



A quarterly newsletter

EEA and NORWAY GRANTS in BULGARIA

Points of interest:

**Open call for the
Bilateral Fund** –
deadline in
December 2014.

*Find out more on
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THE GRANTS IN 2013: A RECAP

It's again that time of the year when everybody looks back at what has been achieved for the past 12 months, not only to draw conclusions, but also to make plans for the next steps. We join in with a recap on what marked 2013 from the perspective of the EEA and Norway Grants.

First and most important, all programmes for Bulgaria are approved by the donor states as of October 2013. This marks the end of planning and the beginning of implementation where programmes come to life and transform into projects stories. These stories are what we are looking forward to sharing with you in 2014.

Second, the programmes are getting speed. The last three months of 2013 were marked by plenty of EEA and Norway Grants events. Six new programmes were launched between October and December. For us this is a clear signal that the time has come to move from theory to practice. We are very glad that you are willing to join us along the way and follow different cases and stories on the EEA and Norway Grants in Bulgaria.

Finally, we would like to thank you for being with us and to wish you happy holidays and all the best in 2014!

EEA and NORWAY GRANTS in BULGARIA Stories



Patrizia Brandellero, Financial Mechanism Office, Georgi Stoytchev, OSI-Sofia, and Zinaida Zlatanova, Vice Prime Minister (from left to right) during the opening of the event. Photo: OSI-Sofia

Confronting hate speech

Hate speech is a widespread phenomenon in Bulgarian public life, according to a study conducted by Open Society Institute - Sofia (OSI) in July 2013. Nearly half (45,6%) of Bulgarian citizens have in the last year witnessed statements expressing disapproval of, hatred or aggression against representatives of ethnic, religious or sexual minorities. The data was presented at the conference [“Hate speech and the role of the civil society”](#), which took place in Sofia on 28 November 2013. The event was supported by EEA Grants

NGO programme for Bulgaria.

Bulgarian Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Justice Zinaida Zlatanova opened the conference stating that Bulgaria is a tolerant nation, but that there exist a negative trend in the spread of hate speech. Norwegian Ambassador to Bulgaria Guro Katharina Vikør stressed the importance of the cooperation between governments, politicians, civil society organisations, media and other stakeholders in countering hate speech and hate crime in Europe.

EEA and NORWAY GRANTS in BULGARIA

Stories



Young people are one of the groups, which are most sensitive to hate speech. Photo: OSI-Sofia

[The OSI study](#) shows that Roma are the most common victims of hate speech, followed by the ethnic Turkish minority and homosexuals. Television is the most important factor for the proliferation of hate speech in Bulgaria. Approximately 75% of the respondents who witnessed hate speech have heard it on television.

Barrier to social cohesion

Reducing the economic and social disparities in Europe is one of the objectives of the EEA and Norway Grants. Through different

programmes and projects, the Grants promote tolerance, equality and multicultural awareness.

Initiatives to tackle hate speech are supported mainly through the civil society and the NGO programmes.

– Hate is a barrier to social cohesion. Hate should not find refuge in any place of the EU and this is why we have to cope with hate crimes through consistent and coordinated activities all over Europe, added John Kellock, Director's Policy Advisor in the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.

EEA and NORWAY GRANTS in BULGARIA Stories

The NGO programme for Bulgaria has so far supported six projects that deal with hate related issues directly or indirectly. A second call for project proposals within the programme will be launched in early 2014, with democracy and human rights being the largest priority area.

Hate speech online

Among young and well-educated people Internet plays a significant role in the propagation of hate speech, shows the OSI study.

– People share 170 billion pieces of information on the newsfeed on Facebook every day. Most of this is innocent, but there is a part of it, which is hate speech either according to the law or to the Facebook standard, said Gabriella Cseh, head of policy in Central and Eastern Europe in Facebook, while explaining the challenges in tackling hate speech online.

According to Mara Georgescu, Educational Advisor at the Council of Europe, young bloggers and journalists should be trained to take stand and actively work against hate speech.



Gabriella Cseh Facebook. Photo: OSI - Sofia

Bilateral cooperation

Non-governmental organizations from two of the EEA Grants donor states - Norway and Iceland, attended the conference in Sofia and participated in a bilateral workshop with Bulgarian NGOs the next day. A special fund to encourage bilateral cooperation is available within the NGO programme for Bulgaria. The preparation of joint project proposals between organizations from the donor states and Bulgaria is supported through the fund.

PRESENTING THE PROGRAMMES

Fund for Bilateral Relations at National level



In Bulgaria, €633,000 has been set aside for a bilateral national fund. Among the focus areas for the fund are children and youth, combating drugs and organised crime, promotion of European values and nuclear energy.

The funding from the bilateral national fund serves as a flexible source of financial support for initiatives from both Bulgaria and donor country entities that can contribute to strengthening the bilateral relations.

The funds are to be used strategically and can go beyond the programmes in Bulgaria to cover all programme areas under the EEA and Norway Grants.

What are the priorities?

- ❑ Knowledge exchange in combating drugs and organized crime, children and youth at risk (Priority 1);
- ❑ Promotion of European values and in particular history teaching in a multicultural society (Priority 2);
- ❑ Predefined initiatives in the area of nuclear decommissioning.
- ❑ Predefined activities that promote research partnerships, encourage regional activities on topics of bilateral importance and strengthen cooperation with intergovernmental organizations;
- ❑ Travel support for participation in seminars, workshops, etc.

PRESENTING THE PROGRAMMES

Fund for Bilateral Relations at National level

The grant schemes under priorities 1 and 2 will be operated through an open call for project proposals.

What is supported?

The fund supports projects that will contribute to strengthening the bilateral relations between Bulgaria and Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. Funded activities include study visits, organising and participating in seminars, workshops and conferences, training courses and other meetings implemented with the joint participation of representatives of the beneficiary and the donor states, joint participation in international events, etc.

Supported activities – examples

- ❑ An international conference on the new Bulgarian penal code was organised with the Council of Europe on 20 November 2012.
- ❑ Bulgarian representatives took part in a geothermal conference organised in Iceland in March 2013.
- ❑ Bulgarian mayors took part in a study visit to Trysil, Norway, in September 2013.

Planned activities – examples

- ❑ Cooperation between the Norwegian Radiation Protection Control Authority and the Nuclear Regulatory Agency of Bulgaria.

Key facts

Bilateral fund at national level

Fund operator: Monitoring of EU Funds Directorate, Council of Ministers of Bulgaria

Size of the fund: €633,000

A call for project proposals under priority 1 and priority 2 of the fund is currently open. The call is a “rolling” one, which means that submitted applications will be reviewed and assessed on a quarterly basis. **Final date for application:** 15 December 2014

Travel support is provided on an ongoing basis, following a request for financial support.

More information about the fund, the application requirements and the application forms are available at www.eeagrants.bg.

EVENTS, OPEN CALLS AND INFO DAYS



Photo: Svetla Semerdzhieva

Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

The Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy programme was launched on the 10th of October. The participation of the Programme Partner – Water Resource and Energy Directorate at the Norwegian Ministry of Oil and Energy proved to be essential, as well as of more than 100 representatives of Bulgarian companies and Non-governmental organisations active in the field of energy efficiency and innovative energy technologies, mass media and other interested institutions attended the event. They were able to meet and discuss potential partnerships with 9 Norwegian companies working in the area of consulting and implementation of projects targeting improvement of energy efficiency and utilization of the renewable energy potential. Find out more [here](#).

Four components to be supported:

- Pilot micro-electricity generation;
- Energy efficiency measures in public buildings;
- Production of fuels for heating based on biomass;
- Training and education activities.

EVENTS, OPEN CALLS AND INFO DAYS



Petar Stoyanovich, Minister of Culture, H.E. Guro Katharina Vikør, Ambassador of Norway, Zinaida Zlatanova, Vice Prime Minister, Mariana Kordova, Head of the NFP (from left to right) during the opening of the event. Photo: NFP

Cultural Heritage

The Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Arts programme was signed on the 15th of October at the lush premises of the National Museum of Bulgarian Art. With high level of attendance by Deputy-Prime Minister Zinaida Zlatanova and H.E. Ms. Guro Katharina Vikør, the event proved to be in the center of media attention. The setting was perfectly enriched by a live performance of pieces by

Edvard Grieg linking the signing to the forthcoming concert dedicated to the 170th anniversary of the birth of the composer, held on the very next day.

With a budget of 16 470 588 Euro the programme will finance projects for renovation of buildings of cultural importance, creation of new museums, making cultural content more accessible in the internet, etc.

EVENTS, OPEN CALLS AND INFO DAYS

Schengen Cooperation

November was dedicated to the Justice and Home Affairs priority sector with opening events for the two programmes operated by the Ministry of Interior in partnership with the Council of Europe – Schengen Cooperation and Domestic and Gender-based Violence. The Schengen cooperation programme aims to improve effectiveness in transborder and organised crime. The programme beneficiaries are from a number of institutions involved in the security sector in Bulgaria and will benefit from the expertise of their partners on programme and project level.

Domestic violence

The opening of the Domestic and Gender-based Violence programme coincided with a conference on the same topic. "This social phenomenon is not a trade mark for any society or social group. We cannot eliminate it completely neither in a fast way, but we have the ambition to diminish it to its minimum," said in his opening speech Deputy-Minister of Interior Mr. Plamen Angelov. Vulnerable groups will be among the targets of the programme, being one of the main targets of Domestic and Gender-based Violence.



Ms Rachel Eapen Paul from the Norwegian Equality and Anti-discrimination Ombud presented the Norwegian experience in confronting domestic violence and attended the public event. Photo: Norwegian Embassy

EVENTS, OPEN CALLS AND INFO DAYS

Public Health Initiatives

The signing event for the Public Health Initiatives programme was held on 13 December. With a budget of 15,78 million Euro, the event gathered high level of participation with the attendance of the Minister of Health, the Chairmen of the Health Commission of the National Assembly and H.E. Ms. Guro Katharina Vikor. The Programme Implementation Agreement was signed by the Head of the NFP Ms. Mariana Kordova and the Head of the PO Deputy-Minister of Health Mr. Chavdar Slavov.

Scholarships

On 18 December the Ministry of Education held the Opening Event for the Scholarship programme. With special participation of Mr. Vidar Helgason from the Icelandic Programme Partner "RANNIS", the event was attended by representatives from the majority of Bulgarian higher education institutions. The afternoon session involved the institutional coordinators that represent the link between the higher education institutions and the PO and will help the potential beneficiaries with information and guidance.



Chavdar Slavov, Deputy-Minister of Health and Mariana Kordova, Head of the NFP (from left to right) during the signing event. Photo: NFP

RESULTS IN FOCUS



Photo: Council of Europe

Three Bulgarian judges join the EHRC for a one year practice

Ms. Irina Ganeva, Ms. Iliyana Baltova and Ms. Tsveta Jeliaskova are the first three of nine Bulgarian judges to work at the institution as part of a predefined project within the Judicial Capacity-building and Cooperation Programme. The aim is to contribute to the effective implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights by broadening the knowledge and skills while collaborating with their colleagues and reviewing the cases at the European Court of Human Rights. "For us as national judges it is an invaluable experience to have an

inside perspective to the work of the Court, the mechanisms related to executing the rights given by the Convention and to explore the working environment where the protection of human rights is not regarded as an abstract rule, but rather as a conscious engagement for correcting the occurred injustice", say the three judges who have joined the Bulgarian division within the court. They are working with petitions while being introduced to the workflow of the Court. Their expertise is further increased with participation in seminars and trainings, organised by the Court.

RESULTS IN FOCUS



Study visit on legal aid provision for vulnerable groups

Bulgarian experts from the National Legal Aid Bureau, the Supreme Bar Council and Open Society Institute Sofia took part in a 2-day study visit to Norway in the period 9-10 September 2013. The event was part of predefined project n.4 "Improving the access of vulnerable groups to legal aid through the implementation of a pilot project for primary legal aid hotline and regional consultation centers" funded within area Judicial Capacity Building programme of the Norway Grants.

The aim of the visit was exchange of experience and transfer of know-how on the set up of decentralized services for legal aid provision with a special emphasis on access to justice for socially unprivileged groups. Members of the Bulgarian delegation were the appointed managers of the national hotline and the regional consultation center in Vidin within predefined project n.4 whose priority was to get acquainted with the Norwegian legal aid system and make sure a transfer of best practices is ensured as part of the pilot services to be rendered in the next 12 months.

RESULTS IN FOCUS

Visit of representatives of the National Association of Municipalities in the Norwegian town of Trysil

From the 17th to the 21st of September 2013 the Mayors of the municipalities of Karnobat, Malko Tarnovo and Varshets have visited the town of Trysil (3000 inhabitants), situated 250 km north from Oslo. The visit was following an invitation of the Mayor of the municipality Mr. Ole Martin and was financed by the Bilateral Fund at National Level. The visit began with an introduction to the activities of the Trysil Municipality followed by a presentation of an energy efficiency project implemented by two partners – on the one side the regional council of South Osterdal, through which are represented 5 municipalities – Elverum, Engerdal, Stor-Elvdal, Trysil and Amot and the other is the regional council of Hedmark. Its main goals are to provide technical assistance for the municipalities and the regional council with the aim of reaching 25% of energy efficiency in all municipal buildings till the end of the project in 2015.



The group of visiting mayors. Photo: NAM

As a follow up, the Bulgarian delegation visited the municipal company for treating wood material, where the production waste is used for heating and delivering of warm water to the inhabitants of the town.

The delegation also visited a built in 2011 factory for bio-fuel and for producing central heating and energy for the town of Hamar. The factory can ensure the heating of a city with 1,5 mln. inhabitants. The process in the factory is fully automatic and computer-operated. The staff of the factory is 55 people.

The result from the exchanged experience and the shared good practices of the Norwegian and Bulgarian municipalities was a common will for joint activities and cooperation for realizing concrete projects.

RESULTS IN FOCUS

72 organisations are already implementing projects under the NGO Grants

How to make a family budget? What are my employment insurance rights and obligations? What is the difference between a credit and a debit card? What is an overdraft? What is the difference between the obligatory and the additional pension insurance?

At first glance the answers to all these questions seem fairly easy. Studies on financial literacy show that close to 2/3ds of the 16 and 17 year-old youth have no or very little knowledge on finances. Striving to compensate this deficit, the Financial Literacy Initiative Foundation (in partnership with Junior Achievement Bulgaria) has developed the project "My life, my finances – programme for financial literacy for the youth". A total of 15 teachers and 300 students from the latter phase of high school education from the poorest regions in the country – Northwest and North central will be trained. Both regions are generally associated with low living standard, excessive dependency on government social programmes and social exclusion.

"My life, my finances" is one of the already contracted 72 projects within the first open call of the Fund for NGOs, supported by the EEA Grants. The funding is for micro and small projects within all four priority areas of the programme: "Democracy, human rights and good governance", "Social inclusion and empowerment of vulnerable groups" and "Capacity building for NGOs". "We are very happy that a large number of the contracted projects have a practical purpose and we hope that their successful implementation will be beneficial not only for the target groups, but also for the NGO sector in the country as a whole," said Ms. Elitsa Markova, programme manager of the NGO Programme. The total amount of the currently contracted projects is 969 616 Euro. Additional details are available on the website of the programme, [section Results](#).

The evaluation of the medium and large projects concluded on 16 September. The Programme Operator of the NGO Fund intends to finalise the contracting process with the awarded projects in January 2014. This will be followed by the launch of a second call for project proposals.

EVENTS, OPEN CALLS AND INFO DAYS

Oslo, Norway. Photo: Svetla Semerdzhieva



Check out the cultural agenda:

20 January 2014 – 13 February 2014

Month of Norwegian cinema, Artnewscafe, Plovdiv

www.artnewscafe.com

21 January 2014 – 09 February 2014

Exhibition of Atelier Oslo, Union of the Architects in Bulgaria, Sofia

www.edno.bg

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