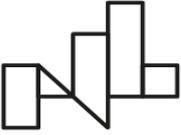


Iceland 
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Norway grants

EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021

Strategic Report 2020-2021 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 2020 to October 2021.

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. Greece, in the past year, had not major political changes, it was affected alike countries in Europe and worldwide by the pandemic at both social and economic level and at the same time it was a year of substantial progress in the setup of financial mechanisms and tools for the years ahead.

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 made its initial project contracts and steps, thus forming the base for the effects and results to unfold in the next years.

Status of Programmes section presents the status and the developments for each programme separately. All programmes operated by Greek national authorities entered the in-reference period having a signed Programme Agreement as well a Programme Implementation Agreement, in effect by Ministerial Decree. Thus in this period, programmes moved to the phase of open calls and invitations to project promoters for the predefined projects. Three programmes have completed this phase with project contracts in effect. Two other programmes have not issued all project contracts but they are all at a stage of advanced preparation in order to conclude this phase shortly. During this period took place also the allocation of additional funds from the reserve to three programmes, chosen according to the results of the mid-term.

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 approved the selection of 3 more strategic initiatives, bringing the total number to 9 selected initiatives. Also JCBF initiated an Open call which was drafted and elaborated by NFP in cooperation with JCBF. The approval by JCBF and the publication of the call is expected to be completed in October 2021.

Management and implementation section presents the activities related to the Management and Control System at the national level and of the associated Manual of Procedures. All procedures foreseen in the MCS such as monitoring, controls, public procurements, verifications, financing, reporting and IFRs, irregularities and audits were implemented as applicable.

Communication section presents the progress and developments in the implementation of the Communication strategy at the national level, as adjusted also to the unprecedented conditions of Covid19 pandemic. Activities included inter alia networking, cooperation and training between the different entities and staff related to the Grants, continuous and dynamic presence in the social media, participation to EU Regions week 2021 as well as to Thessaloniki International Fair, the most important exhibition event in Greece and a major annual political milestone.

Monitoring section presents the main responsibilities and tasks of the NFP in monitoring progress of programmes, bilateral fund and technical assistance.

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

The issues to be discussed at the Annual meeting, scheduled to be held on 18 November 2021 reflect the issues of the respective sections of the current Strategic Report.

2. Political, economic and social context

In the reporting period 2020-2021, at the political level, Greece, had a stable and continuous government and administration context without elections, extended reshuffles or other major changes. Thus, although this reporting period falls in its entirety within the Covid19 pandemic crisis, the stability and continuity at the policy level contributed to a constructive year of development planning and setup, as well as to consistent mitigation of the crisis impact at the economic and social level.

As reported in the previous years¹, the Greek economy, after the decade long crisis, returned to recovery and growth with a 2% growth rate in 2018 that reached up to 2,2% by 2019. Unemployment – although still high – edged down from 27,5% in 2013 to around 17% in 2019.² Thus before the pandemic crisis breaks out the economy was expanding by nearly 2% for about three years and had started to gradually restore confidence.³

The COVID-19 pandemic however exerted strong pressure on global economic activity throughout the reporting period. In Greece, by the end of 2020, the recession that started from the beginning of the pandemic continued, while the state budget was facing reduced incomes and divergence from its objectives. Significant impact on the Greek economy had especially the tourism sector as only 1 in 5 travelers in 2019 came to Greece in 2020, a reduction by 77,3%. Despite the crisis, however, at the end of 2020 there were also some positive trends. The Economic Climate Index recorded a slight increase in the fourth quarter of 2020 compared to the immediately preceding quarter (91,6 from 90,3 units), while also there was a marginal reduction in unemployment, compared to the third quarter of 2019 as well as to the second trimester of 2020.

By the end of first semester of 2021, the status and trends were reflecting optimism, also based on the unfolding vaccination of the general population. By this time the global economy was recovering steadily, with growth rates already strong in key areas. Significant contribution to the positive trends had also the tackling measures for the economic recovery that the governments developed. In this period, Greece saw a significant weakening of the recession, by halting the decline in investment. State budget was still facing reduced incomes against its objectives, entrepreneurship however had started to present stability, in response to the state support measures. Respectively, the Economic Climate Index showed a significant improvement, compared to the immediately preceding quarter (105,1 from 93,2 units). Also, Consumer Confidence showed significant recovery, compared to the first quarter of the year (-27,5 units from -43,0 units).

At the policy level of planning, the challenges and opportunities for Greece are considered to be:⁴

1. Continuation of sanitary protection at high rates
2. Implementation of reforms of the:
 - Insurance system
 - Bankruptcy Code
 - Labor market
 - Digital transformation
 - Circular economy
 - Sustainable financial management

¹ All macroeconomic data of the report derive from the quarterly reports on the Greek economy, as published from the Foundation for Economic & Industrial Research (IOBE) at http://iobe.gr/default_en.asp

² Regional policy for Greece post-2020_OECD

³ OECD Economic Surveys: Greece 2020

⁴ Report on the Greek Economy (first quarter 2021), Foundation for Economic & Industrial Research (IOBE)

- Consolidation of an active banking system

On the asylum and migration front, Greece is reporting a significant de-escalation of arrivals and of challenges associated with the asylum and migration crisis. In particular, in the first seven months of 2021 arrivals flows were reduced by 60% compared to the first seven months of 2020.⁵ In July 2020, a total of 85.618 asylum seekers resided in all the structures managed or supervised by the Ministry of Immigration and Asylum, while in July 2021 resided 46.380, a decrease by 46%. Especially in the number of inhabitants on the islands, the respective decrease was recorded by up to 79%. At the same time, 7.114 people left for either European or third countries through the mechanisms of deportation, return and relocation of third-country nationals. As regards to the asylum and appeals process, the pending cases (in A and B grade) recorded a decrease of 48%. The pending applications in A and B grade reached a total of 51.669, when in July 2020 it was 99.108. In the islands, the pending in the A degree is a total of 6.056, a percentage of 13% of the total pending, while in July 2020 the pending reached 33.874 and constituted 37% of the pending. To tackle the pandemic risks, the Ministry of Asylum and Migration adopted an Actionplan for the prevention of virus spread, while measures, such as relocation of vulnerable people, isolation and medical care for those infected as well as vaccination were implemented.

General framework of development planning

The year in reference 2020-2021 was very active and constructive for Greece, in terms of development strategy, as well as of financial mechanisms' setup. Based on the Strategy document entitled "Development Plan for the Greek Economy"⁶, as it was presented in the previous year's EEA Grants Strategic Report, the central goal for the Greek economy planning in the coming years, is the systematic increase of productivity and extroversion as well as the closer connection of production with research and innovation. In particular, the economic and political priorities of the country are:

- increase in investment and exports as a percentage of GDP
- strengthening wage labor and reducing the informal economy
- investment in education and knowledge
- increase in the size of Greek companies
- promotion of cutting-edge technology, innovation and digitization
- achieving ambitious environmental goals
- support for weak households
- strengthening basic research through the removal of anchorages in universities
- incentives to boost innovation
- radical upgrade of the training system for the unemployed and employed
- continuation and deepening of digital reform in public administration
- modernization of education at all levels
- restructuring of the health system with priority on digitization
- energy upgrade of buildings
- shifting to renewable energy resources by reducing transition costs and supporting local communities during de-lignification.

This Development Plan has been a key reference document for the strategic choices in the setup of the country's Investments programs and financial mechanisms agreements. The developments and progress

⁵ Newsletter, July 2021, Ministry of Asylum and Migration

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.

regarding the country's main financial mechanisms and tools in the reporting period 2020-2021, are presented in the following sections. Covid19 crisis tackling measures are included in their design and justification.

European Union cohesion policy and the National Strategic Reference Framework-NSRF – Programming period 2021-2027

The objectives of the EU Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 are⁷:

- **A Smarter Europe**, through innovation, digitization, economic transformation and support for small and medium-sized enterprises
- **A Greener Europe** without carbon dioxide, implementing the Paris Agreement and investing in energy, renewable energy and combating climate change
- **A More Connected Europe**, with strategic transport networks and digital networks
- **A More Social Europe**, which implements the European pillar of social rights and supports quality employment, education, skills, social inclusion and equal access to healthcare
- **A Europe Closer to Citizens**, with support for locally developed development strategies and sustainable urban development across the EU.

At the national level, the priorities based on the above Policy Objectives and set through the National Strategic Reference Framework-NSRF are as follows⁸:

1. **"A smarter Europe through the promotion of innovative and smart economic transformation"**
The main goal for the Greek economy is the systematic increase of productivity and extroversion as well as the closer connection of production with technology and innovation. The turn of the economy in this direction will take place in a way compatible with the social and environmental goals of the country.
2. **"A greener low carbon and resilient Europe through the promotion of clean and equitable energy transitions, green and blue investments, the circular economy, climate change adaptation and the prevention and management of policy crisis"**
The main policy priorities in the field of energy concern the improvement of energy efficiency in all sectors, the promotion of autonomy through the use of RES for self-generation and storage systems, the use of RES for heating / cooling, the transition of islands to clean energy, the strengthening of cross-border interconnection projects, the upgrading of transmission and distribution networks, the development of energy control centers and "smart" energy systems and storage at the local level, the promotion of fishing practices for low carbon dioxide emissions. A more interconnected Europe through enhanced mobility and regional ICT interconnections infrastructure and transport systems.
3. **"A more social Europe through the implementation of the European pillar of social rights"**
Central focus of the interventions is a more social Greece through investment in human resources and ensuring equal access to quality services and goods.
4. **"A Europe closer to its citizens, through the promotion of sustainable and integrated development of urban, rural and coastal areas, as well as through the support of local initiatives"**
Integrated spatial strategies using the tools of Integrated Spatial Investments will be applied in areas that will meet at least the criteria that will be determined by the national authorities and will be mentioned in the Programs.

⁷ EU budget for the future at a glance https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/budget-may2018-new-framework-glance_en.pdf

⁸ National Strategic Reference Framework-NSRF https://www.espa.gr/el/Documents/2127/Etairiko_Symfwno_Perifereiakis_Anptyxis_2021-2027.pdf

Specific Objective for the Just Transition Fund The equitable development transition of lignite areas is based, according to a relevant action plan, on five pillars: clean energy, smart agricultural production, sustainable tourism, handicrafts-industry-trade and technology-education. The planned actions / investments will be in line with the territorial transition plans, which will provide detailed information on the needs of economic diversification, acquisition of new skills and environmental rehabilitation.

The National Strategic Reference Framework-NSRF entitled "Corporate Regional Development Pact 2021-2027" reflects and incorporates these development priorities of the country. The planned programs included in NSRF are 8 sectorial (Human resources and social cohesion, Competitiveness, Digital transformation, Environment and climate change, Transports, Just development transition, Civil protection, Technical Assistance) and 13 regional, one per region. The total budget of the agreement sums up to approx.20bn Euros (26bn Euros, the national contribution included).

Greece officially submitted the National Strategic Reference Framework to the European Commission on 12 July 2021. The European Commission approved the NSRF on 29 July 2021, as the first one among the Member States.

"Next Generation EU" and other EU financial tools for the Covid19 crisis recovery

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and in order to tackle its socio-economic impact, the European Council and the European Parliament in following up, have agreed on the basis of a Commission proposal, on a major recovery package for the period 2021-2027, which combines the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) with the new recovery instrument "Next Generation EU". The central idea of the European Recovery Package is based on four policy objectives:

- Promoting the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the Union
- Strengthening economic and social resilience
- Reducing the social and economic effects of the crisis
- Supporting green and digital transformation

EU will borrow funds from the capital markets under the new "Next Generation EU" tool⁹, in order to finance the recovery effort and to provide Member States with the means to meet the challenges posed by the COVID pandemic -19. This will allow the transfer of new increased resources to programs such as the Recovery and Resilience Facility - RRF, REACT-EU, Horizon Europe, InvestEU, Rural Development, the Just Transition Fund, RescEU and others. The Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) was established to address the COVID-19 crisis and support the transition to a green and digital economy. The Recovery and Sustainability Facility with a total budget of € 672.5 billion (of which € 312.5 billion in grants and € 360 billion in loans) will support reforms and investment, especially in green and digital technologies, with a lasting impact on productivity and the resilience of the Union economy.

The development planning of the country is complemented by the implementation of interventions, whose financial support is provided through the resources that will be allocated under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

National Development Program (EPA)

⁹ All relevant documentation at https://europa.eu/next-generation-eu/index_en

Alongside the co-funded financial mechanisms, the National Development Program (EPA as an acronym in Greek) ¹⁰for the period 2021-2025 was completed and adopted also in the year of reference 2020-2021. EPA establishes an integrated system for the planning, management, monitoring and control of the interventions financed from the national resources of the Public Investment Program (PIP). The development goals of the EPA 2021-2025 are based on five pillars: Smart Growth, Green Growth, Social Growth, Infrastructure Development and Extroversion. The provisions of the EPA also influence the design of the NSRF and the Programs, seeking to develop synergies and complementarity. The National Development Program for the programming period 2021-2025 has a budget of 10bn Euros. It was approved in 2020 and started implementation on July, 1 2021 with the gradual activation, until December 31, 2021 of the individual Sectoral and Regional Development Programs that make it up.

¹⁰ All National Development Program documentation is available at <http://epa.gov.gr/>

3. Effects of the Grants

Effects of the EEA Grants at the strategic level are identified 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. These effects may interact, conform, adopt and contribute to the developments and to unforeseen situations in the country and beyond as they unfold during the period. In the reporting period the effects of the grants have been gradually iterated in terms of implementation and communicated. The presentation of the Grants in the context of Thessaloniki International Fair this year was a significant opportunity for awareness of their objectives, anticipated results and effects.

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.). Additional activities funded by the reserve resources allocated to the programme in the current reporting period will contribute further to the objectives of the programme and to its greater impact and effect.

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. Additional projects funded by the reserve resources allocated to the programme in the current reporting period will contribute further to the objectives of the programme and to its greater impact and effect.

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. Additional projects funded by the reserve resources allocated to the programme in the current reporting period will contribute further to the objectives of the programme and to its greater impact and effect.

Programme F for Good Governance, Accountable Institutions and 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 2020 to October 2021, programmes operated by Greek national authorities, kick started implementation. Open calls and invitations to predefined projects promoters were issued and project proposals were submitted for evaluation and selection. By October 2021, in all 5 programmes, 21 project contracts have been awarded, while the remaining projects are imminent for selection and funding award by the end of the year 2021. In this reporting period took place also the mid-term review by FMC/FMO, with the input by the national level. Based on this, 3 out of 5 programmes received additional funds from the reserve. In general, in this period, the majority of the Grants had a progress according to their design and timeline, while there are cases which face delays and challenges to be addressed and recovered.

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

Programme B - Roma Inclusion and Empowerment

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
IPO: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (EU FRA)	Budget: 7ME (EEA Grants: 5ME, National co financing: 2ME). Additional allocation from the reserve 750KE to be included in modification of PA (EEA Grants reserve 500KE, National co financing: 200KE)
National Programme Partner: General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and Fight Against Poverty (General Secretariat for Social Solidarity), Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs	

In the reporting period 2020-2021, the **Roma Inclusion and Empowerment** programme developments and progress were according to planning with slight time deviation.

Predefined project 1 – Task Force: The implementation of the PDP1 followed the foreseen phases, according to the MCS. On 5 October 2020 the Programme Operator addressed the call (invitation) to the predefined Project Promoter (Special Service “NSRF Executive Structure”, Division of Social Solidarity) for the submission of the project’s proposal. The Project promoter submitted the proposal on December 7. As foreseen in the Programme Agreement, the evaluation was carried out by an external entity. Subsequently the Project Contract was issued on 27 January 2021.

For the implementation of the project, the Project Promoter of the PDP1 issued:

- i) a Call for Tender for staff recruitment on 28 April 2021 for the Task Force Units. The first stage of the appraisal process was completed in late August. On September 17 the Provisional Table of Rankings and Results was published, and the procedure entered the stage of objections from the rejected candidates. The contracts are expected by the end of October.
- ii) a Call for Tender for the provision of equipped and furnished offices on July 20. The tender was fruitless, as no bids were submitted. A new call will be published soon.
- iii) a Call for Tender for the provision of services of technical support to the PP on June 25. The relevant contract will be soon signed.
- iv) a Call for Tender for car leasing was published on May 28. The tender was fruitless, as no bids were submitted. A new call will be published soon.

The Programme Operator pre-examined (proactive controls) documents related to the above invitations and public procurement, asked for corrections and modifications and gave approval, as per the instructions of the MCS and the Manual of Procedures.

For the Task Force staff recruitment about 200 applications were submitted. Evaluation and selection procedures followed the respective national legal framework procedures. By October 2021, the Task

Force staff recruitment is imminent to conclude with the award of respective 25 contracts with the selected applicants. The public procurement for the Task Force support (offices, equipment, etc.) is also expected to conclude in November 2021. The Task Force is expected to be in full operation by the end of November 2021. At the time being, no major risks are identified for the implementation of the project.

Predefined project 2 – Katerini housing settlement: For the implementation of the PDP2 the Project Promoter (Municipality of Katerini) submitted a Proposal on 26 March 2021. It was positively evaluated and a project contract was issued on 28 May 2021. In the meantime, the Municipality of Katerini, using the financial resources of the national Public Investment Programme, issued on 28 April 2021 the Call for Tender of the technical studies for the public infrastructure works and the preparation of the location, where the housing facilities for the beneficiary Roma population will be installed. For the technical support of the Project Promoter in its tasks, the PO awarded a technical consultancy contract. The main planning for the implementation of the project is that:

- i. The technical study on the infrastructure of the settlement will be delivered within six months. The final studies are expected by February 2022.
- ii. The technical works for the infrastructure will be contracted in July 2022 and will be delivered by February 2023.
- iii. The public procurement for the housing facilities and equipment will be published in July 2022. The relocation of the beneficiaries into the housing facilities is planned to take place in spring 2023.

The project is being implemented according to its design and timeline so far. Still, although all necessary commitment and effort is dedicated for its progress, objective risks are identified for the future developments, as follows:

- a) The activities and public procurement must necessarily develop in a consecutive manner (technical study, infrastructure works, housing facilities public procurement and installation). Any delay at these different stages may affect the total timeframe within the eligibility period of the programme.
- b) The housing facilities and equipment public procurement documents must be carefully and timely elaborated and implemented, especially in terms of budgeting and costs. Given the price increases since the time that the project was initially budgeted and approved, the tendering documents and specifications must be based on a thorough and consistent market search, in order to avoid inconsistency with actual market prices and failure to attract bidders.

To mitigate the above risks, special expertise and effort must be dedicated to the public procurement procedures as well to the implementation and monitoring of the respective contracts and therefore advanced technical support is suggested and will be allocated making the best use of the PO Management Cost Actions.

Programme level: Beyond the implementation of the 2 predefined projects, at the programme level, the PO:

- Drafted and submitted to the NFP a detailed description of the Management and Control System at the programme level on 7 April 2021.
- Organized the 1st Cooperation Committee on 2 June 2021 via teleconference with simultaneous interpretation from Greek into English and vice versa.
- Submitted in April 2021 an initial proposal for the suggested activities to be funded by the reserve additional funds. The respective modification of the Programme Agreement has not been concluded by October 2021.

- Awarded contracts for the IT provider and the interpretation services to support the 1st Cooperation Committee meeting via teleconference.
- Drafted a call for tender for: a) a technical adviser and b) for publicity and communication support services to carry out the campaign of the programme.
- Submitted two IFRs with incurred expenditure related to management cost

For the year ahead, the programme plans to have the Task Force in full operation, to proceed with the calls for the three small grant schemes, the initiation of bilateral initiatives, as well as the implementation of the launching event if the pandemic restrictions allow and the implementation of communication activities.

Programme D - Water Management

Programme Operator: Executive Authority (“Special Service - Executive Structure NSRF”), Environmental Sector, Ministry of Environment and Energy	Modalities: 2 open calls, 1 small grant scheme and bilateral activities
IPO: N/A	Budget: 5ME (EEA Grants: 4ME, National co financing: 1ME) Additional allocation from the reserve 1,5ME to be included in modification of PA (EEA Grants reserve 1,2ME, National co financing: 300KE)
Donor/Other Programme Partner: N/A	

In the reporting period 2020-2021, the **Water management** programme developments and progress were according to planning with slight time deviation. It went into the implementation of the programme outputs, as follows:

Output 1.1 - Implementation of water management systems – Desalination Units: The call for the output 1.1 was published on 10 December 2020, with deadline on 26 March 2021. For the selection process there was a procedure for the assignment of independent evaluators in February- March 2021. Stage A of selection for the compliance of proposals started in April 2021. Stage B for the evaluation is expected to conclude in December 2021. The pandemic restrictions of physical presence affected and caused delays to the procedure of evaluation.

Output 1.2 - Implementation of research measures of river basin management plans: The call for the output 1.2 was published on 13 November 2020, with deadline on 11 February 2021. The selection procedure initiated with the assignment of independent evaluators in April- May 2021. Stage A evaluation started in June 2021. Evaluation is expected to conclude by the end of 2021. The pandemic restrictions of physical presence affected and caused delays to the procedure of evaluation.

Output 1.3 - Small grant scheme: The draft call for output 1.3 was sent to FMO on 17 August 2021. As an extra amount of 50.000€ from the reserve is allocated to the output, a programme agreement modification is prerequisite for the publication of the call. Therefore the SGS call is expected to be published by early 2022, as soon as a PA modification is set in effect.

Bilateral Output: Project Promoters have been invited to submit proposals for bilateral cooperation, in the context of calls for Outputs 1.1 and 1.2.

Programme level: The main communication and other developments of the programme in the reporting period were as follows:

- The launching and match-making event took place on 20 January 2021 -online, due to pandemic restrictions. Four entities from the Donor States (IFE, NIBIO, University of Iceland, Inaventa Solar) joined the event with presentations and declared their interest for bilateral relations.
- The webpage of the programme is updated regularly, according to the administrative and regulatory requirements.
- The programme has been allocated an additional amount of 1.500.00€ from the reserve. By October 2021 a procedure for the elaboration of the programme agreement modification takes place between FMO and the PO. The modification is expected by December 2021.
- The programme submitted two IFRs in the reporting period, related to Management cost activities and incurred expenditure.
- Covid-19 negative impact was obvious on the launching and match making events, restricting the physical appearance. It also restricted any possible bilateral visits before the preparations of proposals.
- Covid -19 situation also caused delays in the evaluation procedure. The procedure was adapted to the physical appearance restrictions.

In planning for the year ahead, project contracts for outputs 1.1 and 1.2. will be issued and call 1.3 will be published. All projects for calls 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 will start implementation.

Programme E - Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency

Programme Operator: Centre for Renewable Energy Sources and Saving (CRES)	Modalities: 1 open call, and bilateral activities
IPO: N/A	Budget: 10ME (EEA Grants: 7,5ME, National co financing: 2,5ME) Additional allocation from the reserve 3,3ME included in modification of PA (EEA Grants reserve 2,5ME, National co financing: 800KE)
Donor/Other Programme Partner: N/A	

In the reporting period 2020-2021, the **Energy** programme developments and progress were according to planning, as follows:

Outcome 1 – Improved energy efficiency: All outcome is addressed in one open call which was published in the previous year. In the reporting period, the call procedure was successfully completed with the selection of high quality, mature and well-structured projects. Based on the call’s project evaluation final ranking, in addition to the first 10 projects, 3 additional projects were selected for funding from the additional resources of the reserve, further promoting the programme’s objectives.

The Programme Operator followed the implementation of Stages A (compliance) and B (evaluation) of the selection process with the contribution of independent reviewers/ experts. Out of the 18 submitted project proposals, 4 were rejected in Stage A and 1 in Stage B. The overall evaluation process was supervised by the Executive Selection Team (EST) and was conducted in accordance with the Programme’s Management and Control System and the EEA Grants legal requirements. As a result, in June 2021 the Final Ranking Table of Evaluated Proposals was approved by the Board of CRES and in July 2021, the 13 project contracts were issued.

The selected projects will make use of all modern and innovative RES and Energy Efficiency technologies applied to buildings and infrastructure of significant and critical social value. These projects will contribute in the best possible way to the implementation of the Programme’s objectives and indicators. Moreover, they are in full consistency with the strategic European and national energy targets until 2030, while at the same time they will constitute a vibrant promotion and capitalization of the EEA Grants’ results. The 13 projects come from all Greek geographical areas and their implementation has already begun with the feasible and well-planned goal to be completed within the Programme’s timeframe.

Bilateral output: The Programme Operator will carry out 4 main bilateral activities which will boost and strengthen bilateral cooperation among entities from Greece and Donor States. The PO will implement the activities through partnerships in projects, visits to donor countries and meeting/workshops at each project site. Most importantly, the PO as the national competent authority for RES and Energy Saving has a high valued networking with respective and relevant entities in the donor countries and a strong list of partners. As a result, for all activities there will be cooperation with distinguished bilateral partners for sharing know-how and expertise. The project promoters of the 13 projects of the programme will be invited to participate, according to their expertise and project subject. The implementation of the bilateral output is postponed due to the pandemic restrictions and the PO will reassess the possibility of implementation by February 2022.

Programme level: The main developments at the programme level were as follows:

- The Programme Agreement modification, in relation with the additional funds from the reserve was approved by the FMO and NFP and was set in effect by modification of the MD-PIA (Official Gazette 4132 B'/09/09/2021).
- The communication plan was submitted. The plan is committed to ensure the maximum possible publicity for the Programme using all available means. The Programme's website eeares.cres.gr serves as the key communication tool, also between the PO and (potential) Project Promoters and is regularly updated in both English and Greek, in accordance with the requirements of the EEA FM 2014-21. The Programme's Open Call results were posted in the Programme's website with the announcement of the Final Ranking Table of Evaluated Proposals. Similarly, all social media accounts are updated on a regular basis.
- Covid19 restrictions did not affect the Programme implementation, despite the difficulties. All meetings were successfully conducted online. Alike other programmes and at the national level, Covid19 affected the communication activities as launching and communication events had to be postponed.
- The PO submitted 2 IFRs with incurred expenditure related to management cost

In planning for the year ahead, the PO works to monitor and ensure the effective implementation and progress of the projects, following all relevant MCS procedures. For the Bilateral activities it will prepare all necessary documentation and bilateral contacts and partnerships, aiming to initiate the activities in spring 2022. Communication activities and possibilities will be also reassessed according to pandemic developments.

Programme F - Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency

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

The programme agreement was signed on 25 September 2020 and was set in effect by Ministerial Decree-Programme Implementation Agreement on 7 December 2020 (Official Gazette B' 5355/2020). In the reporting period 2020-2021, after the MD-PIA, the programme went through an extensive preparation and elaboration process towards project contracts for the 3 predefined projects of the programme. In particular:

Predefined projects: In the reporting period the Programme Operator in close cooperation with all 3 project promoters of the predefined projects went under an extensive preparation of the different aspects of projects' implementation and of the elaboration of the project partnership agreements. All effort was made so that the partnership agreements were approved before project contract as a prerequisite of the PA. The PO issued the invitation (call) addressed to all 3 predefined project promoters on 23 March 2021 with initial deadline on 7 May 2021 which was eventually extended until May 28. The proposals were submitted accordingly. By September 2021, the evaluation has concluded but the project contracts remain pending as the project partnership agreements of all 3 projects' are imminent for conclusion and signature. The project contracts for all 3 predefined projects are expected in October 2021.

Bilateral output: The Programme Operator will issue a bilateral call by the end of 2021 along with the organization of a match making event, in close cooperation of the Embassy after the project contracts are signed and the projects implementation phase commences. To this end, the PO liaised with the Embassy of Norway in Athens for assistance regarding the actual contacts within identified organizations by the Project Promoters. The Embassy responded by communicating relevant contact details directly to the Project Promoters.

Programme level: The main developments at the programme level were as follows:

- The governance principles and operational rules of the Cooperation Committee were drafted and agreed and the 1st meeting of CC was organized in March 2021. Follow up meetings were organized at the national level.
- A call for management cost was issued on 3 February 2021. 4 projects were submitted and selected by project contract in May 2021. The 3 projects (consulting services) of the PPS account for a 20% of the total management cost of the programme indicating the commitment of the PO to support the PPs in the acceleration of the predefined projects.
- A team and a responsible person for managing fraud and risks was designated.
- The 1st IFR was submitted related to management cost.
- The Covid19 pandemic did not significantly affect the programme at this phase.
- Communication activities involved the design of a web site within the PO's site with clear indication EEA Grants brand logo and the launch of a dedicated facebook page and twitter account. Frequent updates are uploaded with interesting news and relevant information until the PDPs start to announce news or yield early results. All calls were published on the site and a library of key documents were deployed.

In the planning for the year ahead, the project contracts will be issued and the projects will start implementation according to foreseen MCS procedures. The Management and Control System at the programme level as well as the communication plan will be submitted.

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

Programme Operator: European and Development Programs Division - Ministry Of Citizen Protection (EDPD)	Modalities: 8 predefined projects, 1 small grant scheme and bilateral activities
Donor Programme Partner: Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI)	Budget: 19,4ME (EEA Grants:16,5ME, National co financing:2,9 ME)

In the reporting period 2020-2021, the programme **Asylum and Migration** issued 3 project contracts, while it went through programme agreement modifications, in order to proceed with the selection of the remaining 5 predefined projects. In particular:

Predefined projects : By November 2020 there was an open invitation (call) issued by the Programme Operator and addressed to the promoters of predefined projects 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7. Due to limited response by the project promoters, the initially published call was modified on 22 December 2020 and the submission deadline was extended for six months, until 30 June 2021. Appeals Authority (PDP1) and Asylum Service (PDP2) submitted proposals. The evaluations/appraisals were completed on 3 March 2021 and on 27 April 2021 respectively. The respective project contracts were signed on 29 March 2021 and on 28 April 2021.

On the 18 June 2021 the call was modified again; the submission deadline was extended until 30 April 2023. The current version of the active call includes predefined projects 1, 2, 5 (Greek Ombudsman) and 7 (Reception and Identification Service). PDP 3 and 6 was decided to be excluded from the call, until the relevant PA and PIA modifications was completed.

A special effort was put in the preparation and elaboration of the predefined project 7, as certain arrangements and procedures at the national level were necessary for the housing facility foreseen in the project. Eventually on 13 August 2021, Reception and Identification Service submitted its proposal. The appraisal of the Project was finalized and communicated to NFP on 10 September 2021 followed up by the project contract.

The PO published in September 2021 two new calls for proposals. The first call includes PDPs 3, 4, 6 and 8, while the second refers to the management costs of the Programme.

Programme level: The main developments in the reporting period were as follows:

- A technical modification of the Programme Agreement was approved by FMO on the 18 December 2020. In the revised document, the Conditions 1&2 of Annex I were modified, since the administrative changes within the Greek Government did not require their fulfillment for the successful implementation of the Programme. Furthermore the title of predefined project 2 and the name of the Project Promoter of predefined Project 3 were also modified.
- Another PA modification request was submitted on 16 March 2021, concerning a) PDP 4 which was divided into two separate PDPs (PDP 4 and 8) b) a new Project Promoter was included for PDP 8 (Special Secretariat for the Protection of the Unaccompanied Minors) and c) a Project Partner was included in PDP 6. The modification was approved on 26 April 2021. However, in the meantime PO received a request to change the Project Promoter of PDP 3, since according to the new organogram of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, the General Directorate of Administrative and Financial Services of the Ministry was not authorized any more to implement such projects. Provided that the Ministry of Migration and Asylum did not appoint a specific division to implement this project the Ministry of Migration and Asylum as such was designated as project promoter. The PA was amended and approved as such on 7 July 2021. In the context of the abovementioned modifications, the Programme Implementation Agreement was modified and published in the Government Gazette on 8 July 2021 and on 3 August 2021 respectively.
- The MCS at the programme level was approved by the Audit Authority on 10 June 2021
- The 5th and 6th Cooperation Committee Meetings of the Programme were held (via teleconference) on 26 March 2021 and on 29 of June 2021 respectively. The 7th Cooperation Committee Meeting will take place on 1 October 2021 (via physical presence for the Members of the Committee and remotely for the rest of the participants).

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 in critical phases of the programme modification, such as the Programme Agreement modification, the preparation of the Calls for Proposals, the preparation and the successful implementation of the Cooperation Committee Meetings and the update and evaluation of the milestones of the Programme. 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.

5. Status of bilateral funds

In the reference period November 2020-October 2021, the Bilateral Fund made progress in terms of strategic initiatives selections and open call. The Joint Committee for Bilateral Funds – JCBF selected 3 more initiatives, bringing the total number to 9 selected initiatives.

In terms of actual implementation four (4) initiatives have been completed or will be completed before the end of 2021 and two are on-going.

Despite the notable developments however, Covid19 restrictions in travelling and in personal meeting and cooperation had a serious impact on the implementation of the selected initiatives. All six initiatives under implementation have relied only on distance and online activities, while two other initiatives expressed concerns and actual difficulties to proceed with their activities, especially due to their bilateral character.

The initiatives approved or under implementation are:

TITLE	Implementing Entity (donor or beneficiary state entity):	Partner(s)	Allocation	Short description
1./Bilateral activities at the national level	National Focal Point (NFP)		€ 80.000	An initiative based on lessons learned from the previous period and the recognized need for an available and flexible budget line to fund timely and without administration burdens individual activities such as one trip or a small scale event. In the future, if there is a need for an initiative by the NFP on a specific targeted activity that requires a budget of more than 60.000€, then a separate, distinct initiative will be proposed.
2./Transmissions	Onassis Foundation	ULTIMA Festival	€ 284.400	The project is in the field of culture and arts, focusing on music. With its actions such as university exchanges, sound art residencies, community and schools' art projects, devised production, and public art programmes it aims to enhance bilateral collaboration of artists, university music departments, and other entities related to the music and art scene. (The main activity is postponed)
3./Youth Employment and Gender Equality: Mobilizing human capital for sustainable growth in Greece	Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP)	Fafo Research Foundation	€ 119.077	The difficulties of young people and women to access the labor market in Greece deprive the country's economy of the labor potential of some of the most dynamic segments of Greek society. Given the urgent need to address the output gap produced by the crisis and reform the national growth model towards innovation and extroversion, mobilization of and investment in Greece's human capital is of paramount importance for Greece's economic future. In this context, the aim of the proposed initiative is twofold: (a) document and analyse the conditions of the Greek labour market and examine the main barriers that constrain access for the young people, emphasising gender aspects of such barriers; and (b) formulate appropriate policy proposals on how to facilitate the access of young people to the Greek labor market, including specific recommendations on how to overcome gender-related barriers. The project will seek to benefit from and utilize knowledge transfer, experience, and best practices from Norway and other Nordic countries. (To conclude in October 2021)

4./Necessary legislative adjustments to promote offshore wind energy in Greece	Hellenic Wind Energy Association ELETAEN	Norwea	€ 25.000	To develop a partnership between Greek and Norwegian actors that concretely collaborate to produce a comparative analysis of regulatory frameworks for floating offshore wind and, based on this, prepare draft input to legal documentation for offshore floating wind in Greece, with all the critical adjustments/modifications of Greek legislation to occur, to facilitate the development of offshore wind projects in Greece. The initiative will attract international offshore wind energy players to invest in Greece and allow the competent Authorities to issue the necessary licenses for offshore wind projects. (Concluded)
5./Head to Head, a bilateral exhibition project between Greece and Iceland	Kling & Bang gallerí ehf, Iceland	A-Dash Space; ASFA / Athens School of Fine Art; Kling & Bang gallerí ehf, Iceland; The Icelandic Art Centre	€ 20.000	<p>HEAD to HEAD is a bilateral exhibition project connecting the two unique, dynamic, and ever-expanding artist-run visual art scenes of Athens, Greece, and Reykjavik, Iceland. The project aims to establish an energetic connection between Greek and Icelandic artists and spaces and boost peripheral European cultural collaboration. The project's execution will be based on an exchange and pairing of Greek and Icelandic artists resulting in exhibitions in both places.</p> <p>The initial phase of the project will be taking place in Athens in November 2021, where Greek artists will be paired with Icelandic artists exhibiting together in various artist-run spaces in Athens. The project reaches its first peak on the opening weekend 5 - 14th of November 2021, where a variety of exhibitions, performances and events will take place in spaces and venues all over Athens.</p> <p>The second phase of the project will take place in Reykjavik in the fall of 2023 with a parallel exhibition program in various artist-run exhibition spaces around Reykjavik, bringing Greek artists to Iceland and connecting them with the local art scene, both artists, curators, collectors and venues.</p> <p>Further info in the link attached: https://a-dash.space/HEAD-to-HEAD (on-going)</p>
6./ProGender: A Digital Hub on Gender, the COVID-19 crisis and its Aftermath	Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences	RECollective; Stin Priza; Norwegian University for Science and Technology (NTNU); Institute for Gender, Equality and	€ 135,493	ProGender aims to promote bilateral activities between Iceland, Greece, and Norway by creating a digital hub devoted to gender perspectives of COVID-19 and its aftermath. The activities that will be carried out within the hub will be online and promote gender perspectives, analyses, and policy responses to the covid19 crisis through a set of actions and initiatives that enhance cooperation and exchange between Greek, Icelandic and Norwegian institutions. (On-going)
7./Energy Governance for Sustainable Development (Norway-Greece ENERGO)	University of Ioannina, Department of Economics, Greece	National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Department of Economics, Political Economy of Sustainable Development Laboratory, Greece; Norwegian	€ 110,400	"Energy Governance for Sustainable Development" (ENERGO) aims at the advancement of scientific evidence-based mutual knowledge development. The project fosters bilateral relationships, research cooperation and long-term strategic partnership between partners from the donor and the beneficiary states. ENERGO further supports capacity building and continuous collaboration by bringing together a multi-disciplinary team of experts, from Norway and Greece, to systematically analyze common challenges and solutions. (On-going)

		Institute of International Affairs (NUPI)		
8./Review of Norwegian Oil & Gas Industry's Transformation during the Energy Transition and its Application to Greece	Hellenic Hydrocarbon Resources Management S.A.	SINTEF AS by its institute SINTEF Digital	€ 39,660	The aim for the collaboration of Norway and Greece on this topic is in exploring how current hydrocarbon activities in Greece can be supplemented with "green" energy solutions, with a particular focus on the areas of a) carbon capture and storage and b) offshore wind energy. This will involve a comprehensive review of the successful transformation of the Norwegian Oil and Gas sector in the last few years, and application of techniques and lessons learned into the Greek energy sector. (To start in October 2021)
9./"Winds of Change": Can Renewable Energy shape a new geo-economic paradigm for the EU, Greece and its Neighbourhood?	Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP)	Alma Economics; Norwea	€ 77,590	The proposed "Winds of Change" project aims to produce thorough analysis; initiate discussions and a constructive dialogue between key stakeholders; and build bridges of mutual trust and collaboration on green transition and the deployment of renewable energy (RE) sources, notably offshore wind energy, for a new energy model for Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean. Our proposal outlines a two-pronged approach: a regional dimension of a connected RE production and distribution in Greece's neighbourhood; and a domestic dimension with a focused socio-economic impact on offshore wind energy power. Both strands of work will provide evidence and substantiated analysis to. For the domestic Greek socio-economic impact study, we believe it is timely in context of the anticipated incoming regulatory framework for transition of the energy model, whilst at the same time twins with the work already conducted by ELTAEAN under its EEA grant. (To conclude in 'October 2021)

In detail:

The Joint Committee held its 4th meeting on 13 April 2021, 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):

1. The JCBF approves the proposed initiative no 9 (ELIAMEP) on the condition that the promoter provides a new version of the proposal including a Norwegian partner and a revised budget. (UPDATE : On April 22 a new version of the project has been sent to the NFP and a Norway Partner has been designated :NORWEA)
2. The JCBF approves the selection of the proposed initiative no8
3. The JCBF approves the proposed initiative no7 (University of Ioannina) on the condition that the Promoter provides the JCBF with new version of the proposed activities in which the role of the partners is duly described and the dissemination of the results to the market is included. The JCBF will then adopt the initiative with the written procedure.
4. The JCBF acknowledges the modification to the Work Plan as proposed by the NFP in view of an open call for bilateral initiatives proposals. The open call is scheduled to be launched by the end of summer 2021, and the NFP in collaboration with an external expert will draft an open call document which will be approved by the JCBF by the written procedure before made public.
5. The amended text of the Work Plan will be soon available to the Members of the JCBF for comments.

Following the decisions of the JCBF the work plan was amended as presented above and a budget of 400.000 euros is reserved for an open call with the conditions as stated in the Work Plan:

Focus	Indicative Timing	Amount set aside. EUR	Max/Min amount grant
400.000 euros of the available budget would open to a call for proposals on the 'first in-first served ' basis until the available funding of the call is exhausted. As far as the fields of activities are concerned, the NFP proposes to use the Pissarides report as a basis for a selection of activities of common interest for both Greece and Norway. On top of the Pissarides report, an additional field, which could be a topic relevant to the Mitigation of COVID-19 problems in economies is proposed.	2021 - 3Q	€ 400,000	

The call for proposals is drafted in English and sent to the members of the JCBF for comments on August 23 2021.

6. Management and implementation

a. Management and control systems (MCS)

The Management and control System has been in effect since the previous year 2019-2020.

For the training of the entities involved with the implementation of the Grants (Programme Operators and Project Promoters), two online seminars were implemented:

- a) on 17 March addressed mainly to Programme Operators focusing especially to Operational areas of Programme level management, Irregularities and complaints and Financial management. Trainers were officers from the NFP, the CA and the MIS Special service. The seminar had 58 trainees. The seminar was complementary to the seminar implemented from 19 to 22 October 2020, as reported in the respective strategic report which covered the initial Manual of Procedures' Operational areas for Open calls, evaluation, selection and implementation of projects.
- b) on 6-7 April addressed to Programme Operators and Project Promoters covering all Operational areas including the Open calls, evaluation, selection and implementation of projects. Trainers were officers from the NFP, the CA and the MIS Special service. The seminar had 106 trainees, including participants from Bilateral Fund promoters

The seminars were organized, as per foreseen competence, by MOU SA in coordination with the National Focal Point, the Certifying Authority and the Special Service for MIS OPS.

As regards to the MCS at the programme level, as per Art.5.7, par. 2:

The programmes **GR D – Water Management and GR E-Energy** had a fully approved MCS since the previous reporting period.

The Programme **GR G – Asylum and Migration** was awaiting the Audit Authority's approval, which was sent on 10 June 2021 and therefore has its programme level MCS fully approved and in effect in this reporting period.

The Programme **GR B- Roma Inclusion and Empowerment** drafted and submitted to the NFP a detailed description of the P.O.'s Management and Control System at the programme level on 7 April 2021. NFP approved the MCS and submitted to Audit Authority on 25 May 2021. The opinion and approval from the Audit Authority is pending.

The Programme **GR F- Good Governance** has not submitted yet a MCS at the programme level.

b. Irregularities

In accordance with Chapter 12 of the EEA Grants Regulation 2014-2021 for Irregularities, the MCS Manual of Procedures incorporates a dedicated Operational Area consisted of procedures, including workflows and templates, for the management of irregularities. In the reporting period further guidelines and instructions were sent to POs. Additionally as per art. 12.4, the NFP designed the template of the Registry of Irregularities alongside the respective instructions of use and sent it for use to POs and Certifying Authority.

By 29 August 2021, as the foreseen deadline for Irregularities reporting for the 2nd trimester 2021, all national authorities had sent their reporting to the NFP. Respectively the NFP had submitted all previous

and current Irregularities reports in Grace. In the reference period 2020-2021, there were not any irregularities reported.

c. Complaints

In the reporting period 2020-2021, one complaint related to Programme A - **Innovation, Business Development and SMEs** was filed to the National Focal Point, which according to the MCS procedures was forwarded to the Anti-Fraud Coordination Service (AFCOS) – National Transparency Authority on 27 November 2020 (Afcos incom. ref. on 1 December 2020). The case remains under management by AFCOS.

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.

The last Audit Strategy was adopted by Audit Authority after the 867th meeting on 10 June 2021 and is available to FMC/FMO upon request. This strategy will be updated, if it is considered as necessary.

7. Communication

In the realm of Communications, the National Focal Point continued to empower the relations between the Service itself and the POs, FOs and PPs. The NFP used in the most efficient way the covid-19 lockdown to carry on with the online meetings establishing monthly catch-ups. (Every other 3 catch-up meetings, the NFP organized a workshop focused on the communication needs of the beneficiaries.) Person-to-person online discussions also took place, so as to discuss communication issues with every PO separately, according to their idiosyncrasies. Furthermore, the NFP:

1. Participated in the monthly catch-ups organized by the Communication Unit, FMO.
2. Created an online platform, called “Slack”, a useful tool for creating and sharing timetables, social media content, and every kind of online publicity activities, in order to keep the dialogue constantly on and so everyone could see how the NFP promotes the programmes, and at the same time, the NFP could monitor what the POs do to showcase their own work. The goal was to create a warmer sense of a Comms community where we all participate actively and learn from one another.
3. Started to gather info about the past programming periods. In doing so, the Service managed to communicate with important beneficiaries who promptly sent archives and valuable visual material. This content was re-used, cut into smaller pieces and became social media posts. Starting from late spring till the mid July, every Thursday was dedicated to this historical narrative. In the same vein, every Tuesday was dedicated to the Bilateral Fund initiatives. (This history flashback will continue.) Another way of promoting the EEA Grants programmes in Greece throughout the summertime, every Friday was about programmes implemented in summer destinations, combining in this way the mood of the audience and the promotion of the works that are still on and running.
4. Submitted a proposal for the EU Regions Week 2021 in the thematic area entitled: Citizens engagement for an inclusive, participative, and fair recovery, in March 2021. The title of the proposal was: The EEA Grant’s contribution to Greek society throughout the years: A journey in education and knowledge that discovers the past, appreciates the present, and looks forward to the future. The core idea was that education can be seen as a vehicle for changing lives, thoughts, attitudes and mindsets. The projects produce and disseminate knowledge about their own core essence and through the way in which they penetrate into the Greek society. Programmes being both society-changers and actual teachers. The session aspired to showcase the overall contribution of the EEA Grants funding in Greece, emphasizing how the programmes have affected the real life of the Greek society through various educational activities. The whole project unfolds in concert with the inherent values and essence of the EEA Grants expressed in their current message: “Working together for a green, competitive, and inclusive Europe.” Five Ministries (POs), three Fund Operators, University entities, other governmental bodies, and NGOs work together to share knowledge and best practices for implementing this project. All the above stakeholders have accumulated a vast and growing wealth of multiple aspects of life in Greece: environmental management, renewable energy, gender issues, asylum and migration, poverty reduction, the Roma community, civil society, innovation, human rights, education.
5. Signed a contract in July 2021 with an advertising agency, so as to implement social media campaigns, publishing articles on the ePress, and creating media plans till the end of December.
6. Participated from 11 to 19 September, for the first time to the International Thessaloniki Fair, the greatest exhibition event in Greece, and the first major one organized in Europe in 2021 dedicated to Greece. This year’s theme was the Past, Present, and Future triptych, in the framework of the 200th anniversary since the Greek Revolution. The NFP’s main purposes were that a) the

NFP would stand out amongst the Ministry's wealth of services, and the EEA Grants would be made known as a Financial Mechanism in its own merit, and b) the Grants fund programmes of special interest in high priority policy areas, such as social issues, environmental awareness, as well as bilateral initiatives of state-of-the-art expertise, in order to strengthen bilateral relations with the EEA donor countries, especially Norway. In the framework of this Exhibition, the NFP organized an event entitled: "The EEA Grants in Greece: A financial mechanism that embraces us all". The event took place Monday, 13 September; 9 speakers participated, and more than 20 invitees (due to covid19 restrictions only 20 persons could be seated) formed the audience. Both the participation of the NFP and the event were supported and made known to public, through paid advertising on social media, articles written for the ePress, swags and on site roll-up banners.

8. Monitoring and evaluation

a. Monitoring

In the reference period 2020-2021 the main monitoring procedures and milestones were as follows:

Midterm review, reserve allocation and modification of the MoU: Based on the developments of the previous year and the conclusions of the Annual meeting 2020, Greece submitted to FMO on 30 December 2020 its midterm review of the programmes. The review was based on a combination of data and assessments throughout implementation period since the signature of MoU. Specifically for the process of midterm review, NFP collected self-reviewing reports from the programmes, had dedicated meetings with the programmes operators and concluded its review, taking into account all current developments and progress. By the same submission the NFP also sent its proposal for reserve funds allocation to the programmes. The reserve allocation proposal was based on criteria such as:

- Programmes' implementation progress
- Policy priorities
- Readiness & Feasibility for the implementation of the additional activities/funds on behalf of the programmes

The Donors/FMO by letter on 26 April 2021 accepted the Greek proposal for the Greek operated programmes and suggested a minor reallocation in-between the FMO operated programmes. As a result the total amount of EUR 7.479.448 (EEA FM contribution 6.146.115 E and National contribution for the Greek operated programmes 1.333.333 E) , was allocated to the following programmes:

GR Roma inclusion: EUR 700.000

GR Water management: EUR 1.800.000

GR Energy: EUR 3.333.333

GR Active Citizens Fund-ACF (FMO managed): EUR 1 446 115

GR Local development (FMO managed): EUR 500 000

As a follow up, FMO introduced by letter the modification of MoU on 25 May 2021 and on 16 June 2021 Greece agreed and set the modification into effect. At the national level the modification was transposed by the modification of the JMD MCS (Official Gazette 3141 B'/19-07-2021).

Subsequently FMO and the 3 programmes which received funds from the reserve moved on to discussions for the modification of the Programme agreements. By October 2021 the programme **GR E - Energy** has concluded with the modification of the programme Agreement (Official Gazette 4132 B'/09/09/2021). The modifications for the programme GR D - Water management is imminent by October 2021, while the modification for the programme **GR B- Roma inclusion and empowerment** and is expected to conclude further on, according to the discussions between FMO and PO.

The Declaration and the verification of expenditures as well as the subsequent IFRs submissions have been realised, covering the preparation phase and/or preliminary actions' expenditures in programmes and in Technical Assistance.

Forecasts submitted as foreseen in the Regulation for accurate and realistic forecasts, to the best possible degree. The NFP as well as all programme operators cooperated with Certifying Authority in this regard.

Overall progress monitoring, coordination and support where applicable and/or necessary. All implementation follows procedures, roles and tasks as foreseen in the respective JMD which transposes the Regulation and the adjacent Manual of Procedures. Helpdesk and support is provided by the National Focal Point, the Certifying Authority and the Special Service for MIS OPS to all involved parties on daily basis.

Submission of Strategic report and organization of the Annual meeting 2021

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

Training seminars were implemented in the reference period as follows:

For the entities involved with implementation of the Grants (Programme Operators and Project Promoters), two online seminars on Management and Control System procedures were implemented on 17 March addressed mainly to Programme Operators and on 6-7 April addressed to Programme Operators and Project Promoters. The seminars were organized, as per foreseen competence, by MOU SA in coordination with the National Focal Point, the Certifying Authority and the Special Service for MIS OPS and had a very high level of response (58 and 106 participants/trainees respectively)

b. Evaluation

According to the Evaluation plan, as submitted after the Annual meeting 2020, an on-going - formative evaluation will be implemented for those programmes which present deviations from their design and timeline according to their programme agreement. The assessment of the deviations takes place at least one year onward from the PA signature. On this ground, in the reporting period the National Focal Point considers that the programmes **GR D – Water Management and GR E-Energy GR** which completed one year of implementation in spring 2021 as well as the programme **GR B- Roma Inclusion and Empowerment** which completed the year in September 2021 proceed with implementation as foreseen in programme agreement, without remarkable deviations. Therefore, the National Focal Point does not proceed with a formative evaluation for these programmes.

The **programme G – Asylum and Migration** completed one year of implementation in spring 2021 and presents delays of different justification to the selection and implementation of most of its projects. The programme has faced also some sort of changes from its original design, as organizational restructure within the policy sector, led to new project promoters according to their acquired competences. For these reasons and taking into account the monitoring reports for the programme by external experts, as assigned by FMC/FMO, the NFP considers that the on-going formative evaluation must be conducted for this programme. Therefore, in October 2021 a contract with external experts has been awarded. According to it, the evaluation of the programme is scheduled to be delivered in January 2022.

The **programme F – Good Governance** will complete one year of implementation in October 2021. Although in the first year of its implementation there have been delays in the procedure towards project contracts of its 3 predefined projects, the National Focal Point considers that the assessment of its progress and the decision for an on-going formative evaluation should be taken further on and according to the developments by November 2021 and to the conclusions of the Annual meeting.

9. Issues for the Annual meeting 2021

The Annual meeting 2021 has been scheduled to take place on Tuesday 18 November 2021. 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, strategic initiatives, open call, timeframe, planning and goals for the year ahead
3. Communication -Publicity: Strategy and activities' progress, planning ahead, dynamic showcase of complementary programmes and projects, effective and captivating dissemination of the new EEA Grants campaign taking into account both the linguistic and the cultural idiosyncrasies of Greece
4. Organizational issues of NFP – Technical Assistance: New Head of Service and premises, progress of implementation and planning ahead
5. AOB, according to issues raised by Donors and the participants