

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA

FORUM OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF THE EEA EFTA STATES

Ref: 16-3047

THIRTEENTH MEETING OF THE EEA EFTA FORUM

Stykkishólmur

6-7 June 2016

Opinion on the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021

Rapporteur: Hilde Onarheim

The EEA EFTA Forum of Local and Regional Authorities (the Forum):

- A. Having regard to Protocol 38A to the Agreement on the European Economic Area (the EEA Agreement) on the EEA Financial Mechanism;
 - B. Noting the Agreement between the European Union, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway on an EEA Financial Mechanism for the period 2014-2021;
 - C. Noting the Agreement between the European Union and Norway on a Norwegian Financial Mechanism for the period 2014-2021;
 - D. Having regard to “Mid-term evaluation of the support to strengthened bilateral relations under the EEA and Norway Grants” of 22 April 2016;
 - E. Noting the reinforced subsidiarity principle set out in the Lisbon Treaty and its explicit reference to the local and regional dimension and self-government;
 - F. Having regard to the important role of local and regional authorities in reducing economic and social disparities in Europe;
 - G. Acknowledging the impact of European Union law on local and regional authorities in the EEA EFTA States through the EEA Agreement;
 - H. Noting the role of the Forum as a body in the EFTA structure.
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- 1. Encourages the Governments of the EEA EFTA States to ensure that local and regional views are reflected in the EEA and Norway Grants projects, through timely consultation on programme priorities for the upcoming financial period, i.e. through their associations in the EEA EFTA countries;
 - 2. Asks that local and regional authorities in the beneficiary countries be specifically indicated as beneficiaries of the EEA and Norway Grants and that activities to motivate and involve local and regional authorities in programmes and projects funded by the Grants are undertaken, in both donor and beneficiary states;

3. Encourages the European Commission and the Governments of the EEA EFTA States to include special programmes addressing local and regional government issues in the next financial period for the EEA and Norway Grants;
4. Encourages beneficiary states to avail themselves of donor states' experience with the inclusion of local and regional authorities in policy areas such as local and regional development, poverty reduction, youth employment, migration management, environment and climate change and more;
5. Proposes that mechanisms for encouraging partnerships between local and regional authorities in donor and beneficiary countries be further developed in the memoranda of understanding between the EEA EFTA States and the beneficiary countries;
6. Encourages beneficiary states to release bilateral funds early, enabling enhanced processes for the establishment of partnerships between local and regional authorities in donor and beneficiary countries;
7. Instructs the Secretariat to submit this Opinion to the formal Consultation Process on the Draft Priorities for the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 by 8 July 2016. Furthermore, instructs the Secretariat to forward this Opinion to the national authorities and the associations of local and regional authorities in the 15 beneficiary states;
8. Instructs the Secretariat to forward this Opinion to the EFTA Standing Committee at Ministerial level.