



**Iceland**  
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**EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021**

**Strategic Report 2020 for Greece**

**General Secretariat for Public Investments & the NSRF**  
**Special Service EEA Grants - National Focal Point**

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## 1. Executive summary

As per Art. 2.6 of the EEA Grants Regulation 2014-2021, the National Focal Point submits by the present document the Strategic Report of the EEA Grants 2014-2021 in Greece for the reporting period November 2019 to October 2020.

The Strategic Report is following the Regulation Annex template and its foreseen sections, as follows:

**Political, economic and social context** section presents the overview of the political, economic and social status and developments in Greece in the reference period. Report includes data and analysis as reported by early 2020 as well as after the serious impact of the Covid19 pandemic.

**Effects of the Grants** section presents the overall anticipated effects in the funding period of the Grants in their sectorial interventions and at the national level. Each Programme and the Bilateral Fund are designed to contribute to the overall objectives of the EEA Grants for the reduction of social and economic disparities and the strengthening of the bilateral relations. In the reference period implementation has kick-started and the effects in terms of objectives and results are anticipated to unfold in the year ahead.

**Status of Programmes** section presents the status and the developments for each programme separately. In this reference period programmes operated by Greek national authorities, moved from the conclusion and signature of Programme Agreements to the commencement of the implementation. By the end of October 2020, all programmes have signed their Programme Agreement and subsequently at the national level, there have been issued the Ministerial Decrees for funding (PIAs). Three programmes have made first steps of implementation with calls and preparation of project partnership agreements, while two programmes follow in this path.

**Status of the Bilateral Funds** section presents, under the approval of the JCBF, the developments of the Bilateral Fund. In the reporting period, the JCBF adopted the Bilateral Fund Workplan as foreseen in the Art.2.3 of the Bilateral Fund Agreement. As regards to the strategic initiatives, the JCBF selected 4 more initiatives, bringing the total number to 5 selected initiatives.

**Management and implementation** section presents the developments in the setup of the implementation scheme by a) publishing into the Official Gazette of the Management and Control System at the national level and of the associated Manual of Procedures which analytically develops the day to day implementation into procedures, workflows and templates, b) publishing into the Official Gazette the MD-PIAs for all 5 programmes, the Bilateral Fund and the Technical Assistance.

**Communication** section presents the implementation as well as the proposed revision of the Communication strategy at the national level, in relation also to the unprecedented conditions of Covid19 pandemic restrictions. Communication strategy includes inter alia the construction of the website, the continuous presence in social media as well as the support and training of the POs.

**Monitoring** section presents the main responsibilities and tasks of the NFP in monitoring progress of programmes, bilateral fund and technical assistance. An Evaluation plan has been conducted which will be initiated upon commencement of the programmes implementation.

**Annexes** section presents further information on risk assessment and mitigation, the Technical Assistance implementation and organizational issues related to NFP.

The issues to be discussed at the Annual meeting, scheduled to be held on 26 November 2020 reflect the issues of the respective sections of the current Strategic report.

## 2. Political, economic and social context

The Greek economy is coming out of a decade of prolonged crisis and after three consecutive economic adjustment programs in the period 2010-2018, Greece has managed to eliminate the macroeconomic imbalances that characterized the country's economy before the debt crisis broke out. Greece's economy had been expanding by nearly 2% for over three years before the COVID-19 shock. Structural reforms, high primary budget surpluses and debt measures underpinned Greece's recovery and rising confidence.<sup>1</sup> Gradually, the confidence of consumers, businesses and the investment community in the growth prospects of the Greek economy is restoring, as reflected in the course of the respective indicators. In particular, in February 2020, the Economy Climate Index recorded its highest performance in almost 20 years (113,2 versus 79,3 points in August 2015 and 116,0 points in December 2000). Respectively, there was high performance for the Consumer Confidence Index (-4,8 versus -80,8 points in February 2012 and -4.1 points in July 2000)<sup>2</sup>.

Despite the positive course of the economy in early 2020 and the extent of the changes that have taken place in the country over the last decade, the crisis has left wounds that have not been healed. Unemployment remains higher than before the crisis, and per capita income remains significantly lower than in 2008. The employment rate has increased over the past six years but it is still one of the lowest among OECD countries and wages are low. Women and the young continue suffering from low employment rates. The lack of prospects has pushed many talented young people to emigrate, lowering the country's entrepreneurial and innovation potential. Difficulties of integrating migrants into the education system and labor market, together with the limited support from other EU countries to deal with the large influx of asylum seekers, compound these challenges.<sup>3</sup>

On the asylum and migration front, Greece is continuously facing new arrivals of asylum seekers and migrants, while it is accumulating the ballooning numbers and difficulties from a decade of intense influx. According to the statistics of the Greek Asylum Service, in 2019-2020 there was a yearly increase of asylum claims by 66,2% (in 2019: 6.440, in 2020: 9.128)<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the fire that burnt Moria — Europe's biggest refugee camp on the Greek island of Lesbos in September 2020 caused a humanitarian crisis as well as the urgent need for the European Union to reform its asylum system. In Moria about 12.000 people remained unsheltered while an overnight new facility struggles to provide for the most urgent needs, while the issues such as the asylum process acceleration and the covid19 catering remain crucial.

In addition, the country is facing further challenges for the future. Technological developments bring significant changes in the global division of labor, income and wealth, as well as in the way we work. The aging population in the country, which has deteriorated rapidly during the last decade of the crisis, poses serious challenges for social security and protection systems. The need to limit and adapt to the effects of climate change brings significant changes to critical sectors of the economy, such as energy and transport.

The readiness of the country to face these challenges determines to a great extent the development of the Greek economy and ultimately the well-being of the citizens of the country for the coming decades. In this direction, it is necessary to turn the productive fabric of the country to a new model that can achieve competitive and robust operation in a volatile international environment that constantly poses new challenges.

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<sup>1</sup> OECD Economic Surveys: Greece 2020

<sup>2</sup> Data according to the Quarterly Bulletin "Greek Economy" by Foundation for Economic & Industrial Research (IOBE) at [http://iobe.gr/greek\\_economy\\_en.asp?PD=2020](http://iobe.gr/greek_economy_en.asp?PD=2020)

<sup>3</sup> OECD Economic Surveys: Greece 2020

<sup>4</sup> [http://asylo.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Greek\\_Asylum\\_Service\\_data\\_February\\_2020\\_gr.pdf](http://asylo.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Greek_Asylum_Service_data_February_2020_gr.pdf)

## Covid19 pandemic impact

The rapid spread of coronavirus since February 2020, resulting in a global health crisis, has changed significantly and will continue to affect, in the medium term at least, the conditions not only for the Greek, but also for the European and global economy. Greece has responded swiftly to the pandemic and has limited the infections but the economy has been hit hard. The unprecedented situation has completely altered the economic conditions, it has set back the country's recovery and it is expected to be the most decisive factor for the macroeconomic figures of the Greek economy, with its impact dependent on its duration.

Its duration and intensity, in the current and possibly in the coming years, and thus the intensity of its effects at various levels (public health, social relations, education, interstate relations, production, public finances, banking system, etc.) cannot be accurately predicted at present.

According to the European Commission's Spring 2020 forecast, government spending is expected to increase by around € 1.782 billion, gross fixed capital formation is expected to decline by around € 6.422 billion and, finally, exports are expected to fall by around € 14.918 billion. Taking into account, therefore, these forecasts of the European Commission, it is estimated that will be caused (directly and indirectly):

- \* Reduction of GDP by about 7.16%
- \* Reduction in the levels of total employment approximately 7.20%
- \* Reduction of total imports by about 15.53%

As it turns out, the majority of losses in GDP correspond to "Water Transport Services" (25.6%), "Construction" (20.9%) and "Accommodation and Catering Services" (17.6%). The most significant reductions in employment levels correspond to the sectors "Agriculture" (19.8%), "Construction" (19.1%) and "Hotels and Restaurants" (11.6%), while the most significant reductions in total imports correspond to in "Mines and Quarries" (18.8%), "Computers, Electronic and Optical Products" (10.1%) and "Other Transport Equipment" (9.2%).<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, the Covid-19 crisis has highlighted the dependence of state, economic and social support on the applications of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The need for digital transformation has been urgently and directly addressed as a priority for the functioning of a modern state. Interventions in the field of telework, distance learning, telemedicine, social support from a distance are now considered necessary. Technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, the Internet of Things, Big Data Utilization, Cloud Computing infrastructure and applications as well as data and communications security issues are becoming vital in a crisis environment.

Risks from floods, forest fires, other natural phenomena and anthropogenic activity, as well as health risks such as the recent pandemic (COVID-19), highlight the vulnerability of modern societies and, consequently, the need for Greece to upgrade its crisis management mechanisms and the development of prediction models and contingency plans.

## Proposed development policy actions

The Report entitled "Development Plan for the Greek Economy"<sup>6</sup> develops in detail the current situation, the structural weaknesses and the comparative advantages of the Greek economy and it is expected to a big extent to form the basis for the reform of the Greek economy and public investment strategy in the mid and long-term future. The Report covers thoroughly and analytically the issues concerning the Greek economy, but it is of particular interest for this Strategic report, the special reference to those proposed development policy actions which are also a common field of interest with

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5 « Centre of Planning and Economic Research (KEPE): The effects of Covid-19 on the Greek economy » Capital, 10 Iouliou 2020

6 The Report entitled "Development Plan for the Greek Economy", Interim Report, July 27, 2020, was drafted by a Committee of Experts headed by Prof. Christoforos Pissaridis (LSE, Nobel Prize for Economics 2010) after the assignment of the Greek government in order to be part of the planning for the reform of the Greek economy and the public investments' strategy.

the EEA Grants 2014- 2021 thematic areas and priorities, certain of which are already addressed through the programmes of the current funding period.

In this context, the following proposed development policy actions are mentioned in the Report and are expected to be the framework within which the policy and reform priorities in Greece will be developed in the coming years:

1. Modernization and improvement of the investment environment in terms of simplification of procedures, the corporate governance system, the financial sector, access to justice, tax incentives and the cost of paid work.
2. Institutional enhancement of the public administration, with evaluation and upgrading of the executive positions, digitization and interoperability of procedures in the service of citizens and companies
3. Enhancement of research in universities and research centers and intra coordination with a long-term research strategy.
4. Enhancement of innovation with incentives for business research in sectors such as processing, agri-food and elsewhere, and growth through smart specialization.
5. Upgrading of the vocational training system for the unemployed and the employed, with a shift towards active employment policies.
6. Immigrant training programs and better integration into the labour market.
7. Facilitation of the full integration of women in the labour market and increase of their wages.
8. Modernization of the structure of the education system at all levels with actions to combat discrimination of all kinds. Increase of the average size of school units, with substantial autonomy and evaluation, universal development of digital infrastructure and content, expansion of all-day school programs.
9. Development of a system of pre-school education with universal access, which lays a strong foundation for the future development of the child.
10. Modernization of the system of governance in higher education and substantial interconnection of Institutions with those of foreign countries and with the economy and wider society.
11. Energy upgrade of buildings (residential and commercial) in order to reduce energy consumption, the environmental footprint. Support for green growth actions with emphasis on (a) shift to renewable energy sources, (b) mitigation of transition costs during the delignification process and (c) development of circular economy systems.
12. Development of infrastructure in (a) digital technologies and systems, (b) green development and environment, (c) waste management, (d) transport to strengthen Greek ports, to facilitate exports of goods from the country and (e) upgrading of infrastructure for inbound tourism.

### 3. Effects of the Grants

Effects of the EEA Grants are identified at strategic level in the time horizon of the funding period FM 2104-2021 as well as in the total period of the financial mechanism implementation in Greece, since 1994. Therefore reporting on the effects of the EEA Grants is not expected to present major modifications throughout the years of FM 2014-2021. Adjustments however may occur as EEA Grants interact, conform, adopt and contribute to the developments and to unforeseen situations in the country and beyond as they unfold during the period.

Since the commencement of the EEA Financial Mechanism in 1994, Greece has been a beneficiary state continuously and the effects of its presence and implementation in the country in the previous funding periods, in terms of results, institutional framework, national authorities, donor partners and stakeholders' networking as well as in terms of communication and publicity, constitute a substantial basis on which to develop the EEA Grants period 2014-2021.

For the EEA Grants 2014-2021 period, critical sectors have been selected for the programme interventions, to reflect the interests of both the Donor countries and of Greece as the Beneficiary country. Further to the thematic area 16 for "Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency", which is instructed by the EEA Grants for intervention in all beneficiary countries, 4 other thematic areas have been selected, to be funded through programmes implemented by the Greek authorities and it is anticipated that these programmes will have significant impact to their respective sectors. Additionally the Bilateral Fund at the national level is expected to have a significant impact respectively, in the objectives of reducing social and economic disparities and strengthening the bilateral relations. In particular, the effect of each programme is anticipated to be as follows:

**Programme B for Roma Inclusion and Empowerment** aims in a pilot project to address the most acute housing challenges of Roma population in Greece within a holistic framework. Housing is one of the key priority areas identified by Council Recommendation of December 2013 on effective Roma integration measures in the EU Member States, which also include employment, education and health, as well as the promotion of equal treatment and the respect of fundamental rights of Roma. The programme focus on housing was selected because it affects critically the access to regular attendance and attainment in education, as well as providing the conditions for living in a healthy environment. Furthermore, it impacts the employment opportunities and potential for entrepreneurship. The housing project of the programme will be located in the municipality of Katerini, it will contribute locally to the benefit of both the Roma and the general population and it will serve as a pilot intervention which is expected to offer valuable know how, experience and lessons learned for future respective interventions in the country. In addition to the housing project, the implementation of a Task force Unit in areas of high concentration of Roma populations will ensure the effective implementation of the national strategy of Roma inclusion as it will partake in the support of local government and the activation of the Roma population in all policy – measures concerning social inclusion (housing, education, employment, health, empowerment, etc.).

**Programme D for Water Management** will address the need to improve the environmental status of water ecosystems by supporting the rational use of water mainly in vulnerable areas and islands. It is expected to provide drinking water to vulnerable areas and islands and technologies for water leakages in water grids. In addition, the programme will finance research studies which will provide with data and solutions for the improvement of the status of water bodies or improvement of water management. The programme will fund awareness campaigns highlighting the water problems and the importance of improving the status of water bodies.

At the same time, bilateral relations with donor state entities will be strengthened by having donor partners in projects and by activities organized in the context of the bilateral fund budget allocated to the programme.

**Programme E for Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency** aims to promote Renewable Energy Sources and Energy Efficiency and substantially contributes to the implementation of a balanced development framework that creates high added value and prospects for the local economy, while familiarising residents with sustainable practices which improve their quality of life.

The programme will support all three pillars of sustainability, i.e. the economic, social, and environmental pillars, thus increasing the general welfare of their respective communities. Apart from their direct positive environmental impact, the projects will enhance social sustainability by applying Renewable Energy Sources and Energy Efficiency solutions to promote sustainable living in the local communities. All chosen projects will reinforce the local economy of their communities by providing work to local contractors, during times of adverse economic climate. At the same time, the chosen projects will promote economic sustainability, as project promoters will save energy for their public buildings and infrastructures every year.

**Programme F for Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency** will significantly and directly contribute to the integrity, transparency, accountability and effectiveness of public administration. Through the proposed actions, direct citizen access to public administration will be improved, technological modernization of public administration and reduction of bureaucracy will be enhanced. The proposed reform actions concerning the reduction of bureaucracy and the technological modernization of public administration are in line with the anti-corruption transparency and integrity actions of the Programme. Finally, actions to reduce maladministration and enhance management concerning citizens' problems will contribute and reinforce the objectives and effects of the programme.

**Programme G for Asylum and Migration** aims to ensuring well-functioning national asylum and migration management systems while at the same time assisting asylum seekers to exercise basic rights. The target group focuses to Third Country Nationals arriving at Greek territory with emphasis placed on unaccompanied minors and vulnerable groups. Moreover, the programme contributes to strengthening the bilateral relations among national institutions playing key roles in the field of asylum and migration and Donor States partners. Most of the predefined projects will be implemented in close cooperation with donor project partners, such as the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), the Norwegian Immigration Appeals Board (UTLENDINGSNEMNDA-UNE), the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security as well as the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDI).

#### 4. Status of programmes

In the reporting period from November 2019 to October 2020, programmes operated by Greek national authorities, moved from the signature of their Programme Agreement to the initiation of implementation. By the end of October 2020, all programmes have a signed Programme Agreement while at the national level for each one of the programmes there has been issued and come in effect the Ministerial Decree which transposes the Programme Agreement, sets the terms and conditions of financing through the national mechanism of Public Investment Program-PIP (PDE) -which centrally manages the funding from the EEA FM- and initiates implementation. These Ministerial Decrees are identified through the MCS at the national level as the Programme Implementation Agreement of Art. 6.8 of the Regulation.

The status and developments per Programme in the reporting period are as follows:

##### **Programme B - Roma Inclusion and Empowerment**

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**Programme Operator:** Executive Authority (“Special Service - Executive Structure NSRF”), Division of Employment and Social Economy, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

**Modalities:** 2 predefined projects, 3 small grant schemes and bilateral activities

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**IPO:** European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (EU FRA)

**Budget:** 7ME (EEA Grants: 5ME, National co financing: 2ME )

**National Programme Partner:** General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and Fight Against Poverty (General Secretariat for Social Solidarity), Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

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At the EEA Grants 2014-2021 Annual meeting in November 2019, discussion about the programme emphasized on the outstanding issues at the time being related to the preliminary actions of the housing project, on the Donors and FMO concerns and priorities, as well as on the commitment of Greece to the implementation and accomplishment of the programme. All parts confirmed their interest and commitment to the development and implementation of the programme. A further round of intensive cooperation was initiated with the aim of concluding the Programme Agreement as soon as possible in the year ahead. In this context, systematic and consistent cooperation between the Programme Operator and the FMO led to a highly appreciated on-the-spot visit at the Municipality of Katerini on 26 February 2020 and to an important technical meeting in Athens on the following day, February 27. After a thorough and extensive elaboration of the Supplementary Information based on the feedback and remarks by Donors and FMO, the Programme Agreement was finally concluded and signed on 10 July 2020.

At the national level, the Ministerial Decree –PIA was issued and in effect on 21 September 2020.

In parallel, the Programme Operator drafted and submitted to the members of Cooperation Committee the Document “Rules of procedure of the Cooperation Committee”. The Document was concluded and signed on 13 August 2020 by the Members, namely the Programme Operator - Executive Authority (“Special Service - Executive Structure NSRF”), the General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and Fight Against Poverty and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA).

At the implementation level, the Programme Operator elaborated all the Management and Control System documents and procedures, in preparation for the project contracts of the 2 predefined projects. By the time the Ministerial Decree came into effect, the Programme Operator was ready to proceed with the call for submission to the predefined project promoters.

The Covid19 pandemic did not affect significantly the process at the programme development phase. It is expected however that at the implementation level in the year ahead, several challenges related to the restrictions of the pandemic will be encountered and should be mitigated. For the year ahead, the

programme plans the submission of the Management and Control System at the programme level, the conclusion of the preparation for the project partnerships agreements and the publication of the project contracts, the commencement of public procurement and foreseen procedures for the projects' implementation, the preparation of the calls for the three small grant schemes, the initiation of bilateral initiatives, as well as the website launch and all the foreseen and possible communication activities.

The programme has submitted 1IFRin total so far, with expenditure under the Management cost.

### Programme D - Water Management

<b>Programme Operator:</b> Executive Authority ("Special Service - Executive Structure NSRF"), Environmental Sector, Ministry of Environment and Energy	<b>Modalities:</b> 2 open calls, 1 small grant scheme and bilateral activities
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**IPO:** N/A

**Budget:** 5ME (EEA Grants: 4ME, National co financing: 1ME)

**Donor/Other Programme Partner:** N/A

The Programme Agreement was concluded and signed on 26 November 2019. The MD-PIA was proceeded immediately after the publication of the Management and Control System at the national level and it came into effect on 21 March 2020. The Programme Operator submitted to the NFP the Management and Control System at the programme level, on 22 May 2020. The NFP approved and forwarded to the Audit Authority for Report and Opinion on 26 May 2020. Further exchanges and clarifications took place on the request of the Audit Authority. On 8 September 2020 the Management and Control System was approved by the Audit Authority.

At the implementation level, the PO proceeded with all three calls of the programme, respectively for the Outputs 1&2 and for the small grant scheme as follows:

- For the Output 1.1 (Implementation of water management systems – Desalination Units), the draft call was submitted on 9 September 2020 to NFP for consultation and approval. After the approval by the NFP on 16 September 2020. The call is imminent for submission to FMO in October 2020.
- For the Output 1.2 (Implementation of research measures of river basin management plans), the draft call, after consultation and approval by the NFP, was sent to FMO on 1 July 2020. The draft call was further elaborated according to feedback from the FMO and was finalized in August 2020. By October 2020, the Call is imminent for publication.
- For the Output 1.3 (small grant scheme), the call is under preparation and drafting.
- For the Bilateral Output, the Project Promoters will also be invited to submit proposals for bilateral cooperation, in the context of the above calls.

A webpage for the EEA Grants 2014-2021 "Water Management Programme" is updated regularly, according to the administrative and regulatory requirements.

The programme has submitted 2 IFRs in total so far, with expenditure under the Management cost.

Covid-19 negative impact was mainly on communication, as the launching and match making events with physical presence were cancelled due to the restrictions. They have been rescheduled to take place online. The two events were initially organized to take place in May 2020 in Greece, with entities from Greece and the Donor countries, however, due to covid-19 restrictions, they were postponed to September - October 2020 and then it was decided that they should be implemented online.

In planning for the year ahead, is the evaluation of the proposals in the context of the calls for Outputs 1.1 & 1.2 and the selection of the projects to be funded. The call for output 1.3 will be issued and as aforementioned, the launching and match making event will take place online.

## **Programme E - Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency**

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**Programme Operator:** Centre for Renewable Energy Sources and Saving (CRES) **Modalities:** 1 open call, and bilateral activities

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**IPO:** N/A

**Budget:** 10ME (EEA Grants: 7,5ME, National co financing: 2,5ME )

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**Donor/Other Programme Partner:** N/A

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The Programme Agreement was concluded and signed on 6 June 2019, the MD-PIA however should be and was proceeded after the publication of the Management and Control System at the national level on 19 February 2020. Thus the MD-PIA was issued and came into effect on 21 March 2020. The Programme Operator submitted the Management and Control System at the programme level to NFP on 16 April 2020, it was approved by the NFP on 11 May 2020 and confirmed by Audit Authority Report and Opinion on 2 June 2020.

At the implementation level, the Programme Operator elaborated the Open Call for Output 1.1 after an extensive cooperation with NFP and FMO. The open call fully complied with relevant guidelines (announcements, helpdesk in full operation, online workshops/meetings, and continuous communication with potential Project Promoters etc.) and was finalized and published on 23 July 2020. The submission deadline of the Call has been initially announced to be on 22 October 2020, while with a later amendment the final date was postponed to 23 November. The PO provides with daily help desk support all stakeholders and possible promoters. Every technical question submitted is answered and all are made available on the programme's website. As indicated by the demand of Helpdesk in October 2020, there is a wide and promising response of possible call beneficiaries, it is estimated that a very large number of valuable project proposals will be submitted, while many of them have already acquired user access to the MIS for the submission of their proposal. At the same time, the PO prepared the unhindered implementation of Stages A (compliance) and B (evaluation) of the selection process in order to accelerate the process and reach the implementation stage in early 2021.

The programme has submitted 2 IFRs in total so far, with expenditure under the Management cost.

At the Communication level, the PO developed its communication plan and is committed to ensure the maximum possible publicity of the program using all available means (program website, social media, events, etc.). The programme's website <http://eeares.cres.gr/> is updated regularly in English & in Greek, in accordance with the requirements of the FM EEA 2014-21. Also, the social media accounts in Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are updated on a regular basis. For the publicity of the open call, press releases have been sent especially to the Central Union of Municipalities in Greece (KEDE) and the Association of Greek Regions (ENPE), which in turn have informed their members.

Covid19 did not affect significantly the preliminary actions of implementation, despite the difficulties. Alike other programmes and at the national level, Covid19 affected the Communication activities as launching and communication events had to be postponed.

In planning for the year ahead, the PO will work for the finalization of the Evaluators Register, a necessary component for the Evaluation stage B of the calls. The implementation of the projects is expected to start early in 2021. PO also prepares all required actions and next steps for the projects monitoring within the time frame and in full compliance with the objectives and indicators of the programme.

As regards to the bilateral initiatives, the Programme Operator capitalizes the experience and best practices of the GR03 programme from the EEA Grants 2009-2014 period and prepares activities which boost and strengthen bilateral cooperation among entities from Greece and Donor States activated in the field of Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency. The PO will facilitate bilateral relations

through partnerships in projects, visits to donor countries and meeting/workshops at each project site. The PO will seek to create a forum in which the green energy projects are discussed and experience is shared. Finally PO plans to visit donor countries to explore floating wind power development.

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### **Programme F - Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency**

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<b>Programme Operator:</b> Management & Implementation Authority for Information Communication Technologies (M&IA ICT)	<b>Modalities:</b> 3 predefined projects and bilateral activities
<b>IPO:</b> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)	<b>Budget:</b> 8,2ME (EEA Grants: 7ME, National co financing: 1,2ME)
<b>Donor/Other Programme Partner:</b> N/A	

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In the reporting period 2018-2019, the concept note of the programme had been approved by the Donors on the condition of further elaboration for PDP1. OECD as the IPO had submitted comments not yet incorporated into the programme design. The FMO had notified the NFP that supplementary information was needed to proceed with the process of drafting the Programme Agreement.

After the institutional and organizational changes in July 2019 (transfer of relevant competences from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Digital Governance), the consultation of involved national authorities, as coordinated by the NFP and the discussion at the Annual meeting 2019, it was proposed and agreed the 1<sup>st</sup> amendment of the MoU which affected the programme as follows: a) new Programme Operator was designated the Special Service Management & Implementation Authority for Information Communication Technologies (M&IA ICT), b) Project Promoter of predefined project 1 was designated the General Directorate for Digital Governance and the Simplification of Procedures /Ministry of Digital Governance, c) Project Promoter of predefined project 2 was designated the National Authority for Transparency, as being the new competent national authority for the fight against corruption.

Following the new designations, the programme resumed the procedure of supplementary information in cooperation with FMO towards drafting the Programme Agreement. After an extensive elaboration which included close cooperation with competent authorities at the national level and preparation for the project partnership agreements, the Programme Agreement was finally concluded and signed on 25 September 2020. The successive MD-PIA is expected to be published in Official Gazette by the end of October 2020.

The Covid19 pandemic did not affect significantly the process at the programme development phase. In planning for the year ahead, is the set-up of the Cooperation Committee with OECD as the IPO, the submission of the Management and Control System at the programme level, the preparation and signature of the project partnerships agreements and the publication of the project contracts, the commencement of public procurement and foreseen procedures for the projects' implementation, as well as the website launch and all the foreseen and possible communication activities.

As regards to the bilateral initiatives, the PO is taking all necessary preliminary steps in order to develop its bilateral modality in the most efficient and productive way. In this context PO addressed the need of identification of bilateral partners in the Donor countries to the Embassy of Norway in Athens, which in turn responded eagerly in support of the effort. In September - October 2020 cooperation was launched between the entities in this regard.

## **Programme G - Asylum and Migration (Capacity building of national asylum and migration management systems)**

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**Programme Operator:** European and Development Programs Division - Ministry Of Citizen Protection (EDPD)      **Modalities:** 7 predefined projects, 1 small grant scheme and bilateral activities

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**Donor Programme Partner:** Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI)      **Budget:** 19,4ME (EEA Grants: 16,5ME, National co financing: 2,9 ME )

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The Programme Agreement was concluded and signed on 26 November 2019. The MD-PIA was proceeded after the publication of the Management and Control System at the national level and it came into effect on 21 April 2020. The Programme Operator submitted to the NFP the Management and Control System at the programme level on 26 May 2020. The NFP reviewed the document in comparison with provisions in MCS at the national and in common elaboration of clarifications needed for predefined projects. After a course of cooperation between the NFP and the PO which included online meetings, exchange of q&a, new templates, instructions and clarifications, the NFP sent its feedback and remarks for the revision of the document on 16 September 2020.

At the implementation level, the PO proceeded with the invitation for submission to the predefined project promoters (named at the national level also a Call for reasons of systematic management) on 23 July 2020. Project 4 (EKKA- Care for unaccompanied minors) was excluded from the call due to institutional and organizational changes in the respective sectorial competence. In August 2020 the PO organized online meetings and teleconferencing in order to provide all necessary information and support to the predefined promoters. By October 2020 projects are preparing their project partnership agreements and all the necessary documentation for the submission of their project.

At the Communication level the Programme implemented its launching event on 26 February 2020. Press releases and announcements were made public through the Programme Operator website. COVID-19 pandemic restrictions brought certain delays to the original timeframe of implementation, while at the same time stressed out the importance of finding out alternative and workable solutions in order to keep in close contact with different counterparts. In this direction , the PO implemented a series of mitigation measures so as to achieve a proportionate and timely response to the challenges emerged, such as: a) Moving activities online (virtual Cooperation Committee meetings, telco meetings with the Donor Programme Partner and the FMO colleagues, Telecommuting ), b) Extending predefined projects implementation period until the final date of eligibility set by the Regulation, c) Modifying the scope and the schedule of the bilateral initiatives.

In planning for the year ahead, the programme prepares in order to complete all procedures towards project contracts, the commencement of public procurement and foreseen procedures for the projects' implementation, as well as all the foreseen and possible communication activities.

As regards to the raised issue for Programme Agreement amendment, the Programme Operator prepares its amendement proposal in order to accommodate the following changes and needs: a) the institutional and organizational changes that took place in the period after the signature of the Programme Agreement, namely the re-establishment of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum in January 2020 and the set-up of a new Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors, b) the correction on the title of the predefined project 2, c) the correction on the name of the project promoter of the predefined project 3, d) the modification of conditions 1&2 in Annex I of the Programme Agreement as the entities do not fall under the same ministry with the PO anymore.

As regards to the institutional changes that affect predefined project 4 (Care for unaccompanied minors), a split will be proposed to accommodate the respective new institutional setup. Additionally for predefined project 6, there might be a proposal for an additional project partner (Center for

Security Studies- KEMEA), to strengthen the research and scientific capabilities in the project implementation.

In spite of the amendments described above, there are also other challenges at the project level. Currently the most significant issues concern: a) the accommodation structure for the extremely vulnerable migrant groups of the predefined project 7. It is noted that the Project, as a whole, shall not be appraised by the Programme Operator until the facility is secured and b) the financial management of the predefined project 5, as the Project Promoter is exploiting the possibility of the financial management of the Project by alternate strategic institutions of the general government.

#### *Cooperation with the Donor Programme Partner*

The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), which is the central agency in the Norwegian immigration administration that implements and helps to develop the government's immigration and refugee policy, acting as the Donor Programme Partner, provides continuous advice on the implementation of the Programme GR-G entitled "Capacity building of national asylum and migration management systems". During the reference period, UDI supported Programme Operator, the European and Development Programmes Division (EDPD) of the Hellenic Ministry of Citizen Protection, in critical phases of the programme preparation (initiation and planning), such as the Programme Agreement development, the implementation of the launch event, the effective management of changes related to the scope of the approved predefined projects and the preparation of the call for proposals that was finally published by EDPD. Provided the strict character of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions imposed in both Norway and Greece, the assistance is mainly provided by means of teleconferences, phone calls and email exchanges.

The Cooperation Committee had its 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> (via teleconference) Meeting, during the reference year.

## 5. Status of bilateral funds

In the reference period November 2019-October 2020, the Bilateral Fund made significant progress in terms of reaching regulatory milestones and of strategic initiatives selection. The Joint Committee for Bilateral Funds – JCBF adopted the Bilateral Fund Workplan as foreseen in the Art.2.3 of the Bilateral Fund Agreement. As regards to the strategic initiatives, the JCBF selected 4 more initiatives, bringing the total number to 5 selected initiatives.

At the level of the national framework of implementation, a Ministerial Decree was issued on 18 May 2020, as foreseen in the MCS at the national level- in effect since 19 February 2020. The Ministerial Decree transposes the Bilateral Fund Agreement, sets the terms and conditions of the national mechanism of funding and initiates implementation.

Despite the notable developments at the regulatory and administration level however, Covid19 restrictions in travelling and in personal meeting and cooperation had a serious impact on the implementation of the selected initiatives. All selected initiatives expressed concerns and actual difficulties to proceed with their activities, especially due to their bilateral character, leading them to postponement of implementation, until further notice in 2021.

### **In detail:**

Following the concluding remarks of the Annual meeting 2019 and in accordance with Annex 3 of the Bilateral Fund Agreement, the NFP drafted and submitted to the members of the Joint Committee for Bilateral Funds –JCBF the Bilateral Fund Work plan, on 28 January 2020.

The Joint Committee subsequently held its 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting on 27 February 2020, to discuss the Workplan, thus fulfilling the regulatory provision of 4 weeks prior submission. At the meeting, after an extensive discussion and consultation on the agenda issues which included Workplan and proposed initiatives, the members agreed (that):

- The JCBF approves the Workplan. Corrections will be made by the NFP in cooperation with Iceland on the text related to Iceland-Greece bilateral relations. The budget section will also be revised, in order to reflect the decisions of the JCBF. With these corrections finalized the Workplan is considered final and the NFP can proceed to annex it to the BF Ministerial Decree.
- The JCBF approves the selection of the first stage of the initiative “Youth Employment and Gender Equality: Mobilizing human capital for sustainable growth in Greece” as submitted by the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP) in bilateral partnership with Fafo Institute for Labor and Social Research (Fafo). The promoter must submit additionally a more detailed budget breakdown which will correspond the budget lines and deliverables and will clearly separate between stage one and two of the initiative.
- The JCBF acknowledges the qualities of the proposal for Pro-Gender university studies by Panteion University but doesn’t approve its selection.
- The JCBF approves the selection of initiative with Promoter the NFP to cover all individual costs and small scale events of the member countries, eligible to the Bilateral Fund, with budget 80.000E. The NFP must form an implementation/procedural framework so that all eligible individual costs from all involved parts are dully covered, with the least possible administration burden.

- A supplementary text will be drafted by NFP and brought to JCBF for discussion, to outline the communication platform of the Bilateral Fund.
- The NFP will proceed to the Bilateral Fund Ministerial Decree immediately after the finalization of the Workplan. The BF MD will setup the best possible implementation/procedural framework to eliminate the administration burden.
- After the BF MD comes into effect, the NFP will proceed with all foreseen procedures and steps for the implementation and funding of the selected initiatives.
- The NFP, as foreseen in the JCBF framework, will circulate to JCBF by written procedure all possible initiative proposals, duly submitted to NFP.

Following the JCBF 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting, written procedures via email took place, as follows:

- Finalization of the Workplan, according to the feedback of the JCBF meeting
- Submission, discussion and selection of strategic initiative “Necessary legislative adjustments to promote offshore wind energy in Greece” with promoter the Hellenic Wind Energy Association ELETAEN with Donor partner the “Norwegian Wind Energy Association NORWEA”. Initiative budget: € 25.000
- Submission, discussion and selection of strategic initiative “Head to Head, a bilateral exhibition project between Greece and Iceland” with promoter the Kling & Bang gallerí ehf, Iceland and bilateral partners on behalf of Greece the A-Dashand the ASFA / Athens School of Fine Art. On behalf of Iceland also The Icelandic Art Center will be a partner. Initiative budget: € 20.000
- Finalization of budget and activities, with the final selected initiative corresponding to stage 1 of the strategic initiative “Youth Employment and Gender Equality: Mobilizing human capital for sustainable growth in Greece” with promoter the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP) in bilateral partnership with Fafo Institute for Labor and Social Research (Fafo). Initiative final budget: €119.076,62 (ELIAMEP budget: €63.351,35 and FAFO budget: €55.725,27 for their part and contribution respectively)
- Re –submission, discussion and selection of the strategic initiative “ProGender: Promoting a gender perspective in teaching, research and academic structures in Universities” with promoter the Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences-Athens, Greece (UPSPS) and bilateral partners the Institute for Gender equality and Difference – University of Iceland Reykjavik, Iceland (RIKK), Norwegian University of Science and Technology- Trondheim (NTNU) and the Research and Education Collective (REC). The new resubmitted proposal was modified in terms of activities and corresponding budget. Initiative final budget: €135.493

### **About the Workplan:**

The Work plan according to Annex 3 of the Bilateral Fund Agreement was drafted following the Annex template. Its content is based on data and experience from the previous period of EEA FM 2009-2014, the minutes of the meetings of the JCBF and Annual meeting, on the strategic initiatives proposed and selected by the Joint Committee, as well as on the expressed interest of the Donor countries and Greece on certain thematic areas of mutual bilateral interest as discussed on the several occasions of conference and cooperation within the EEA Grants context and beyond..

The Work plan, presents the strategy that will be followed for the implementation of the Bilateral Fund, as part of the EEA FM 2014-2021 strategic approach and objectives.

Further to the policy areas supported with programmes according to the Regulation and MoU, Bilateral

Fund might in principle be open to all thematic areas from all sectors which may document and justify a mutual interest, benefit and ground for bilateral cooperation.

Workplan identifies indicatively and not limited to, policy areas of common interest and enhanced potential for bilateral cooperation between the Donor States and Greece which might be benefitted from the Bilateral Fund, as listed below:

- Blue growth, marine resources and shipping
- Culture and arts
- Gender equality and social welfare
- Climate change and civil protection, natural disasters contingency

Following the template sections, the Workplan also includes the budget breakdown to national and programme level bilateral activities, an overview of the major and strategic activities selected for funding at the national level, as well as a description of the management and control system provisions for the implementation of the Fund.

The Workplan was drafted by the National Focal Point and submitted to the Joint Committee for Bilateral Funds –JCBF which commented on minor changes and decided the adoption of the finalized document. The adopted Workplan was annexed to the Bilateral Fund Ministerial Decree. Alongside the legal framework of the Bilateral Fund as set forth in Art.1.2 of the Bilateral Fund Agreement, the Work Plan shall be read in conjunction with the a) the Document for the Composition, role and functioning of JCBF, b) the Management and Control System at the national level.

The Work plan is subject to annual review and necessary modifications where appropriate during the years of its implementation. The initial Work plan, its reviews and modifications are discussed and decided by the JCBF, they are presented and reviewed by the Annual meetings and are reported in the Strategic Report. The initial Work plan and its budget table modifications are annexed to the Ministerial Decree for the implementation of the Bilateral Fund.

The above reporting on the Bilateral Fund and the Workplan, to be included in the Strategic Report 2020, was approved by the members of the JCBF under a written procedure on 29 September 2020.

## 6. Management and implementation

### **a. Management and control systems (MCS)**

In accordance with Article 5.7 of the EEA Grants Regulation 2014-2021, the National Focal Point drafted the Management and Control System - MCS at the national level and submitted to FMO the Detailed Description on 21 February 2019, while a thorough and extensive exchange of feedback and remarks followed the submission. The MCS at the national level was in the agenda of Annual meeting 2019 with a presentation on the status and developments. Eventually FMO acknowledged Detailed Description / MCS at the national level on 17 December 2019. Following the acknowledgement, the respective Joint Ministerial Decree was issued and came into effect on 19 February 2020 (Official Gazette: B' 526/2020). The complementary to JMD-MCS, Manual of Procedures came into effect with an initial pilot phase option. Results and conclusions of the pilot phase lead to minor adjustments/clarifications in the structure and content of the Manual. The updated version of Manual of Procedures alongside the JMD-MCS will be uploaded to the official website [www.eeagrants.gr](http://www.eeagrants.gr) in October 2020.

Following the publication of the MCS at the national level and in accordance with Art. 5.7, par.2, the 3 programmes with a signed Programme Agreement in the reference year 2019-2020 proceeded with their Management and Control System at the programme level. The Programme GR E – Energy submitted the Management and Control System at the programme level to NFP on 16 April 2020, it was approved by the NFP on 11 May 2020 and confirmed by Audit Authority Report and Opinion on 2 June 2020. The Programme GR D – Water Management submitted the Management and Control System at the programme level to the NFP, on 22 May 2020. The NFP approved and forwarded to the Audit Authority for Report and Opinion on 26 May 2020. Further exchanges and clarifications took place on the request of the Audit Authority. On 8 September 2020 the Management and Control System was approved by the Audit Authority.

The GR G – Asylum and Migration submitted the Management and Control System at the programme level to the NFP on 26 May 2020. The NFP reviewed the document in comparison with provisions in MCS at the national and in common elaboration of clarifications needed for predefined projects. After a course of cooperation between the NFP and the PO which included online meetings, exchange of q&a, new templates, instructions and clarifications, the NFP sent its feedback and remarks for the revision of the document on 16 September 2020.

As foreseen in the MCS at the national level, a Ministerial Decree was issued for each programme with a signed Programme Agreement in the reference year 2019-2020. The Ministerial Decree stands for the Programme Implementation Agreement of Art. 6.8, it transposes the Programme Agreement, sets the terms and conditions of the national mechanism of funding and initiates implementation. The MDs were published with the following order:

- The MD-PIA for Programme GR D – Water Management was published and came into effect on 21 March 2020 (Official Gazette: B' 975/2020)
- The MD-PIA for the Programme GR E – Energy was published and came into effect on 21 March 2020 (Official Gazette: B' 974/2020),
- The MD-PIA for GR G – Asylum and Migration was published and came into effect on 21 April 2020 (Official Gazette: B' 1497/2020)
- The MD for the Bilateral Fund was published and came into effect on 18 May 2020 (Official Gazette: B' 1896/2020)
- The MD for the Technical Assistance was published and came into effect on 19 June 2020 (Official Gazette: B' 2440/2020)
- The MD-PIA for GR B – Roma Empowerment and Inclusion was published and came into effect on 21 September 2020 (Official Gazette: B' 4027/2020)

- The MD-PIA for GR F – Food Governance is in the process to be issued and published in October 2020.

For the training of the entities involved with implementation (Programme Operators and Project Promoters), a 4day online seminar is scheduled from 19 to 22 October 2020 on the MCS at the national level, the Manual of Procedures as well as to the use of the corresponding MIS (OPS). The seminar will be organized, as per foreseen competence, by MOD sa in coordination with the National Focal Point and the Special Service for MIS OPS. Additionally, helpdesk and support is provided by the National Focal Point and the Special Service for MIS OPS to all involved parties on daily basis, since the publication of the JMD and the MDs.

#### ***b. Irregularities***

In accordance with Chapter 12 of the EEA Grants Regulation 2014-2021 for Irregularities, the MCS incorporates a dedicated Operational Area consisted by Procedures, including workflows and templates, for the management of irregularities.

The MCS identifies irregularities following the definitions of the EEA FM 2014-2021 Regulation. Identification of the irregularities is expected through the MCS administrative Procedures at the different phases-elements of implementation as well as through audits and complaints.

The MCS recognizes that Irregularities may refer to cases not identified as fraud. To examine however, case by case whether any of the above infringements constitutes possible fraud, it includes at every step of the procedure, provision for the examination of this possibility.

In the reference period 2019-2020, there were not identified, managed and reported any irregularities.

#### ***c. Complaints***

Alike irregularities and in accordance with Article 12.7 of the EEA Grants Regulation 2014-2021, the MCS incorporates a dedicated Procedure, including workflow and templates for the management of complaints.

A Complaints mechanism is set up which follows the pattern of first assessment at the filing service, and then further examination by PO, AA. In case of suspicion of fraud, the case is forwarded to judiciary authorities. In the respective Procedure in the Manual of Procedures, the roles and responsibilities of the involved authorities are demonstrated in the context of Complaints mechanism.

In the reporting period 2019-2020, there were not filed, managed and reported any complaints.

#### ***d. Audit***

As per Art. 5.5, the Audit Authority (EDEL) has drawn-up an audit strategy that spreads throughout the programming period 2014-2021, lays down general and specific objectives and incorporates the methodology that is necessary for its implementation.

The audit strategy covers all the programmes of EEA Grants for which EDEL is the Audit Authority and sets out the audit methodology, the sampling method for audits on projects and the indicative planning of audits to ensure that audits are spread evenly throughout the programming period. Audits are

performed according to EDEL's Audit Manual that meets the requirements of the international standards on auditing.

## 7. Communication

The Communication strategy for the EEA Grants 2014-2021 in Greece of Article 3.2 was discussed at the Annual meeting 2019, where the emphasis was put on the importance of the update and operation of the website and the organization of the launching event, both of which were planned to be realized in early 2020. In line with the Donors and FMO comments, the NFP planned for all the necessary actions regarding public procurement for the design and operation of the new EEA Grants website, but the pandemic disarray led to a delay in the procedures which finally were completed on 14 July 2020. By October 2020 the website is expected to be in full operation. Respectively, pandemic restrictions did not allow the organization of the launching or any matchmaking events, which were postponed without being clear when it might be possible for them to be implemented. The organization of the launching event will be on the Agenda of the Annual meeting 2020 for discussion and decision.

In March 2020, a new officer recruited at the NFP, was designated as responsible person for the communication and publicity activities, as per Art. 3.2 of the Regulation and a new momentum was achieved for the implementation of the Communication strategy and activities.

The unprecedented situation, caused by the restrictions of the pandemic, had a serious negative impact mainly on the communication activities at the national level as well as at the programme level. To mitigate the negative impact, the NFP revised and submitted to the FMO a new updated version of the Communication Strategy, henceforth CS. This Strategy is based on the previous one, but highlights a direction towards the increased use of digital tools, such as virtual summits, and social media campaigns. Due to the current socioeconomic environment, communication finds its realization through the internet and the social media platforms. A revised CS can be used as a flexible communicative tool which facilitates communication needs both on strategic and on the financial level, so as the NFP (and subsequently the POs and the FOs) will be coherent and able to carry on with their communication activities. A revised, balanced budget was also introduced in this CS to showcase the flexibility between the use of the offline communication tools and their online counterparts, in order for the NFP to be prepared against the uncertainty of the pandemic outbreaks. The revised CS was submitted to the FMO on 17 July 2020.

Furthermore, as soon as the coronavirus lockdown was lifted in May 2020, the NFP sent all the POs and the FOs a guidance document where the key points of the CS were highlighted, along with a simple questionnaire about the appointed Comms officers and the issues the POs and the FOs dealt with which needed to be resolved. As a follow up, the NFO visited and had meetings in person with the POs and FOs Comms officers, in order to be informed about the situation at hand, the lockdown aftermath, and the general communication plans drafted and /or adopted.

For information and training purposes, a one-day informative online meeting was held on 8 July 2020, organized by the NFP, in collaboration with the FMO and the Norwegian Embassy, with more than 30 participants from the POs and the FOs. At the meeting, valuable presentations were delivered regarding the Communication Regulatory framework, the way a Communication Strategy should be approached in the light of the coronavirus ramifications (and revised if needed), the EEA Grants ecosystem, etc. The FOs were also invited to present their case studies. To conclude with the meeting, the NFP forwarded the presentations and all relevant material related to the Communication and guidelines as defined by the FMO to the participants, alongside a questionnaire for the most important issued related to Communication as received by the POs and FOs.

In the same line, a Comms workshop took place on 6 October 2020, organized by the NFP in coordination with the FMO and the Norwegian embassy.

## 8. Monitoring and evaluation

### a. Monitoring

In the reference period 2019-2020 the main monitoring procedures and milestones were as follows:

**Amendment of the MoU:** Certain institutional and organizational changes related to the government change and reshuffle in July 2019, affected the provisions of the EEA Grants 2014-2021 MoU, namely: transfer of relevant competences from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Digital Governance, launch of National Authority for Transparency as the new national competent authority in the field of fight against corruption, merge of Ministry of Migration with the Ministry of Citizen protection, launch of the General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and Fight Against Poverty, which took over as the sectorial policy maker for the Roma related policy. To follow up, the NFP organized and coordinated consultation of involved national authorities, while the issue was also discussed at the Annual meeting 2019, where it was proposed and agreed the 1st amendment of the MoU.

According to this amendment of the MoU, changes that affected Programme F- Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, and Transparency were that: a) new Programme Operator was designated the Special Service Management and Implementation Authority for ICT, b) Project Promoter of predefined project 1 was designated the General Directorate for Digital Governance and the Simplification of Procedures /Ministry of Digital Governance, c) Project Promoter of predefined project 2 was designated the National Authority for Transparency as the new competent national authority for the fight against corruption. For the Programme B - Roma Inclusion and Empowerment, amendment was that new strategic partner as national policy maker was defined the General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and Fight against Poverty. For the Programme G - Asylum and Migration changed the definition of the national migration policy maker to reflect the new institutional setup.

**MCS at the national level in effect:** (As in relevant section 5.a of the current Strategic Report)

**MD-PIAs in effect** for all programmes, Technical Assistance and Bilateral Fund: (As in relevant section 5.a of the current Strategic Report)

**Midterm review and reserve allocation proposal:** Under the instructions of and in coordination with FMO, the procedure at the national level is consisted of the following steps/milestones: a) Cutoff date for the midterm review is 30 September 2020, b) In preparation, NFP sent on 16 June 2020 a letter by the General Secretary of Public Investments & NSRF to all POs containing a description of the procedure of MTR and a template to fill in for every programme, with feedback deadline by August 31. POs sent feedback on time, c) NFP reviewed the data from the POs and organized meetings with POs in October 2020, d) a first draft of the Greek proposal will be drafted prior of the Annual meeting to be discussed according to the agenda. NFP will further proceed according to the conclusions of the Annual meeting.

**Declaration and verification of expenditures and IFRs submissions** were implemented for the preparation phase expenditures in programmes (except Good Governance) and in Technical Assistance.

**Forecasts** submitted as foreseen in the Regulation and according to the strong recommendation of the Donors at the Annual meeting 2019 for accurate and realistic forecasts, to the best possible degree.

**Overall progress monitoring, coordination and support** where applicable and/or necessary

**Submission of Strategic report and organization of the Annual meeting 2020.**

**Coordination of the JCBF and preparation of implementation** for the selected initiatives of the Bilateral Fund

**Training seminars and helpdesk** were implemented in the reference period as follows: a) a 4days/modules online Results & Evaluation training was implemented by and in coordination with FMO for the POs and FOs, on 18-20 and on 25 May 2020, b) an informative meeting/training was implemented by NFP in coordination with FMO and the Norwegian Embassy for the programmes communication obligations and activities, on 8 July 2020, c) a 4 days/modules online training seminar is

scheduled to be organized by MOD sa with the instruction of NFP and Special Service MIS for the MCS at the national level, the manual of procedures and the MIS, on 19-22 October 2020, d) an online 1day comms workshop took place on 6 October 2020, in coordination of the NFP with FMO and the Norwegian Embassy for the use of Design manual and the communication tools, e) NFP, the Certifying Authority and the Special Service for the MIS provide the POs with on-going helpdesk and support for all needs of implementation.

#### ***b. Evaluation***

By October 2020 the Evaluation plan has been drafted but it has not yet reached its implementation phase. With the acknowledgement of Evaluation plan by FMO, its implementation will start preparation in February 2021, so that it proceeds with the first phase of midterm formative evaluation with the first 3 programmes that complete one year of implementation in March-April 2021 (D-Water management, E-Energy, G-Asylum & Migration.)

## **9. Issues for the Annual meeting 2020**

The Annual meeting 2020 has been scheduled to take place on Tuesday 26 November 2020. The issues to be included in the agenda are as follows:

1. Status of Programmes: Progress and outstanding issues of implementation, timeframe, risks and deficiencies, planning and goals for the year ahead
2. Status of the Bilateral Fund: Progress of implementation, workplan implementation, timeframe, planning and goals for the year ahead
3. Midterm review and reserve allocation: Procedure and results of the NFP-PO consultation, NFP assessment, general directions and criteria for the reserve allocation
4. Communication -Publicity: Communication strategy revision, Covid 19 pandemic adjustments, launching events and other related issues
5. Organizational issues of NFP – Technical Assistance: Staffing of NFP and new Head of Service, new premises, implementation of eligible actions/ expenditure
6. AOB, according to issues raised by Donors and the participants