

MINUTES FROM ANNUAL MEETING GREECE

EEA FINANCIAL MECHANISM 2009-2014, ATHENS 30/10/2014

FIRST SESSION, BETWEEN NFP AND CERTIFYING AUTHORITY, FMC AND FMO.

Opening by respective heads of delegations

The chairman, Mr Spyros Efstathopoulos, opened the meeting by welcoming the Donors' representatives in Greece and then citing the main points of the Agenda and Greece's position on them.

Mr. Anders Erdal delivered a short introductory speech and emphasised that this was a good opportunity to take stock of programme implementation in Greece.

Mr Efstathopoulos then presented the main developments concerning the implementation of all programmes, as general information, and then the main points of the agenda were discussed as follows:

Staffing/capacity of NFP

The first agenda point was the capacity/staffing of the NFP, which has been a recurring topic of annual meetings. The Secretary General (SG) made a commitment to finalise the permanent staff at the NFP (3+1) by the end of November.

Revision of Annex A of the MoU

Based on the NFP's letter explaining the new chart of the Ministry of Development and Competitiveness (following the entry into force of the Presidential Decree 116 in Nov. 3), the Donors expressed their concern about the independence of the Certifying Authority (CA), which seems to refer directly to the Secretary General as the NFP. It was explained that, although the line of hierarchy does include the Secretary General and the Vice Minister, by Ministerial Decision the power of signature is delegated directly to the Director of the CA, thus safeguarding the independence of the CA vis-à-vis the NFP, who refers to the SG. Furthermore, the Audit Authority has confirmed that the structure is in line with the Regulation, and is the same as for the management of the EU Structural and Investment Funds.

It was also explained that the NFP refers to the SG and not the General Director of Public Investments.

Greece pledged itself that it will send the relevant documentation, meaning the documents describing the institutional setup guaranteeing the

independence of the CA from the NFP, as well as a slightly modified draft Annex A (chart) which reflects the actual situation (reporting lines with regard to CA and NFP) to the Donors.

On the sides of the meeting, it was decided to wait until the voting and entry into force of the forthcoming law for the Partnership Contract 2014-2020 (the new NSRF), before any changes in the annex A of the MOU are decided.

Strategic Report 2013

The Donors expressed their concern about the quality of the Document, and requested an update, especially concerning risk assessment, communication and progress towards achieving outputs. However, following discussion, and since the document refers to 2013 and it was updated following a commonly decided method in August 2014, it was agreed that it is adopted as such.

Greece informed that it will submit a risk assessment as soon as the response to the open calls is more clearly visible; probably in early 2015. The next Strategic Report will be prepared following the FMO's recommendations, especially concerning risk management, risk mitigation and communication (incl. at program level). The NFP shall work closely with the POs to that end.

The Donors also expressed concern regarding the delays in some of the programmes, which puts the successful completion of the programme portfolio at risk. The NFP must take responsibility for assisting the POs in making efforts to speed up the implementation. It was underlined that no general extension of the implementation deadline (30 April 2016) will be granted.

Bilateral relations and bilateral fund at national level. Publicity and communication at the national level

Although the Donors expressed their satisfaction about the progress of bilateral relations for some programmes, the delays in appointing a person responsible for payments for the Bilateral Fund at the National Level (BFNL) cause concern and reluctance in accepting the proposed changes in the budget of the program. Following a proposal from Greece, it was indicated that the transfer of €110.000 from the Technical Assistance to the Bilateral Fund at National Level, which will entail an amendment of the PA, will be approved by the FMO. The NFP will not mobilise the reserve list for new projects before the issue of payments is resolved.

The NFP informed the Donors that payments will normalise in January 2015, following the entry into force of a new law on the matter. The NFP also informed that the expenditures of the already completed project (CIEEL/FRA) will be reimbursed within a couple of days.

Greece also informed the participants that the internet site eeagrants.gr will soon be operational, as the NFP is in the process of filling it with information.

The NFP informed that in the next days it will appoint the new communication consultant, following a tender. The FMC stressed the importance of publicity and communication activities also at the program level, and urged the NFP to monitor these activities.

SECOND SESSION OPEN TO PROGRAM OPERATORS, AUDIT AUTHORITY

All Program Operators were invited to make a short presentation on the progress of their activities. In some cases the presentations were followed by discussion, as follows:

02. The Donors expressed concerns that the calls still have not been launched, and requested an updated timeline for the Program.

The PO informed that the calls will be launched next week, and that a date for the launching/matchmaking event (late November) will be set as soon as possible. The Norwegian Embassy and the FMO are ready to assist in the efforts to seek partners for the implementation of the bilateral activities.

04. The Donors expressed their satisfaction about the Program's progress, as well as its geographical distribution. However, more effort should be done in matters concerning information and communication; the PO explained that it has the intention to translate the Communication Manual of the EEA Grants in order to distribute it to the NGOs that are funded by the grants, for reference and use.

The Bodossaki Foundation informed the participants about the new law on NGOs.

06. The FMC expressed satisfaction about the general progress of the Program, however insisted on procurement procedures and urged the NFP to closely monitor them.

The inclusion of the Mytilini First Reception Centre, after the proposal of the NFP (23/09) as a fourth project is in the process of appraisal by the FMO. The subsequent drafting of the new PA is expected by the FMO.

The PO informed the Donors that a website dedicated to the programme will be operational by the end of the year.

07. The Donors requested from the PO an assessment of its foreseen position within the new chart of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, as well as to secure competences of its staff. Further, they raised attention to the issue of state aid control on selected projects and close cooperation with the Norwegian Embassy for finding partners.

Call has recently been launched, deadline 20 December 2014. Due to the significant delays the NFP is monitoring closely. The selection of external evaluators is already under way, and the PO will proceed to the selection immediately after the submission deadline in order not to lose more time. A website dedicated to the programme has already been launched.

03. The Donors expressed their satisfaction on the implementation progress, including communication and bilateral activities. The deadline for submitting applications is 3 November 2014. The process is on schedule, including the selection of external evaluators. At least 30 project proposals are expected, of which probably 4-7 will receive support.

05. Although the progress is remarkable, the Donors indicated that the issue of low overall occupancy rates (compared to the funded capacities) as well as the conditions at one of the centres should be looked into. The FO noted the concern, stressing however the delicate line between offering shelter to as much as possible vulnerable migrants and insisting on the perfect conditions (as far as space availability is concerned). The upcoming meeting between the Fund Operator, UDI and the FMO in early November will address these issues.

08. No particular concerns were raised; the program being timely implemented and about to produce the first tangible results. The renovation works of the Frouarhio building are completed, the participating NGOs are beginning to move in and start their operation, and the official inauguration is planned to be organised in early December.

As a final agenda point, the Audit Authority informed the Donors about their institutional setup and the audit strategy.

As closing remarks, the FMC noted the clear progress on program monitoring, but stressed the importance of maintaining a stable Focal Point with permanent and competent staff.

The Secretary General expressed a commitment to work closer with the POs in order to ensure timely implementation.

Participants:

Greek delegation:

NFP & 01 TA & BFNL:

Mr. Spyros Efstathopoulos, Head of Delegation, General Secretary of General Secretariat of Public Investment – NSRF, Ministry for Development and Competitiveness, Head of National Focal Point

Ms Anastasia Panopoulou, Head of Unit, National Focal Point, Ministry of Development and Competitiveness

Mr. Nikolaos Kamvysis, Advisor to the Minister of Development and Competitiveness

Mr. Paraschos Lygeroudis, National Focal Point Staff (Task Force MOU)

Mr. Nikoalos Mniestris , National Focal Point Staff (Task Force MOU)

Ms. Eugenia Fotoniata, National Focal Point Staff (Task Force MOU)

Ms. Elisavet Mavridou, National Focal Point Staff (appointment in progress)

Ms Vicky Kaza, National Focal Point Staff (appointment in progress)

GR02: Integrated marine and inland water management

Ms. Chryssoula N. Kourteli, Head of Special Agency for Coordination of Environmental Projects, Ministry for the Environment, Energy & Climate Change.

Mr. Giorgos Parnassas, Special Agency for Coordination of Environmental Projects, Ministry for the Environment, Energy & Climate Change

GR 03: Renewable Energy

Dr. Konstantinos D. Patlitzianas, Division of Development Programmes, Centre for Renewable Energy Sources and Saving (CRES)

GR05: Assisted Voluntary Returns

Mr. Daniel Esdras, Director

Mrs. Mantalena Kaili, Public Information Officer

GR06 "Institutional Framework in the Asylum and Migration Sector

Ms. Matina Platsikoudi, European and Development Programmes Division, Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection

Mr. Konstantinos Iliopoulos, European and Development Programmes Division, Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection

GR07: Research

Ms. Eleni Stavrianoudaki, General Secretariat for Research and Technology

08: Solidarity and social inclusion

Mrs. Violetta Pertidou

Mrs. Eleni-Efrosyni Spentzou

Certifying Authority

Ms.Vasiliki Alesta

Mr. Ioannis Katsaros

Audit Authority

Ms. Evaggelia Triantafillopoulou

Mr. Vasilis Dikopoulos

Ms. Anastasia Travlou

Ms Vasiliki Pavlopoulou

Donors:

Mr Anders Erdal, Head of Delegation, Chairman of the Financial Mechanism Committee

Mr Sjur Larsen, Ambassador, Royal Norwegian Embassy, Athens

Mr Roger Jørgensen, Deputy Head of Mission, Royal Norwegian Embassy, Athens

Mr Tom Tjomsland, Senior Advisor, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ms Stine Andresen, Director, Financial Mechanism Office

Ms Polyxeni Anastasiou, EEA Grants Officer, Royal Norwegian Embassy, Athens

Mr Tamas Polgar, Country Officer, Financial Mechanism Office