implementation Agreement, Organizational set-up of the Fund Operator, Programme promotion, Timeline for Calls, bilateral relations, assessment criteria, risk analysis.

d) Programme implementation

Programme launch – information and publicity activities

- 1 Launching event and information session organized in Bucharest (24 May 2018); live transmission on social media channels (facebook, youtube)
- 5 regional information sessions during May – June 2018 (Brasov, Cluj, Timisoara, Iasi, Constanta)
- Promotion on Innovation Norway's website, roll-ups, leaflets, press-release.

Development of description of management and control system

Innovation Norway, as Fund Operator, will secure independence and functional separation of responsibilities for verification of incurred expenditure and approval of payments from other divisions responsible for the implementation of the Programme. There is no formal Programme partner/Donor Programme Partners or International Partner Organisations for this Programme, but the Romanian Ministry for Business Environment, Commerce and Entrepreneurship and the Icelandic Centre for Research (RANNIS) have been invited as observers in the Cooperation Meeting. Innovation Norway will secure adequate division of roles and management capacity and ensure independence and functional separation of responsibilities.

The approval of grants will be decided according to IN's Power of Attorney regulations. The Power of Attorney decision system is based on the size of amounts which are granted. Decisions are normally executed by means of Decision Making Committees at different levels (see table above).

Project Contracts: IN will provide a Project Contract to the Project Promoter issuing a Grant Offer Letter including mandatory attachments (detailed budget, disbursement plan, and implementation plan). The letter will state the expected outcome and outputs of the grant, special conditions and provide further details on how the implementation of the project is to be done according to "Standard Terms and Conditions for EEA and Norway Grants operated by Innovation Norway".

Monitoring of compliance with Project Contract includes site visits by IN's Programme Team in Romania and Norway, and external monitoring experts if/when required.

Open calls launched

Modality	Launching date	Deadline for project submission	Total available amount (€)	Maximum / Minimum grant applied for (€)	Objective and activities
Call for Travel Support	July 2017	March 2018	50,000	1,200/ 1,500	Facilitate establishment of bilateral partnerships between the Donor States and Romania with the intent to participate to future calls
Call for proposals 1 (EEA FM)	24 May 2018	1 Nov 2018	15,083,334 (Green Industry Innovation: 7,708,334 Blue Growth: 4,525,000 ICT: 2,850,000)	2,000,000/200,000	Increase value creation and sustainable growth in Romanian business sector The scheme will provide support for Projects that will develop and implement activities within the enterprise applying for funding in one of the following areas:
Small grant scheme 1 (EEA FM)	24 May 2018	1 Nov.2018	6,000,000 (Green Industry Innovation: 2,000,000 Blue Growth: 2,000,000 ICT: 2,000,000)	200,000/ 50,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Industry Innovation • Blue Growth • ICT
Call for Travel Support	June 2018	Until depletion of funds	50,000	1,000/ 1,200/ 1,500	Facilitate establishment of bilateral partnerships between the Donor States and Romania with the intent to participate in the 1st main call under the Programme opened on 24 May 2018

a) Development of the Concept Note

The CN has been prepared by Innovation Norway in cooperation with FMO, the two DPPs (NVE and OS), the two Beneficiary State Partners (Ministry of Energy and Ministry of Environment) and the NFP. Several video meetings were organised with Programme partners in the period November 2016-March 2017 to get input for the development of the CN. The partners also gave their input in writing.

One big stakeholder consultation meeting was organised in Bucharest on 17 January 2017. The aim was to collect input from interested parties regarding challenges and needs of the renewable energy production sector and energy efficiency initiatives. Representatives from a wide range of Romanian ministries, national agencies, sector associations, business associations, clusters etc. The meeting was facilitated by FMO and all Programme partners were present. A large number of individual consultation meetings have also been organised between Innovation Norway Bucharest and Romanian and international institutions located in Bucharest. Separate consultation meetings have been organised with the two DPPs - in Reykjavik, Oslo and via teleconferences to discuss the CN development. Stakeholders were also invited to submit input through an online consultation.

The consultations helped the FMO, the FO and the DPP's to better understand the challenges and needs within the energy sector in Romania. The main results from the consultations can briefly be summarised as: Romania has huge energy resources. The EU targets 2020, both in renewable energy share and climate emissions, will be met and the 2030 targets are within reach. The challenge is to modernize and develop the energy sector in Romania for the future as well as to get high energy security by reduced dependency of import of crude oil for inland petroleum and diesel consumption. The focus areas selected for RO-Energy are: Renewable energy production (hydropower, geothermal and other renewable sources like biomass, sun and wind), Energy Efficiency in all economic sectors, R&D in energy sector, Awareness raising about the benefits of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency among public at large as well as electrification of households without access to the grid.

To better understand the background situation and to identify the most sustainable technical and economical solutions for the electrification of households, a Pre-Feasibility Study was contracted (Consultant: SWECO Norge AS with a Romanian sub-supplier SC Ruxpro SRL.).

First version of CN submitted to FMO in April 2017. The FO received the first feed-back from FMO in June, the second feed-back in September and the third feed-back in December. FMO's comments were mostly related to the Result Framework and indicators, eligible partners, synergies between programmes, bilateral issues and state aid. The FO, with input from partners, updated the CN accordingly. A few additional adjustments were made during internal discussions in FMO and the FO submitted the final CN in December 2017.

Extensive work has been put into the development of the Result Framework and the indicators. The CN is based on open calls and not pre-defined projects. Main reason for delay has been a long-lasting discussion between FMO, Donors and one DPP about possible pre-defined projects.

b) Development of the Programme Agreement

The Donors accepted the CN in April 2018.

On 26 April 2018 the FO received a request from FMO to submit supplementary information for the PIA. The final version of Annex I and II were sent to FMO on 31 May. The text of the PIA as such was

already agreed upon between FMO and Innovation Norway (same text as for RO-Innovation and other Programmes operated by Innovation Norway). The PIA is now with the Donors for approval. Signing of the PIA expected late 2018.

c) Cooperation with DPPs

The Kick-off meeting for the Programme was held in Bucharest on 17 November 2016. All participants shared their viewpoints on the specific concerns mentioned in the MoUs and shared their expectations for the Programme in general.

1st Cooperation Committee Meeting held 15 March 2017 in Bucharest.

Participants: Representatives from FMO, NFP, IN, OS, NVE, Ministry of Energy (RO), Ministry of Environment (RO) and Norwegian Embassy.

Topics discussed:

- The Scope of Work for the Committee was discussed and agreed upon.
- IN had submitted a draft version of the CN to all members of the Committee in advance. A

thorough discussion about each focus area took place in the CC. Based on agreements made in the CC, IN updated the CN and submitted the first version to FMO in April 2017.

After the CC meeting, a workshop on energy was organised by IN where different key persons from relevant RO ministries and associations presented status of strategies and plans in the energy sector. Very useful for capacity building for all representatives from the Donor States.

2nd Cooperation Committee Meeting was held on 7 November 2017.

Participants: Representatives from FMO, NFP, IN, OS, NVE, Ministry of Energy (RO), Ministry of Environment (RO) and Norwegian Embassy.

Topics discussed:

- FMO was still assessing the CN (final quality check). FMO said that the CN was well drafted, but still, a complex document, with many focus areas, and which also attracts high interest/attention from the Donors. The CN is based on open calls and no pre-defined projects. However, Iceland had suggested 5 pre-defined projects and Norway 1 pre-defined project. FMO had minor comments on the technical side and more substantial comments on the proposed pre-defined projects.
- Specific challenges linked to financing of new hydropower plants
- Risk analyses for RO-Energy
- Possible joint IT platform for sharing of documents between members of CC.
- The role of the Programme partners as advisers to the FO (IN) and the partners were invited to bring their suggestions to the table.
- Electrification component: NFP advises IN not further investigate background information but to launch the call as soon as possible (tentatively planned for Sept. 2018). IN will continue dialogue with the Ministry of Energy to clarify how the latter can contribute to this component.
- IN will prepare draft call texts and sent to all partners for input and comments in due time before the launching of each call.

Commitments and disbursements

Advance payments towards the signed Programmes were made following the confirmation of the MCS description at national level (2,847,500 euros), as follows:

- Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeships and Youth Entrepreneurship - €1,000,000 (02.03.2018)
- Technical Assistance - €250,000 (02.03.2018)
- Fund for bilateral relations - €1,045,000 (02.03.2018)
- Research - €302,500 (02.03.2018)

The following interim payments based on IFRs were made by the FMO:

- Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeships and Youth Entrepreneurship - €1,572,849 (27.04.2018)

Roma objective

The objective regarding the allocation of at least 10% of relevant Programmes for the improvement of the situation of the Roma was addressed during the concept note preparation, as well as the preparation of Programme Agreements.

A plan for reaching this objective across all Programmes has been submitted by the NFP on 02 August 2017. However, this document will need to be updated to reflect the relevant provisions of the Programme Agreements.

Bilateral relations, use of the fund for bilateral relations

At the request of Programme Operators, extraordinary advance payments of €50,000 from the Bilateral Fund at Programme level were made, in order to support possible bilateral initiatives in the Programme preparation phase, €250,000 in total:

- Justice on 07.09.2017
- Business Development, Innovation and SMEs on 07.09.2017
- Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeships and Youth Entrepreneurship on 07.09.2017
- Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency, Energy Security on 30.11.2017
- Local Development and Poverty Reduction, Enhanced Roma Inclusion on 16.01.2018

The NFP disbursed bilateral funds towards Programme Operators, as follows:

- Research - €70,000 – 19.04.2018
- Research - €15,000 – 07.06.2018

The rules for the application of lump sums under the Fund for Bilateral Relations was finalized in April 2018, after consultation with the FMO in January-February 2018, through a Minister of European Fund's Order signed on 27.04.2018.

On the Bilateral Fund at Programme level, four open calls for travel support schemes were launched, for the purpose of developing donor project partnerships.

2 Progress on the Joint Committee on Bilateral Funds

According to the Memoranda of Understanding for the 2014-2021 EEA and Norway grants, €10,050,000 are allocated for the Fund for Bilateral Relations (2% of the Romania's allocation according to art. 4.6.1 of the Regulation) for activities aiming at increased strategic cooperation, networking and exchange of knowledge between Romania and the Donor States.

According to the Regulation (art. 4.2) and the Bilateral Guidelines, The National Focal Point fulfilled its obligations regarding the FBR: established a Joint Committee for Bilateral Fund and issued the Work Plan.

On 07.02.2017, the NFP submitted the document describing the *Composition, role and functioning of the Joint Committee for the Bilateral Funds 2014-2021*, and a final version was agreed with the FMO on 20.02.2017.

The composition of the JCBF was established as the following:

- The National Focal Point
- The Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, represented by the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Bucharest
- The Icelandic Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- The ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Principality of Liechtenstein, represented by the Mission of Liechtenstein to the European Union

On 23.08.2017, the Agreement on the Fund for Bilateral relations was signed between the Financial Mechanism Committee and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Romania and on 16.04.2018.

The first meeting of the Joint Committee for Bilateral Relations 2014-2021 was organised in Bucharest on 27.09.2017 and the first draft of the Work Plan and the document describing the Composition, role and functioning of the Joint Committee for the Bilateral Funds were presented and discussed.

The NFP proposed to continue with a similar approach to the 2009-2014 Bilateral Fund, where a good level of absorption was achieved - a mix of predefined initiatives and open call, allowing for a broader outreach in terms of priority sectors and applicants (public and NGOs).

Subsequently, the Norwegian Embassy made several rounds of comments – from September 2017 to April 2018, and proposed changes to the draft Work Plan, related mainly to the elimination of the open call and the description of the priority sectors and areas of special interest.

Following correspondence on this issue between the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the NFP, the latest version of the work plan was submitted on 18.04.2018, comprising only predefined initiatives, with open calls to be included at a later stage. The Work Plan was approved on 02.04.2018.

The following predefined/major initiatives have been identified:

1. Matchmaking event on circular economy in Romania

- Promoter: Innovation Norway
- Partner: Romanian Association of Waste Management
- Budget: EUR 45,442
- Objective: identifying concrete feasible business opportunities for Norwegian entities within the circular economy in Romania; matchmaking event on circular economy relevant for 3 Programmes: Energy, Business Development and Research.
- The initiative is currently under contracting

2. Initiative in the field of competition

- Promoter: Romanian Competition Council
- Partner: Norwegian Competition Authority
- Budget: EUR 250,000
- Objective: strengthening institutional capacity and cooperation between the Norwegian and the Romanian competition authorities

3. Initiative in tax issues

- Promoter: National Agency for Fiscal Administration
- Partner: The Norwegian Tax Authority
- Budget: TBD
- Objective: strengthening institutional capacity and cooperation between the Norwegian and the Romanian tax authorities, following a pre-defined project during the FM 2009-14.

4. Initiative in labour issues

- Promoter: The Romanian Labour Inspection (TBD)
- Partner: The Norwegian Labour Inspection
- Budget: 300,000 Euro
- Objective: strengthening institutional capacity and cooperation between the Norwegian and the Romanian and Norwegian Labour inspections.

3 Management and Control System

The description of the management and control system at national level, accompanied by the audit opinion, was submitted to the FMO on 25 May 2017. Following comments received from the FMO on 11 July 2017, a revised version was submitted on 31 July 2017. A revision of the audit opinion was also necessary, which was submitted by the Audit Authority in January 2018.

The confirmation regarding the compliance of the MCS description with the minimum requirements was issued by the FMO on 15 February 2018.

All the recommendations issued by the AA in the audit report related to the MCS opinion have been implemented.

The development and assessment of the MCS descriptions at the level of the approved Programmes is currently on-going. Regarding the programme "Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeships and Youth Entrepreneurship" The Central Harmonization Unit for Public Internal Audit (CHUPIA) has started the audit mission on 16th of April 2018. The Audit Report prepared following the Audit Mission on the Conformity Assessment of the Management and Control System established at the level of the National Agency for Community Programs in the Field of Vocational Education and Training (Program Operator for the Education programme) was sent to NFP on 22nd of June 2018. The conclusion of the report is that the MCS established at the level of OP is in line with the provision of the EEA Regulation and the requirements of the system are proportionate to the effectiveness of program objectives.

4 Communication

The NFP and Programme Operators took all necessary steps to ensure adequate communication during the preparation and beginning of implementation phase.

The NFP ensured a wide communication of the signing of the Memoranda of Understanding, with a press event on the occasion of the signing, as well as a widely distributed press release.

The Communication Strategy was submitted on 22.02.2018 and comments from the FMO have been received on 31.05.2018.

The eeagrants.ro website and the "Granturi SEE&norvegiane" Facebook account were employed to make public information on the new programming period and distribute news on important events, such as signing of Programme Agreements, Programme launching events and calls for proposals.

14 articles were published on the website and a number of 30 posts were published on Facebook, with

the highest audience was reached with the launching of the open calls on the Education Programme (126 likes, 106 shares 17,500 views).

The press event marking 10 years of EEA and Norway Grants in Romania organized on 13 June 2017, was also used to communicate the 2014-2021 period and a brochure describing also the new Programmes was produced and distributed. Through the NFP helpdesk e-mail address, approx. 25 requests for information were addressed.

Considering the need for a technology and design update, the procurement for the development of a new eeagrants.ro website has been initiated, estimated to be finalized by the end of the current year.

3 Programme launching events were organized for:

- ✓ the “Education” Programme on 05.12.2017 (www.wwa4edu.ro)
- ✓ the “Research” Programme on 12.06.2018 (<https://uefiscdi.ro/eea-norway-grants>)
- ✓ the “Cultural Entrepreneurship, Cultural Heritage and Cultural Cooperation” Programme on 20.06.2018 (www.ro-cultura.ro) in Bucharest.

5 Risk assessment

According to its tasks related to risk management, the NFP will assess and manage risks identified at national level, as part of the annual Strategic Report.

Please see Annex – Risk assessment.

6 Evaluation

Evaluation plan to be provided after all Programme Agreements have been signed.

7 Work plan

Major milestones for the next period:

- Signing remaining Programme Agreements: July 2018 – August 2018 (see Annex)
 - o European Public Health Challenges
 - o Energy
 - o Active Citizenship Fund
 - o Environment, Climate Change Adaptation and Ecosystems
- Launching event for the 2014-2021 period - September-October 2018 (after PAs signed)
- Contracting and implementation of predefined activities on Bilateral Fund – beginning with September 2018
- Preparation and approval of the description of management and control system at Programme level – timeline according to approval of Programmes
- Matchmaking events and open calls for preparation of bilateral project partnerships, according to Programme Agreement provisions
- Launching of open calls on Programmes