

Work Plan

FUND FOR BILATERAL RELATIONS

(In accordance with Article 2.4 of the Bilateral Fund Agreement and Article 4.2 of the Regulations on the implementation of the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2014-2021)

Version 2.0

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1 BACKGROUND

This document has been prepared to reflect the period of the upcoming two years 2021-2022.

1.1 Major fields of bilateral cooperation between Slovakia (“SK”) and Donor States (“DS”)

The bilateral relations between Slovakia and the Donor States (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein), from a long-term perspective, can be generally characterized as **very good, friendly and effective, with a strong potential for further cooperation and development**. The level of bilateral relations between Slovakia and the Donor States (especially with Norway) is also clearly reflected in the relatively high number of common events, meetings and other interesting bilateral activities.

Cooperation between the SK and the DS takes place e.g. at political level, in business and investment, education, science and research, culture, energy, innovation, social issues, as well as in the context of co-operation within international organizations.

1.2 Short evaluation of existing bilateral relations and their development (based on 5 crucial areas of interest)

Partners	Fields of cooperation (classification compares the actual status of cooperation/future potential for cooperation)				
	Political and institutional cooperation	Economic (investment and trade)	Cultural	Historical ties, general knowledge, public awareness...	People-to-people (incl. students, tourism, employees...)
SK – NO	Strong / Strong	Moderate / Stronger	Moderate / Stronger	Moderate / Growing	Moderate / Growing
SK – IC	Moderate / Stronger	Low / Moderate	Moderate / Growing	Low / Growing	Moderate / Growing
SK - LI	Low / Moderate	Strong / Strong	Low / Moderate	Low / Growing	Low / Moderate

As regards **political and institutional¹ cooperation**, there is a strong cooperation at diplomatic level between **Norway** and Slovakia, documented through the number of official visits, including a visit of the Prime Minister, over the last years, and especially during the Slovak EU Presidency. Important contacts and forms of cooperation have been established that can be further developed. Cooperation with **Iceland** is moderate, the recent highlight of this cooperation being the Prime Ministers’ meeting held in July 2017. Slovakia and **Liechtenstein** established diplomatic relations in 2009 and since then cooperation has been steadily increasing at bilateral, EEA and UN level (within international organisations). This has been illustrated, i.a., by regular visits at Ministerial level and bilateral exchanges in the margins of international conferences.

In the **economic area** investments and trade from **Norway²** to Slovakia are moderate, with some larger investments made over the past years, and with a potential for further development. Economic relations

¹ For the purpose of this document, as “institutional” cooperation is considered cooperation between public authorities, ministries, self-government authorities, professional unions, academic institutions as well as institutions with specific public mission.

² As examples could be highlighted the most important Norwegian investments in Slovakia to metallurgical industry - Slovalco and SAPA in Žiar nad Hronom by the Norwegian company Norsk Hydro. Among other investments from Norway we find

between Slovakia and Liechtenstein are increasingly close. Slovakia is an important trade partner of Liechtenstein, ranging 7th in direct imports and 15th in direct exports. Additionally, some of the most successful Liechtenstein companies have established branches in Slovakia, offering 600 jobs. Investments from **Iceland**³ can be considered as low, with potential for further development. Investments from Slovakia to all the three Donor countries are negligible.

In the **cultural area**, close cooperation has been developed between different Slovak and **Norwegian** institutions and artists. **Iceland** is a very interesting destination for artists from all around the world, including Slovakia, and cultural relations between the two countries have the potential to develop. Some cultural cooperation has taken place with **Liechtenstein**, but there is also a potential for development. This field of cooperation was the most attractive area under the Bilateral Fund in the previous programming period.

As indicated before, **historical ties between** Slovakia and the Donor States are, for objective reasons, considered low. **Norway** is an exception to this, with the legacy of Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson being still vivid in Slovakia. The same applies to the **general knowledge and public awareness** of Slovak citizens about Norway, where **Norway** is perceived as a role model country of how things may work in the society.

People-to-people contacts (such as students, visitors, employees) are most frequent between Slovakia and **Norway**. There is also a big community of **Norwegian** students in Slovakia studying medicine and veterinary medicine, and the number of **Icelandic** students has been increasing. There is also a growing community of Slovaks working in **Norway**, especially in the health and transport sector.

1.3 Experiences / lessons learned and successes from FMs 09-14

In the programming period 09-14, funds of the Bilateral Fund were distributed through open calls, predefined activities, as well as activities implemented directly by the NFP/PO. The experience from the past period shows that:

- Support to larger-scale activities with a clear focus on a particular field of cooperation brought more sustainable and higher quality results.
- Larger-scale activities brought more opportunities the promotion of partnerships, media coverage, better communication measures as well as wider presentation of the respective activity and bilateral dimension generally.

There are several examples of bilateral activities which can be considered as **success stories**:

- **strategic contribution of EEA and Norway Grants** under the EU Slovak Presidency 2016, e.g. in the areas as green economy and energy (in particular flagship conferences on transition to green economy and energy security);
- **bilateral activities implemented by academic institutions** – e.g. a series of cultural bilateral activities implemented by the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava in cooperation with the University of Bergen (International Grieg Society) or the predefined activity implemented by University of Veterinary Medicine and Pharmacy in Košice in close cooperation with Nord University in Bodø and close cooperation of the Jessenius Faculty of Medicine in Martin of the Comenius University in Bratislava and Bjorknes College.

companies like Tomra (sorting and recycling), TIMM (shipping ropes), BRING (transport/trucking); Kongsberg Automotive (spare parts for cars)

³ The most important investment from Iceland is company Marel Food Nitra for production of technological equipment in food industry.

The setup and the implementation of the Bilateral Funds in Slovakia under the FMs 09-14 have been very successful and the Bilateral Fund at National Level could be regarded as a model for programming period 14-21 also for other Beneficiary states.

A more **targeted approach** within selected fields of cooperation can bring more visible results. **Visibility of results** in close connection with **high level of quality** of results should be the overall ambitions of the implementation of the Bilateral Fund in this period.

The fund shall support well-balanced partnerships (bilateral or multilateral) where all parties benefit from the cooperation.

1.4 Upcoming activities / initiatives

In the coming years, there will be several major **opportunities**, in the framework of which strategic initiatives can be funded by the Bilateral Fund. The official state visit of the President of Iceland to Slovakia (2021) and Strategic cooperation of Slovak and Norwegian National Theatres can be mentioned as examples.

1.5 Possible ways for promotion and partnership facilitation under Programmes

In the Memoranda of Understanding, €600,000 (26.5% of the Bilateral Fund allocation) has already been set aside to the Programmes. Partnerships between SK and DS entities shall be promoted and facilitated through already well-established measures such as matchmaking events or study visits that were also supported by the Bilateral Fund at the Programme level in the period 09-14, for which the baselines and suggestions for how to achieve them already exist.

In addition to this, the following initiatives have already been proposed by the Programme Operators at various steps of the Concept Notes preparation:

- 1) Bilateral workshops focused on the role of cultural players in arts and culture under the Culture Programme.
- 2) Expert workshops focused on specific fields of expertise under the Domestic and Gender-Based Violence Programme.

It is expected that more suggestions will come up at a later stage. Given the fact that this Work Plan predominantly covers the initial stages of the Programmes implementation, it is expected that matchmaking seminars and study visits will be the most frequently used measures to promote and facilitate the bilateral partnerships.

2 MAIN OBJECTIVE

The main objective has been defined as: “Enhanced cooperation and improved mutual knowledge and understanding between Donor and Beneficiary States”.

2.1 The main ambitions

The **main ambitions** of the Bilateral Fund are closely linked to the Chapter 1 of this document.

It is proposed that in **2021 – 2022, the Bilateral Fund will continue supporting political and institutional cooperation** between Slovakia and Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein as well as **Cultural cooperation** – cultural exchange, promotion of culture and cultural development in Slovakia and Iceland / Liechtenstein

/ Norway. In addition to pre-defined activities, these two areas shall also be supported through a thematically focused open call.

2.2 Implementation system – general principles / modalities

The first meeting of the Joint Committee for Bilateral Funds (JCBF) took place on 27 October 2017 in Bratislava, Slovakia. The JCBF is chaired by the National Focal Point and composed of five members, including the NFP, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, represented by the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Bratislava, the Icelandic Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Principality of Liechtenstein.

In the first meeting, the JCBF adopted the Statutes and Rules of Procedures and gathered inputs to the Work Plan for the bilateral funds. It was agreed that cultural and political cooperation will be prioritized within the Work Plan in the two coming years (2018 – 2020).

On 1 December 2020, the sixth meeting of the JCBF took place and it was agreed, that the potential of the selected priority areas was not fully utilised. The implementation of the Fund in 2020 was heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The members have therefore agreed that the political and institutional, as well as cultural cooperation will be prioritized also in 2021 - 2022.

Mechanisms to ensure flexible funding and to the principle of proportionality will be applied at all levels. In addition to pre-defined activities, funds shall be re-granted through on-going call with a thematic focus open until 12/2022 or until all funds available for the call have been exhausted. More detailed information about the Implementation system is provided in Part 3.

In second half of 2022, the JCBF shall evaluate the use of the funds and functioning of the implementation system and may agree on revisions. If it turns out that it is necessary to make changes within the implementation system, the National Focal Point will take into account comments of the JCBF.

2.3 Allocation

The total allocation of the Bilateral Fund is **€2,262,000**⁴. Based on MoUs the amount of €600,000 has been set aside to Programmes. This allocation is not subject to any further approval by the JCBF or NFP. The remaining allocation of the Bilateral Fund, in the amount of €1,662,000, is subject to decisions issued by the JCBF.

An amount of €295,600 shall remain reserved for Activities / Initiatives implemented under Programmes based on “Expression of Interest” at later stage, as the ambition to express interest for more funds have been included in a number of Programme Concept Notes.

Within this Work Plan, the NFP focuses on the distribution of funds in the years 2021 - 2022, for which the amount of **€290,000 was allocated (division of allocations is specified in Part 6 Budget). The funds will be used for:**

- an on-going open call for online bilateral activities thematically focused on cultural cooperation, political and institutional cooperation (€ 200,000),
- Predefined Activities listed in Part 5 (€ 90,000).

The potential savings as well as currently unallocated funds will be transferred to the period 2023 - 2025.

⁴ EEA Grants €1,098,000 and Norway Grants €1,164,000

2.4 Principles of selection and assessment

Selection of Grant Applications follows these basic rules:

1. All members of the JCBF shall have an opportunity to vote on every Grant Application.
2. For a Grant Application to be supported under an open call, a quorum must be reached (3 out of 5 of the members must vote). In case of travel grants, silence procedure shall apply.
3. If any of the members vote against a Grant Application, such application shall not be supported. This should, however, be preceded by a discussion in an effort to reach the consensus of all the members.
4. Any member may propose modifications to the Grant Application. In case substantial modification is proposed, the application needs to be re-evaluated.
5. Any member may enter scrutiny reservation. It is possible to use this procedure also to request more information from the applicant. Scrutiny reservation is not applied under the travel grants.

More detailed rules are included in Annex I to this Work Plan - Rules for awarding grants.

3 IMPLEMENTATION SYSTEM

3.1 Applicants and financing

Eligible applicants / partners are legal persons registered in the Slovak Republic or in the DS.

The minimum grant amount for an activity / initiative supported by the call will be stated in the particular call.

Generally, payments are provided as reimbursement of already incurred costs. If the grant amount exceeds €25,000, an advance payment of up to 80 % may be provided by the NFP following the signature of the contract.

3.2 Modalities for allocating of the funds

The **open call for online bilateral activities shall be published in 2021 and shall be focused on “cultural cooperation” and “political and institutional cooperation”**. The NFP will consult the call text, including eligibility and selection criteria with the JCBF whose recommendation shall be duly taken into consideration.

The open call for smaller scale activities – travel grants – may be published in 2021/2022, in order to support participation at strategic bilateral events/conferences/seminars etc. Travel grants of up to €5,000 shall be provided. Should the world health situation allow travelling, the NFP will consult the allocation and call text, including eligibility and selection criteria with the JCBF whose recommendation shall be duly taken into consideration.

The priorities of pre-defined activities / initiatives for 2021 – 2022 will be focused on *political cooperation and cultural cooperation*. Other predefined activities proposals can be discussed within JCBF in accordance with Statutes and Rules of Procedure of the JCBF. In case a member of the JCBF shall implement a pre-defined activity upon the approval of the JCBF, the respective member shall abstain from voting.

Any uncommitted funds from the open call may be allocated for the call for smaller scale activities and vice versa, subject the approval of the JCBF.

4 BILATERAL PRIORITY PROGRAMMES

Programme title	DPP(s)	Funds allocated in MoU	JCBF - Allocations	Total allocation	Comments
Bilateral funds for the programme Business Development, Innovation and SME	Innovation Norway, Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU) and National Agency of International Education Affairs (AIBA)	€150,000	0€ (TBD)	€150,000	<i>JCBF allocation will be stated based on submitted and approved documents "Expression of Interest"</i>
Bilateral funds for the programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation	Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate (NVE), Directorate for Civil Protection and Emergency Planning (DSB) and the Norwegian	€100,000	0€ (TBD)	€100,000	
Bilateral funds for the programme Cultural Entrepreneurship, Cultural Heritage and Cultural Cooperation	Directorate for Cultural Heritage (RA) and Arts Council of Norway (ACN)	€125,000	€146,400	€271,400	
Bilateral funds for the programme Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency / Cross-border Cooperation	Norwegian Barents Secretariat	€75,000	€70,000	€145,000	
Bilateral funds for the programme Domestic and Gender-based Violence	Norwegian Directorate of Health	€75,000	€150,000	€225,000	
Bilateral Funds for the programme Local Development, Poverty Reduction and Roma Inclusion	Council of Europe	€75,000	0€ (TBD)	€75,000	

5 PREDEFINED ACTIVITIES FOR 2021 – 2022

5.1 Predefined initiative 1

The strategic cooperation of national theatres

Implementing entity: Slovak National Theatre

Partner(s): National Theatre in Oslo / National Theatre in Bergen

Allocation: €40,000

Short description:

This bilateral initiative includes strategic bilateral cooperation of national theatres in Slovakia and Norway.

All implemented activities will have national or international importance and impact. Media presentation of this professional cooperation at national level will be an integral part of the activity. All media outputs will be directly focused on the presentation of the bilateral dimension of the Activity, as well as the role of EEA and Norway Grants as the Donors.

The activity brings significant strategic importance to the cooperation between Slovakia and Norway in the cultural area.

Expected period of the implementation is 2021.

The Grant Application including a detail proposal for the bilateral activity and related description and indicators will be subject to discussion in the JCBF. The listed indicators below can be considered as core indicators. Further indicators will be set within the Grant Application. Following the conclusion of the discussion about the Grant Application in the JCBF, the information listed in the Work Plan will be updated.

Planned results:

OUTPUT	INDICATOR	TARGET
Slovak – Norwegian Theatrical Cooperation established / enhanced	Number of cooperation agreements signed	1
	Number of cooperating cultural institutions from Slovakia and Norway	4
	Number of reportages issued by Slovak Media	2
	Number of articles issued by Slovak Media	2
	Number of media outputs (reportages, articles etc.) issued by Norwegian Media	2
TBD	TBD	TBD

5.2 Predefined initiative 2

Accompanying /business/ activities related to State Visit of the President of the Republic of Iceland in the Slovak Republic – plan 2021

Implementing entity: Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR

Partner(s): Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iceland

Allocation: €15,000

Short description:

The activities will include accompanying activities or events with strategic importance for bilateral cooperation between Slovakia and Iceland at political level related the official program of the state visit. Focus on accompanying activities is planned to develop bilateral trade cooperation and tourism and academic and scientific cooperation (student programs, academic cooperation, scientific cooperation in the area of green technologies and the use of geothermal energy).

The Grant Application, including a detailed proposal for the bilateral activity and related description and indicators will be subject to discussion in the JCBF. Following the conclusion of the discussion about the Grant Application in the JCBF, the information listed in the Work Plan will be updated accordingly.

Planned results:

OUTPUT	INDICATOR	TARGET
TBD	TBD	TBD

5.3 Predefined initiative 3 – completed

SK Presidency in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) – 2019; SK Presidency in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – 2019

Implementing entity: Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR

Partner(s): TBD

Allocation: €30,000

Disbursed amount: €5,353

Short description:

The initiative enhanced cooperation within the context of the SK Presidency in the OECD via organization of a workshop, which was the final event of the joint project of the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic and the OECD on Smart Cities as a Tool for Sustainable Development of the Slovak Cities.

Achieved results:

OUTPUT	INDICATOR	TARGET	ACHIEVED
Political cooperation between Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Slovakia under OSCE enhanced	Number of SK/DS experts contributions at events / conferences during SK Presidency in OSCE	8	0
	TBD	3	0
Political cooperation between Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Slovakia under OECD enhanced	Number of bilateral conferences during SK Presidency in OECD	1	1
	Number of participants in bilateral events / activities from Donor States	1	1
	Report from bilateral event	1	1
	Media outputs	4	6

5.4 Predefined initiative 4

Accompanying activities / events on the occasion of Celebration of 300 years of Principality of Liechtenstein (optional) – 2021/2022

Implementing entity: Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Justice and Culture of the Principality of Liechtenstein (TBC)

Partner(s): TBD

Allocation: €20,000

Short description:

The activities will promote the tercentenary of the establishment of the Principality of Liechtenstein. Possible activities are: cultural events, study visits, seminars etc.

The Grant Application, including a detailed proposal for the bilateral activity and related description and indicators will be subject to discussion in the JCBF. Following the conclusion of the discussion about the Grant Application in the JCBF, the information listed in the Work Plan will be updated accordingly.

Planned results:

OUTPUT	INDICATOR	TARGET
TBD	TBD	TBD

5.5 Predefined initiative 5

Reducing the Gender Pay Gap – 2021

Implementing entity: Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of SR

Partner(s): The Directorate of Equality

Allocation: €15,000

Short description:

The gender pay gap in Slovakia has long been above the average for the EU level even though it continues to show a favourable falling trend. Gender segregation in the labour market in Slovakia is closely linked to the overall lower income of women. Despite women's excellent level of education women do not achieve comparable earnings to men because education in "typically female areas" is less valued. The current control mechanisms under Labour Inspection need a new impulse to reinforce the existing legislation better.

Iceland example could be used as a good practice since its policies belong to the most progressive in the world. The law on Equal Pay Certification entered into force in January of 2018, by additions to provisions of the Icelandic Gender Equality Act. The immediate effect was a requirement that all ministries and workplaces with 250 or more staff members on an annual basis are supposed to obtain Equal Pay Certification by the end of the year 2018. With minor adjustments to original aims, this has meant that practical application and knowledge about implementing the gender pay standards has been acquired in numerous organisations.

The building on this experience the Directorate of Equality in Iceland will provide a workshop for delegates from Slovakia followed by a study trip. In the workshop, the history of gender equality and equal pay legislation will provide a backdrop for the analysis and presentation of the most recent developments in gender pay legislation. The workshop, to be held in Iceland, will include presentations from specialist advisors and lawyers mandated the administration and implementation of the Icelandic Gender Equality Act. Accredited auditors from licensed auditing bodies will provide insight into the certification of the equal pay management system. In addition, corporate human resource experts will give examples of the benefits of working within the framework of the equal pay system.

Planned results:

OUTPUT	INDICATOR	TARGET
Political cooperation between Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Slovakia in the Gender Equality field enhanced	Number of workshops between Slovak and Icelandic institutions active in the field of Gender Equality	1
	Number of study trips from Slovakia to Iceland related to Gender Equality	1
	Number of Slovak participants in the meetings	5

	Number of Icelandic participants in the meetings	8
Know-how between Slovak and Icelandic institutions in the field of Gender Equality transferred	Icelandic Equal Pay Certification methodology explained to Slovak participants	Yes
	Slovak legislation in the field of Gender Equality explained to Icelandic participants	Yes
	Study trip report providing overview of the Icelandic Equal Pay Certification methodology elaborated	Yes

6 BUDGET

Please note that this budget follows the structure of the IFR template.

Title		Budget	Comments
Call for proposals 2019 / 2020 - closed	Subject to Decision of JCBF (implementation of bilateral activities under call, smaller scale activities (travel grants) and predefined activities specified within Part 5	€154,806	Political and Institutional cooperation Cultural cooperation
On-going call for smaller scale initiatives – closed		€13,772	Travel grants
Pre-defined activities 2019 – 2020		€5,353	Disbursed amount of implemented pre-defined activities (Section 5)
Call for proposals 2021/2022		€200,000	Political and Institutional cooperation Cultural cooperation for online bilateral activities
Pre-defined activities 2021 – 2022		€90,000	Allocated amount of pre-defined activities (Section 5)
Bilateral funds for the programme Business Development, Innovation and SMEs	Funds allocated to Programmes based on MoUs and Expressions of Interest	€150,000	EEA/NFM MoUs
Bilateral funds for the programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation		€100,000	EEA/NFM MoUs
Bilateral funds for the programme Cultural Entrepreneurship, Cultural Heritage and Cultural Cooperation		€271,400	EEA MoU, EI-SK-CLT-001
Bilateral funds for the programme Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency / Cross-border Cooperation		€145,000	EEA MoU, EI-SK-GGC-001
Bilateral funds for the programme Local Development, Poverty Reduction and Roma Inclusion		€75,000	NFM MoU
Bilateral funds for the programme Domestic and Gender-based Violence		€225,000	NFM MoU, EI-SK-DGV-001, EI-SK-DGV-002
Funds reserved for programmes based on “Expression of Interest”	Funds reserved for Programmes for activities implemented based on “Expression of Interest” – subject of Decision of the JCBF	€295,600	Funds allocated to Programmes based on submitted and approved “Expression of Interest”
Funds still to be allocated	Subject to Decision of the JCBF	€536,069	Will be allocated for 2023-2025 or earlier upon the decision of the JCBF
TOTAL		€2,262,000	

ANNEX I – RULES FOR AWARDING GRANTS

1) Introduction

- a) The involvement of the members of the JCBF in the selection process is an additional, extra task, unrelated to the standard functions of the JCBF as defined in the Regulations, Bilateral Guideline and the Statutes and Rules of Procedure.
- b) Unless otherwise stated in this document, the Statutes and Rules of Procedure, including, but not limited to chapter IV point 2 (decision-making) shall not apply.

2) Basic procedural rules

- a) The members express their opinion on the Grant Applications through electronic voting, organised by the NFP. In case of Open Call, voting shall be supported by a scoring chart, filled in in line with the selection criteria. Alternatively, a statement confirming that the member agrees with the opinion and scoring chart of the National Focal Point shall suffice.
- b) While the members agree that it is not possible to reach consensus on each and every Grant Application submitted, the members endeavour to closely cooperate in order to make sure that the votes and objections of any of the other members are carefully considered. Mutual trust and confidence should be applied whenever an objection is raised.
- c) If a member votes against a Grant Application or if an objection is raised, proper justification is required. The justification shall be detailed enough to enable the applicant to understand the reasons for the rejection of the application and shall follow the selection criteria.
- d) Representatives of Liechtenstein and Iceland are relieved from assessing the Grant Applications submitted in the Calls where only Slovak and Norwegian organisations are eligible to apply.

3) Rules of nomination

- a) The right of nomination of the person carrying out the voting (hereinafter referred to as “the assessor”) on the Grant Application belongs to the representative of the member in the JCBF (hereinafter referred to as “the representative”).
- b) The assessor might be the representative him/herself, his or her deputy in the JCBF or any other person.
- c) The representative shall notify the NFP about the contact details of the assessor (e.g. in an e-mail).
- d) The representative may also nominate several assessors. In that case, the Grant Applications shall be circulated to all of them; however, every member has only one vote.
- e) The nomination can be revoked by the representative.
- f) The nomination is not contingent of the particular representative, e.g. in case a new representative becomes member in the JCBF.

4) Criteria, voting and FIFO principle

- a) Formal and eligibility criteria shall be elaborated by the NFP and submitted to the JCBF for comments along with the text of the Call.
- b) Grant Applications not meeting formal or eligibility criteria, evaluated by the NFP, shall be rejected by the NFP. This does not prevent the re-submission of the Grant Application.
- c) Applicants whose applications were rejected due to non-compliance with formal or eligibility criteria have the right to appeal to the NFP, or re-submit the application. In case the appeal is successful, the original day of the submission of the application is considered when applying the FIFO principle.
- d) Selection criteria shall be elaborated by the NFP, approved by the JCBF and published along with the Call.

- e) In case of open calls, the assessors shall vote “FOR” or “AGAINST” the Grant Application or formally “ABSTAIN” from voting.
- f) In case of travel grants, the assessors may vote “FOR” or raise „OBJECTION” against the initial opinion of the NFP.
- g) FIFO (First In First Out) principle means that the applications are evaluated in the exact same order as they were received by the NFP. The NFP automatically reserves funds for the financing of the application after it is delivered.
- h) The call is closed if the amount of funds reserved tops the call allocation, however, a certain number of Grant Applications delivered in the meantime can be put on a reserve list (pipeline) and funded in case of savings in, withdrawal from or rejection of other Grant Applications or in other similar cases.

5) Procedure for awarding grants under an open call

- a) Every Grant Application meeting the formal and eligibility criteria is circulated to all JCBF members, along with the NFP’s initial opinion. The opinion represents the vote of the NFP as the member of the JCBF.
- b) Deadline for selection and voting is generally 5 working days. Within this period, any member may enter scrutiny reservation. Entering the scrutiny reservation suspends the time limits for a maximum of 5 working days. Members that remain silent are considered to have supported the NFP’s opinion (vote).
- c) The Grant Application is supported if it is voted “FOR” by **all, but at least three** members (hereinafter referred to as “the quorum”).
- d) If quorum is not reached, the deadline is prolonged by another 5 working days. The assessors shall be notified and requested to vote by the NFP. If, at the end of this period, the quorum is still not reached, the application shall be rejected and the reservation of funds cancelled.
- e) If the quorum is not unanimous, a discussion shall be held in order to reach consensus. Following the discussion, the NFP shall organise a new round of voting that shall be completed within 5 working days. If consensus still cannot be reached, the Grant Application shall be rejected and the reservation of funds cancelled.
- f) The members may make comments in order to improve the quality of the Grant Application. Comments shall be entitled as “substantive” or “minor”.
- g) In case substantive comments are received, the Grant Application needs to be modified within a period set by the NFP and circulated to all members again. The reservation of funds shall not be cancelled until the new assessment by the JCBF members is completed.
- h) Procedure under points b) – g) shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to any substantive modification of an already supported Grant Application.

6) Procedure for awarding travel grants

- a) Every Grant Application meeting the formal and eligibility criteria is circulated to all JCBF members, along with the NFP’s initial opinion. The opinion represents the vote of the NFP as the member of the JCBF.
- b) The NFP shall reserve funds for the financing of the Grant Application, irrespective of its opinion.
- c) In case the opinion of the NFP is positive and no objection is received within three working days following the circulation of the application, the Grant Application is *supported*; otherwise, the application is *rejected* and the reservation of funds cancelled.
- d) In case the opinion of the NFP is negative and **all, but at least two voting** assessors raised objection against the opinion, the Grant Application is *supported*; otherwise, the application is *rejected* and the reservation of funds cancelled.

7) Procedure for pre-defined initiatives

- a) The NFP shall approach the applicant for a pre-defined initiative well before the estimated start of the implementation of the initiative and request the submission of the Grant Application.

- b) The NFP shall, in close cooperation with the applicant, make all efforts to ensure that the Grant Application properly reflects the concept of the activity listed in the Work Plan.
- c) Once the Grant Application is fully developed, it shall be circulated to all JCBF members for comments within a deadline of 10 working days.
- d) In case substantive comments are received, the Grant Application needs to be modified and circulated to all members again.
- e) If no substantive comments are received within the deadline, the Grant Application is considered approved.
- f) Procedure under points b) – e) shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to any substantive modification of an already supported Grant Application.

8) Final decision

- a) Final decision shall be issued by the NFP (statutory representative or designated person).
- b) No appeal procedure shall apply on the final decision.

9) Final provisions

- a) Deadlines shall be calculated as of the day following the day the action was taken.
- b) Working days are those days considered working in both the Beneficiary State and the EFTA States.