

Foreword

2019 was an exceptional year for the EEA – not only did we see significant progress for the EEA and Norway Grants schemes, we also marked 25 years since the entry into force of the EEA Agreement. The Agreement enables the EEA EFTA States – Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway – to participate as equal partners in the European single market alongside the EU Member States. Today, the single market is a community of over 500 million people working, living, studying, and contributing to a greener, more inclusive, and more competitive Europe.

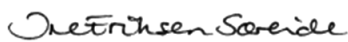
Through the EEA and Norway Grants, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway work closely with partners in 15 EU Member States to help reduce social and economic disparities and further strengthen bilateral cooperation. This cooperation is greatly valued by our three countries. Only by working together can we succeed in tackling some of the biggest challenges facing Europe. For example, we must work together to address climate change, enhance social inclusion, create employment for young people, protect human rights, and foster innovation and business development.

The budget for the current funding period of the EEA and Norway Grants (2014-2021) totals €2.8 billion and reflects the fact that this period is our most ambitious effort to date. This new chapter in the Grants' history builds on the successes of the 2009-2014 period and on the lessons learnt from 25 years of contributions and collaboration.

Programme development was our main focus this past year. We made great progress in getting new programmes off the ground, launching the first calls for proposals and kicking off projects. The result was a large number of project applications from a range of actors, including businesses, researchers, civil society organisations, and public and private institutions. An impressive number of applicants took part in matchmaking events and information meetings. We were also pleased to see that there was significant interest in forming partnerships between entities in the beneficiary and donor countries.

If our joint efforts are to succeed, we must agree on the challenges we are seeking to address and the outcomes we want to see, and we need to ensure that the right partners are involved. In designing the various programmes, the emphasis has been on laying a firm foundation for strong partnerships and concrete results. This has been a dynamic process, and although it has been time-consuming, we know that it will improve the quality of projects at entry. This is an important objective for all of us – in Reykjavík, Vaduz and Oslo.

As you will see from this report, 2019 was a busy year for all those involved in the EEA and Norway Grants. We plan to maintain this momentum, and we have high expectations for 2020. We hope that you will continue to work with us to build a better Europe for everyone. But for now, we invite you to delve into some of the highlights from last year.



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