

## European Economic Area (EEA) Financial Mechanism 2014 – 2021

### in Greece

#### Minutes of the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting - 2022

In accordance with the EEA Grants Regulation 2014-2021, art.2.7, the 5th Annual Meeting - 2022 on the implementation of the EEA FM 2014-2021 in Greece was held on 16 November 2022 in Athens, in physical presence at the Bodossaki Foundation venue. The meeting was co-chaired by Mr. Jon Erik Strømø, Director of Section for Central Europe, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA) and Ms. Anastasia Panopoulou, Director of the National Focal Point, as heads of their respective delegations.

The agenda of the meeting is cited in Annex I and the list of participants in Annex II. The presentations and the discussion of the meeting followed the course of the agenda. The NFP made 3 presentations (Strategic report, Bilateral Fund, Communication). Each programme had its own individual presentation by respective Programme and Fund Operators. A presentation by the FMO for the Fund for Youth Employment and Regional Cooperation was also included in the program. The presentations of the meeting are available at [www.eeagrants.gr](http://www.eeagrants.gr)

#### Main outcomes and outstanding points

**Strategic Report:** The Strategic Report (SR) 2022 was presented by the NFP. The outstanding issues presented were as follows:

- In the socioeconomic context, the past year posed many challenges at the national and international level. Greece and the world had to deal with the aftermath of the Covid pandemic, the disruption in trade logistics, the war in Ukraine and its consequences, mainly at the energy front, inflation and the rising cost of goods and services, while Greece also had to manage the foreign affairs challenges. On the positive side, Greece managed to achieve sustained growth – with a positive investment environment.
- At the implementation level, the NFP presented the developments in the context of the Monitoring and Control System (MCS) in the reporting year. For monitoring, the NFP had continuous contact, meetings, coordination, risk assessment and mitigation actions for programmes.
- The NFP initiated a re-direction of funds, in order to increase absorption and impact
- Several seminars: public procurement, MIS and direct meetings when needed
- Minor adjustments to the Management and Control systems *at national and programme levels*

- No irregularities or complaints – successful audits to POs and NFP
- The NFP initiated an external evaluation of the programmes “Roma” and “Good Governance”, as these programmes have had delays and challenges in their implementation. The Evaluation deliverables are expected in January 2023.

The presentation was made by Ms Anastasia Panopoulou

## **Status of Programmes**

### **Programmes managed by Greek national authorities**

**Roma Inclusion & Empowerment:** The Programme Operator presented a steady progress in PDP1. Activities in the context of PDP1 include drafting territorial Roma inclusion strategies, offering structured help to Roma people. As regards to PDP2, it was presented that it faces serious delays and funding gaps due to the need for further construction works on the ground of the housing location of the project in Katerini.

The Donors noted the progress made in the programme and the efforts made at administrative level and political the commitment at the national level. However they expressed their concerns about the delay of implementation of PDP2 and stressed the need for collaboration in finding a realistic and practical solution on the way forward with the aim of having the housing project, under PDP2 concluded,, and stressed their willingness to look at all alternatives to get an achievable outcome in this important project.

The presentation was made by Ms Vassiliki Staikou

**Environment-Water Management:** The Programme Operator presented the developments in the different calls and small grant scheme and the 12 selected projects for funding, with an overall progress that do not pose serious risks. All planned open calls have been published and the evaluation process of the submitted proposals has been completed.

The Donors expressed appreciation for the good management and the progress of the programme. Given the inflation and the provisions for adjustment in the public procurement framework, they asked for the possibility to fund exceeding budgets. The PO informed that any exceeding budgets would be funded by national resources.

The presentation was made by Ms Hrisoula Kourteli

**Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency:** The GR-Energy Programme entails the integration of RES and Energy Savings in 13 flagship projects of the public sector. Implementation is progressing well with almost all services subprojects contracted .The same is anticipated for the contracting of the construction subprojects as all are planned to be contracted in the next six months and to be implemented and concluded in time.. COVID-19 and the current energy crisis has resulted in significant price increases (~35%) for all energy equipment to be installed in the project sites. If no additional funding can be allocated to the programme to meet the price increases, the PO informed it will keep the necessary alterations at the minimum level.

In any case, the 13 projects under implementation will be successfully completed and 100% absorption is expected by the end of the period.

The Donors expressed appreciation for the progress and effort of the Programme Operator. They also noted the request of the programme for additional budget if savings could be identified and allocated from other programs.

*The presentation was made by Mr. Markos Damasiotis and Mr Kostantinos Patlitzianas*

**Good Governance Accountable Institutions Transparency:** The Programme Operator presented the progress of the programme with focus on the developments and communication activities of PDP1 and PDP3. Regarding PDP2, the Programme Operator made reference to developments that lead to the reduction of its scope and budget and subsequently to the need for modification of Programme Agreement.

The Donors acknowledged the progress and made special reference to the risks related to the risks related to procurement of PDP1. They took note on the potential need and argument for reducing the scope of PDP2 due to insufficient time for implementation of some of the planned activities. Regarding PDP3, they expressed concern for the capacity of the project promoter to implement all planned visits in the regions in the remaining time for implementation. They called everyone to reflect on the way forward, encouraging taking the steps necessary in a coordinated manner, for viable solutions.

*The presentation was made by Mr Ilias Kastritis*

**Asylum and Migration:** The Programme Operator presented the pre-defined projects and their main activities, the funding map of the Programme, its implementation status, additional financial figures (disbursed, contracted and payment rates), as well as the plan for the remaining time for implementation. Special reference was made to the initiatives for new mature activities to be included in the programme by Programme Agreement modifications in order to absorb available funds following delays in implementation of projects in some of the PDPs.

Donors commented on the observed delays in the programme and timeframe for the implementation of the projects, and whether remaining time is considered adequate for their conclusion. The Programme Operator replied that projects subject to delays are being reviewed and budget reductions being considered. Some savings are to be reallocated within the programme and new mature activities considered to be included, so that the programme mitigates the consequences and the risks of delays.

*The presentation was made by Mr Konstantinos Iliopoulos*

**FMO managed programmes:**

**Business Innovation:** The Fund Operator presented the progress of implementation. Three calls have been published, 28 projects have been selected so far, in the thematic areas of

Green Industry Innovation (11), Blue Growth (6) and Information Communication Technologies (11). Of them, 2 projects were finalized in 2021, 5 projects finalized/will be finalized in 2022, 7 projects are estimated to finalize in 2023 and 13 projects are estimated to finalize in 2024.

The Donors praised the continued good progress and results of the programme.

*The presentation was made by Ms Anne-Sophie Therese Mikhos*

**Local Development and Poverty Reduction:** The Fund Operator presented continued steady progress of implementation for all 3 pre-defined projects of the programme, with very good programmatical performance, as well as very satisfactory absorption rate up to date. The predefined projects provide support for the integration of refugee children in schools, for the integration and social inclusion of vulnerable individuals and of vulnerable unemployed Greek people.

Success story for the Project “Schools for All” is the story of Kouros Nurmohammadi Baigia, the 19-year-old student who aced this year’s national exams and will study at the Electrical Engineering Department of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

The Donors expressed appreciation for the good progress and good work by the Fund Operator and the other involved actors of the programme. Despite some delays observed in PDP3, they appreciated the results of the projects and welcomed the conclusion of the design of the PDP ‘Skills on demand’ implemented by the Athens Development and Destination Management Agency under the Municipality of Athens and trust the implementation will be efficient and planned results will be achieved.

*The presentation was made by Mr Epaminondas Farmakis*

**Asylum and Migration:** The Fund Operator reported substantial progress in implementation. During the reporting period, all 8 projects of the programme (5 from open call and 3 predefined) were either complete or in advanced implementation phase. The projects provide support for the accommodation in open reception centers, the dignified reception and protection of the rights of migrants and asylum seekers, the operational procedures and capacity of the Greek Asylum Service and Appeal Committees improved (EEA Grants), as well as for the orderly and humane voluntary return of migrants or vulnerable groups.

The Donors acknowledged the continuous good progress and efficient management of the programme.

*The presentation was made by Mr Epaminondas Farmakis*

**Civil Society – Active Citizen Fund:** The Fund Operator reported that it is on track to achieve targets and full absorption. To date, 7 open calls have been completed. 639 applications were received and 119 projects have been funded. There is strong demand for bilateral cooperation initiatives, with 23 approved so far. In 2022, 2 regional civil society initiatives took place, in cooperation with with CoE, Norwegian Ministry of Justice & Public Security, EEA

& Norway Grants SYNERGY Network, FRA, and the participation of 13 EEA beneficiary countries.

The Donors asked if ACF has potential to absorb additional funding should it become available. Jennifer Clarke confirmed that it would be possible and at short notice, due to the flexible nature of the projects on the reserve list and the high number of projects with potential for extension.

*The presentation was made by Ms Jennifer Clarke*

**Funds for Youth Employment and Regional Cooperation:** The FMO presented the Funds for Youth Employment and Regional Cooperation. As regards to the Youth Employment Fund, 33 projects are in implementation and 19 Greek entities take part in the project consortia under the Fund, seven of them as lead partners. For the Regional Cooperation Fund 21 projects are in implementation since late 2020, where 6 Greek entities take part in four projects focusing on environmental issues, active citizenship and better public service.

*The presentation was made by Mr. Hjörtur Braqi Sverrisson*

### **Status of Bilateral Fund**

The NFP presented the progress made so far for the implementation of the Bilateral Fund, corresponding to 16 in total selected initiatives at the national level. In the reporting period an open call was published and 4 initiatives were selected in its context so far. In addition, there was an invitation for proposals and 2 selected initiatives for the support of the Ukrainian refugees. As regards to the bilateral allocation to the programmes of Art.6.13 of the Regulation, an invitation was addressed to the Fund Operators and 3 initiatives were selected corresponding to the programmes' bilateral allocation as per the MoU. At the level of Greek authorities programmes' the "Energy" and "Water management" programmes have issued project contracts for all their allocation, while the programmes "Roma", "Good Governance" and "Asylum & Migration" are planning to have project contracts in the year ahead.

The Donors acknowledged the progress made for the Bilateral Fund and made a point for the possibility of allocating more funds to the Bilateral Fund, as a result of reallocation of funds from reduced programmes' budgets.

*The presentation was made by Ms Eleni Kontaxaki*

### **Communication**

The NFP presented the two most important issues, which hinder the full-blown implementation of the Service's Comms Strategic Strategy: (a) limited financial resources due to the tendering process not yet concluded, and (b) the lack of fresh content owned to the absence of implementation tangible results. As an answer to the abovementioned problems, the ceaseless empowerment of the Comms national network has been the real solution.

The NFP highlighted some of its main activities including participated in this year's International Thessaloniki Fair, the work accomplished on its SoMe platforms (Facebook,

LinkedIn and Twitter), such as posts dedicated to projects run by the Innovation Norway (no SoMe presence in Greece), or a social media campaign (and its report) to support the NFP's events at Thessaloniki.

Finally, the NFP also presented: (a) the emergent and long-term need for the communication to co-exist with the implementation, (b) the duties of the NFP to adopt the train-the-trainer approach to the POs so that they pass the knowledge to their PPs, (c) and the new project carried out by the NFP, the creation of a microsite embedded in the [www.eeagrants.gr](http://www.eeagrants.gr) site, where audiovisual content and info about all of the programmes/projects will be presented.

The Donors welcomed the initiatives taken on behalf of the NFP and encouraged the continuation of the Network's work. The Donors also mentioned the importance of working closely with the Norwegian Embassy. They reminded on the need for the NFP's communication work to carry on delivering results while waiting for the tendering procedures that needs to be finalized soon.

*The presentation was made by Ms Elli Vazou*

### **Conclusions - Next steps and actions for the year ahead**

The Icelandic representative echoed the remarks made by the head of delegation and expressed optimism for the year ahead and the need for focusing on successful implementation of the programmes.

In conclusion of the meeting discussions and in line with the regulatory provisions, the NFP agrees that it will take all necessary action towards the following:

- To cooperate and coordinate closely with Programme Operators for all planned Programme Agreement modifications and to take all necessary initiatives and actions for a proposal of reallocation of funds within and between the programmes and Bilateral Fund.
- To submit the results of the on-going evaluation of Roma and Good Governance programmes by February 2023.
- To continue the efforts of efficient communication, cooperation and coordination of all involved partners of the implementation of the Grants in Greece.
- To show vigilance in identifying and reporting irregularities and complaints
- To continue and emphasize on all necessary organizational issues and actions for deployment of the Technical Assistance.
- To continue to cooperate closely with the FMO and the Donors on the efficient implementation of the EEA Grants in Greece.

## ANNEX I-AGENDA

### EEA Grants 2014 – 2021 - Greece

#### Agenda of the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting – 16/11/2022

Location: [The Bodossaki Foundation](#)

- *Head of the Greek delegation: Mrs. Anastasia Panopoulou, Head of the National focal Point, Hellenic Ministry of Development and Investments*
- *Head of the Donor delegation: Mr. Jon Erik Strømø, Director, Section for Central Europe and the EEA Grants, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Norway*

10:00 – 10:20	<b>Welcome and opening remarks by the National Focal Point and the donors</b>
10:20 – 10:35	<b>Presentation of the draft Strategic Report</b>
10:35 - 11:35	<b>Progress of programmes and risk assessment. Individual presentations</b> <i>-Programmes managed by the Hellenic authorities - POs</i> <i>Programmes managed by the FMO - FOs</i>
11:35 – 11:45	<i>Coffee break</i>
11:45 – 12:15	<b>Discussion on next steps</b>
12:15 – 12:30	<b>Bilateral Fund</b>
12:30 – 12:40	<b>Communication</b>
12:40 – 12:50	<b>Management and Control system, irregularities &amp; complaints</b>
12:50 – 13:00	<b>Conclusions and closing remarks</b>
13:00 – 15:00	<i>Transportation and light lunch at the <a href="#">"Shedia Café"</a>, a project funded by the EEA Grants</i>
15:00 – 16:00	<i>Transportation and visit of the donors' delegation at the <a href="#">Doctors of the World headquarters</a></i>
16:00	<i>Return to <a href="#">Syntagma sq.</a></i>

## **ANNEX II - LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

### ***Donor/FMO Delegation***

Jon Erik Strømø	Head of the Donor delegation - Director, Section for Central Europe and the EEA and Norway Grants, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Lajla Brandt Jakhelln	Norwegian Ambassador to Greece and Cyprus, Royal Norwegian Embassy in Athens
Christian Grotnes Halvorsen	Deputy Head of Mission, Royal Norwegian Embassy in Athens
Karí Jónsdóttir	Advisor, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Iceland in Oslo
Hjörtur Bragi Sverrisson	Heads of Funds and Horizontal Concerns Unit, Programmes Department, FMO
Steinar Matthíasson	Country Officer, Country and Bilateral Cooperation Department, EEA and Norway Grants, FMO
Maria Fola	EEA Grants Adviser, Royal Norwegian Embassy in Athens

### ***Greek Delegation***

Anastasia Panopoulou	Senior Adviser to the Secretary General for Public Investments and the NSRF, Hellenic Ministry of Development and Investments
Herakles Alexopoulos	Officer, National Focal Point-Special Service for EEA FM, General Secretariat for Public Investments and the NSRF, Hellenic Ministry of Development and Investments
Elli Vazou	Communication Officer, National Focal Point-Special Service for EEA FM, General Secretariat for Public Investments and the NSRF, Hellenic Ministry of Development and Investments
Eleni Kontaxaki	Officer, National Focal Point-Special Service for EEA FM, General Secretariat for Public Investments and the NSRF, Hellenic Ministry of Development and Investments
Stavroula Kostopoulou	Officer, National Focal Point-Special Service for EEA FM, General Secretariat for Public Investments and the NSRF, Hellenic Ministry of Development and Investments
Katerina Tzortzakaki	Officer, National Focal Point-Special Service for EEA FM, General Secretariat for Public Investments and the NSRF, Hellenic Ministry of Development and Investments
Vassiliki Alesta	Head of Certifying Authority, Secretary General for Public Investments and the NSRF, Hellenic Ministry of Development and Investments
Ioannis Gravias	Officer, Certifying Authority, Secretary General for Public Investments and the NSRF, Hellenic Ministry of Development and Investments
Theofilos Douloudis	Officer, Audit Authority - Financial Audit Committee (EDEL), Hellenic Ministry of Finance

Christina Stasinou	Officer of MIS Special Service, Secretary General for Public Investments and the NSRF, Hellenic Ministry of Development and Investments
--------------------	---

***Greek managed Programmes - Programme Operators***

Vassiliki Staikou	PO Programme B, "Roma inclusion and empowerment", Executive Authority "Special Service - Executive Structure NSRF", Division of Employment and Social Economy, Hellenic Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Marina Platanaki	PO Programme B, "Roma inclusion and empowerment", Head of Department, Executive Authority "Special Service - Executive Structure NSRF", Division of Employment and Social Economy, Hellenic Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Chryssoula Kourteli	PO Programme D, "Water Management", Head of Service, Executive Authority "Executive Authority "Special Service - Executive Structure NSRF", Division of Environment, Hellenic Ministry of Environment & Energy
Markos Damasiotis	PO Programme E, "Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency", Centre for Renewable Energy Sources - CRES, Hellenic Ministry of Environment & Energy
Konstantinos Patlitzianas	PO Programme E, "Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency", Centre for Renewable Energy Sources - CRES, Hellenic Ministry of Environment & Energy
Ilias Kastritis	PO Programme F, "Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency", Management & Implementation Authority ICT, Hellenic Ministry of Digital Governance
Andreas Attaloglou	PO Programme F, "Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency", Officer, Management & Implementation Authority ICT, Hellenic Ministry of Digital Governance
Athanasios Oprianos	PO Programme G, "Asylum & Migration", European and Development Programs Division (EDPD)- Ministry Of Citizen Protection
Kostas Iliopoulos	PO Programme G, "Asylum & Migration", European and Development Programs Division (EDPD)- Ministry Of Citizen Protection

***FMO managed Programmes - Fund Operators***

Anne-Sophie Therese Mikhos	FO Programme A, Innovation, Business Development and SMEs, Innovation Norway
----------------------------	--

Epameinondas Farmakis	FO Programme C&H, Local Development and Poverty Reduction, Aylum & Migration - Crowe SOL/ Human Rights 360
Anastasia Georgiou	FO Programme C&H, Local Development and Poverty Reduction, Aylum & Migration - Crowe SOL/ Human Rights 360
Jennifer Clarke	FO Programme I, Civil Society – Active Citizens Fund, Bodossaki Foundation / Solidarity Now
Maria Tsene	FO Programme I, Civil Society – Active Citizens Fund, Bodossaki Foundation / Solidarity Now