

Annual Programme Report FM14-21

Czech Republic

CZ-ENVIRONMENT Environment, Ecosystem and Climate Change

2020

A. Executive Summary

The Environment, Ecosystem and Climate Change Programme (hereinafter referred to as the “Programme”) entered the phase of launching and administration of individual calls in four areas of support and administration of the Bilateral Fund of the Programme. In 2020 we launched five calls from the Programme. Although the implementation phase in 2020 was significantly complicated by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, we did not crucially deviate from the planned administration schedule. Our current delay is approx. 2-3 month compared to the planned schedule.

Given the great interest of applicants, it was decided, within the 3rd Annual Meeting of EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021, held in November 2020, to **increase the total allocation of the Programme by EUR 2,320,000**, which, with 15% national co-financing, amounts to a total increase in the allocation of **EUR 2,729,412**. We plan to use these funds for projects included in the project pool and for the increase in the allocation of **Call 4A Bergen**, which assumes project support of approximately 70% higher than the original allocation and for financing of projects from the call **SGS-3 Oslo** project pool. We will allocate the remaining funds to the planned **Call 3B Trondheim**. We will initiate the amendment of the Programme Agreement in early 2021. This amendment consists in the increase of the total allocation, fund transfer to calls 4A, 3B and SGS-3 according to the above changes and in the transfer of funds from the SGS-1 Rondane call to the Call 2A Tromsø.

The first call we launched from the Programme was the **SGS-3 Oslo** call, which focuses on the development of strategic documents establishing an approach to climate change-related problems and identifying adaptation and / or mitigation measures for its impact. Due to the high number of well prepared applications, which in many cases also involved international cooperation, we decided that the allocation of this call would be increased and 41 out of 50 submitted applications would receive support. The implementation of projects under this call has already begun with the signing of the Minister's Decision, and contracts for the provision and conditions of support will be concluded during January and February 2021.

The second call is **Call 2A Tromsø**, which aims at carrying out temporary (mobile) air quality monitoring at regional or local level in order to identify the prevalent type of pollution, pollutant concentrations and to determine the source of this pollution and to evaluate data. The Selection Committee at its meeting decided that the allocation of the call could be slightly increased so as to award the project grant to all projects which met the conditions of the call. The projects in this call are in the phase of preparation of the Minister's decision, we expect the start of implementation in February 2021 at the latest.

Call 4A Bergen is focused on implementation of selected nature-related measures identified in the strategic documents setting out the approach to climate change-related problems. Various measures have been submitted within the nineteen applications. The evaluation process lasts from November 2020 till February 2021 and will culminate in the Selection Committee meeting on February the 4th, 2021. The Committee recommended to increase the allocation for the call.

The SGS 1 Rondane call aims to support measures to promote biodiversity through the protection of endangered habitats. Measures to protect endangered species of plants and animals, in particular those on the red lists, will also be supported. All measures must be taken outside specially protected areas. We evaluated this call in cooperation with the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic. 23 applications were submitted to the call and the allocation was not fully exhausted. For this reason, we decided that part of the funds from this call will be transferred to the Call 2A Tromso project pool. The evaluation of applications of the call lasts from December 2020 till mid February 2021, when the Selection committee will take place. Then the Fund 's Board is going to take place during March or in the beginning of April.

The SGS-4 Reine call, which is common to all four areas of support, we launched in mid-December 2020 and applications are currently being received. Given the number of inquiries that we recorded for this call, we expect that the number of requests will significantly exceed the allocation of the call.

Call 1 Rago, Call 3A, Call 3B Trondheim and SGS-2 call are going to be launched during 2021.

Call 4B which will focus on implementation of selected nature-related measures identified in the strategic documents setting out the approach to climate change-related problems. This type of document is collectively referred to as Climate Strategies (Adaptation Strategies). Particularly preferred are green and blue infrastructure elements is going to be announced at the turn 2021/2022, **call 2B** focuses on implementation of selected measures identified in the adopted air protection action plans and is going to be announced Q1/Q2 2022.

Bilateral cooperation was complicated by the ongoing pandemic, which significantly reduced the possibility of foreign travels. However, the allocation of the **Trolltunga call** was exhausted before the planned closing date of the call and the PO has generally noted a great interest in projects involving international cooperation not only with Norwegian partners. We intend to support projects with cooperation from entities from Poland, Slovakia, Germany and Liechtenstein as well. Further calls from the Bilateral Fund shall be launched with respect to the current situation of Covid-19.

The Communication activities of the Programme were also affected. The social networks and websites of the Programme have become the number one channel of communication for year 2020. For an overview of communication activities, we have created a special document: Communication Activities of the Environment, Ecosystem and Climate Change Program 2020.

Concerning the lessons learned - at the level of the PO, a significant organizational change will start in January 2021, and will enable the streamlining and acceleration of the administrative process of calls and a better system of cooperation with other grant programmes. PO will also focus on strengthening of cooperation with the Programme Partner, the Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic, due to recurring complications with the occurrence of overlaps with other grant programmes, which emerged after the conclusion of the Programme Agreement.

The overall risk of the implementation of the programme has not changed within the update table Risk Management, there were only minor re-evaluation of certain risks. Changes were recorded for articles: Insufficient fulfilment of Programme output and outcome targets and Insufficient interest of project promoters to design donor partnership projects

Covid-19 issues, which may have impact on some aspects of the Programmes implementation, are included in the Programmes risk update for the following period.

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