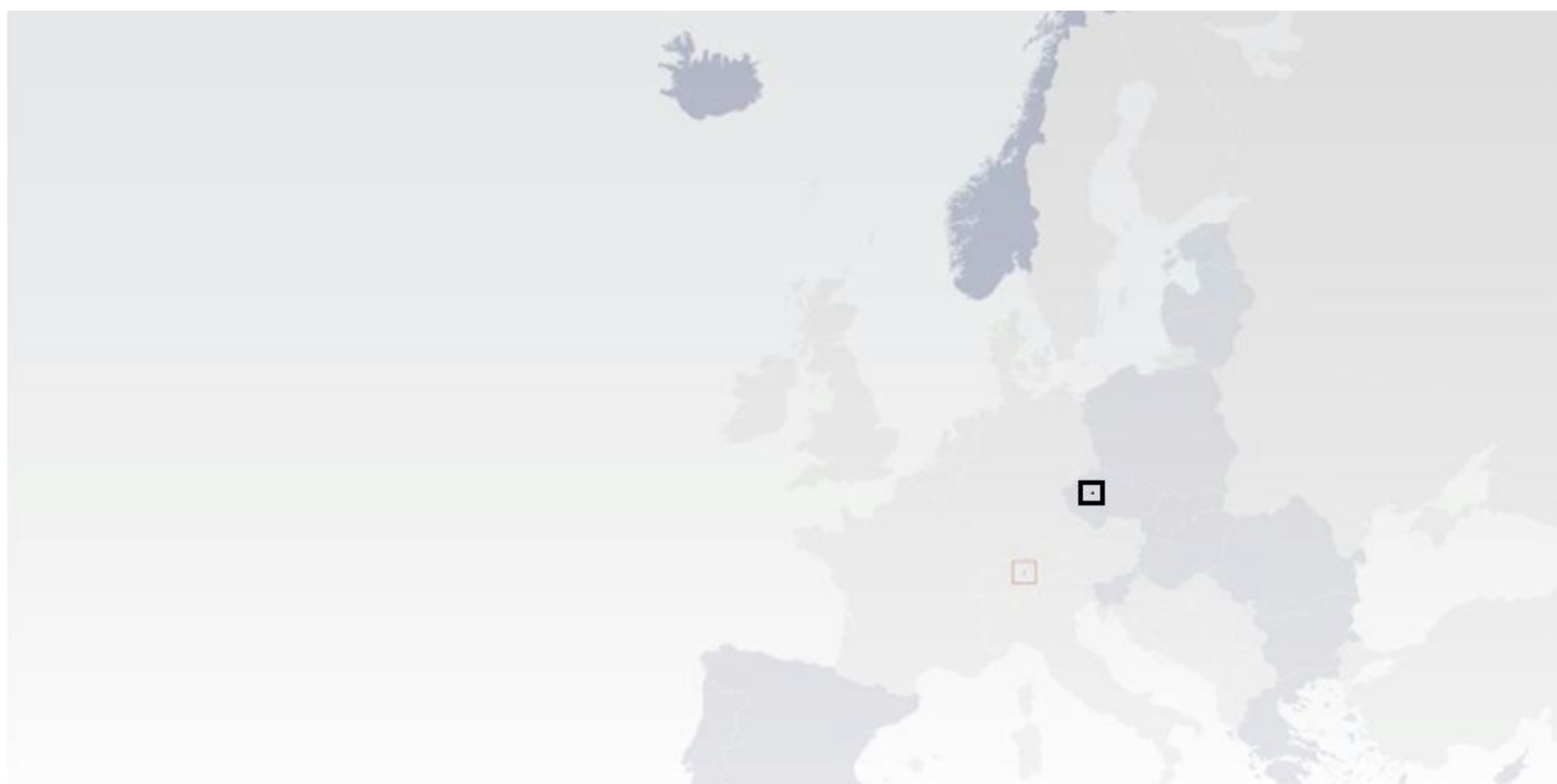




Report from

P017 Meeting

7-9th October 2015, Prague





Staircase at the entrance of the Palace Desfours

Dear colleagues,

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Thank you for your participation at the Meeting of Programme Operators in the Programme area no. 17, held in Prague 7-9th October 2015, for your ideas, proposals and engagement in extensive discussions. This is a brief report of these 3 days, which I hope, proved to be very beneficial to all of us. I firmly believe the cooperation among the Programme Operators, the Arts Council Norway and the Financial Mechanism Office will continue to be successful in the future.

Šárka Sovová

Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic

1. Overview, hindsight & challenges

Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Spain - - - 243 projects / 157 in bilateral partnership



PROJECT SUCCESS RATE

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Spreads between 19-31 % in the individual programmes (aside from Bulgaria where 5 % of applications were supported).

Approximately 65 % of the projects are in bilateral partnership.

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Aren't we spreading the pancake too much?

-Sheamus Cassidy, FMO

”

On Thursday, 8th October, the setting of the focus of the programme in relation to all diverse artistic areas, artistic quality, number of projects and bilateral capacity in donor states was a largely discussed issue.

It was agreed the decision to narrow the eligibility for grant support depends on the circumstances in every country. Nevertheless, two cleavages which can significantly influence the results of the programme were highlighted. Firstly, the *artistic focus of projects* (theatre/music/film etc.) and secondly, the *size of the project*. The size of the project primarily refers to the size of the grant but it also affects the level of artistic value, publicity, significance of the project promoter or the donor state partner).

LESS BIG PROJECTS vs. MORE SMALLER PROJECTS

- ATTRACT BIG DONOR PARTNERS
 - GOOD PUBLICITY AND PR
 - LESS ADMINISTRATION
 - PROJECT LIFE CYCLE LONGER
- CHANCE FOR NEW EMERGING ENTITIES/FESTIVALS/WORKSHOPS
 - VITAL SUPPORT FOR SMALLER PROJECTS AND CULTURAL LIFE
 - RISKY



2. Lessons learned in bilateral cooperation

EFFECTIVE USE OF FUNDS FOR BILATERAL RELATIONS

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The participants agreed the **simplification** of the bilateral funds at programme level (measure A and measure B) and at the national level is important. However, the view on the most effective way of using the funds for **searching for project partners** from donor states differed depending on the size of allocation and the expected demand. Whereas in Lithuania the seed money proved useful, the proportionally higher demand in Poland would cause major administrative difficulties combined with low successful rate. It was agreed the match-making seminars represent a very useful tool for searching for project partners (especially when held in the donor states, e.g. organized in Oslo within the Lithuanian programme).



However, the pool of the possibilities in bilateral cooperation has **changed.**

While preparing the future setting, it is important to consider:

- already **established cooperation**,
 - **bilateral capacity** in the donor states,
 - **sufficient time** for planning the cooperation between the partners based on their character,
 - the **opening of the cooperation** to cultural promoters beyond the donor states, to the other EU countries.
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The Arts Council Norway also suggested creating meeting places, thus widening possibilities for cultural entities of discussing common topics of interest and meeting potential partners, but not necessarily leading into a project immediately.



RECOMMENDATIONS BY ACN

- ! Ensure that the reporting requirements and administrative burden corresponds with amount granted
- ! Mid-term meetings for partners
- ! Manage expectations on all sides
- ! Relevant documents in English
- ! Involve Arts Council Norway as a DPP



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It would be good to have the Arts Council Norway at the future trainings for project applicants.

”

3. Workshop on the selection process

FOCUS ON AIMS OF THE EEA GRANTS

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This issue raised rather questions than answers. Here are some of them:



You identify what or who you want to support. Either children, excluded groups or minority groups.

? Should not the special target groups be decided in every country?

For example in Poland, the minorities represent 2 % of the citizens, the largest is the German minority.

? Is it necessary for cultural projects to have a social impact?

Some projects have big potential to provide access to culture or have social character, but they lack required social impact. The NGO programmes go deeper. Do we really fight anti-semitism with supporting Jewish cultural heritage?

? What about the focus of the next period?

We might be facing setting the programmes in favour of creative industries, economic growth and implicit focus on employment and tourism.

? Would it be in compliance with the rules on state-aid?

The countries foresee notification of the future programme.

QUALITY OF EXPERT EVALUATIONS AND TRANSPARENCY OF RESULTS

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The Czech Republic positively evaluated the **role of the experts from Arts Council Norway** in the Selection Committee. In Poland, each application was evaluated by one Polish expert and one expert from Norway. As agreed with Latvia, Romania and Portugal it is important to have also somebody focusing on the management side of the application (i.e. budget) for example in the Selection committee.

The Arts Council Norway mentioned the Norwegian experts are not used to provide written **justification**. The Arts Council never gives evaluations to their applicants. The applicants can only appeal the technical procedure.

In the beneficiary states, the situation is different - if the justification is not provided, the EEA Grants could lose their **reputation of being fair and transparent**. Therefore sufficient and objective justification in expert evaluations is important to provide reasonable feedback to the applicants and in the case of appeals.

The Czech Republic is considering **lowering the limit** of the difference between the scores given by the two experts in order to commission a third expert (now 30 %). According to their experience the difference between the first and last supported project was approximately 13 points. In case of two scores - 95 points, 80 points - the average score would not be enough for receiving the grant.



4. Workshop on the implementation of projects



REVENUE GENERATED IN PROJECTS

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In case of projects generating revenue, their project promoters in the Czech Republic, Poland and Romania may either transmit revenue to the PO or ask for **additional project activities**. Both the project promoters and the POs welcome the latter possibility.

As for the **revenue monitoring**, such information is included in a special form within monitoring reports in Romania. Project promoters in Poland are obliged to state explicitly, how much revenue their project generate. Unfortunately, there is a problem with revenue generated by partners from the donor states, as these cannot be monitored. Overall, project promoters are responsible for all revenue.

In Bulgaria and Lithuania, all project activities are **free of charge**, therefore revenue problems are not the issue in these countries.

CO-FINANCING

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In the Czech Republic, project promoters usually take out loans to co-finance their projects. Within the first call, **advance payments** were set only up to 20 %. The amount was raised up to 60 % within the second call, since a pre-financing payment equating to 20 % of the total project budget turned out to be very low and insufficient. In Poland, the advanced payments released are up to 80 % for small projects and up to 60 % for large projects. Concerning the advance payments in Bulgaria, there is a specific problem with NGOs – if NGOs cease to exist, it is impossible to **recover the provided funds back**. In the Czech Republic and Poland, there are legal tools to get the money back.

MONITORING TOOLS

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The **length of the monitoring period** is mostly set to 4 months. In Romania, the reporting period will probably be changed to 1-6 months according to the development of the project implementation. The monitoring period in Poland lasts 4 months and the deadline for monitoring reports is the same for all projects. The same principle is applied in the Czech Republic. For the future, both the Czech Republic and Poland prefer **setting the submission deadlines individually for each project** according to the start of the project. The monitoring report in the Czech Republic is divided into 2 parts, so the content and the financial parts are checked. The cooperation between the departments working on the check is running smoothly. In Poland, the check of the report is also divided between two people.

5. Future plans and future challenges



SHOWCASE!

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It is important to promote our results and work in progress. Stories say more.

CULTURE IS CROSS EUROPE

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Target bilateral partnership and help people work together. Focus on the obstacles which limit circulation and development of partnership.





FOCUS ON THE PROCEDURE

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The future focus and the content of the programme area are still in a draft. However, we may already focus on the procedure. Is not the administrative burden too high, in particular with regards to the grant amount and the administration of unsuccessful applications? Is it possible to simplify the application form?

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A lesson from starting late – cut the time wherever you can while keeping the necessary checks and balances.

-Sheamus Cassidy, the FMO

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If it is not broken, do not fix it.

-Sheamus Cassidy, the FMO

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NEXT MEETING

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Bonding and collaborating during face-to-face meeting of Programme Operators proved to be highly beneficial and informative to all the participants. Next meeting will be most likely held in Poland, while the Programme Operators from Latvia, Portugal and Romania consider organizing similar event, too.

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*Exhibition
Brave New
World, in DOX
Gallery*

***No Title** is about how reality exists in language and how this extends into real space. It is about how memory and imagination blur. It is about things and how things can be there and gone at the same time, and that what defines this is various.*

