

**2016 Annual Programme Report  
EEA Financial Mechanism 2009-2014**

**Ministry of Research and Innovation**

*15<sup>th</sup> of February 2017*

Beneficiary State	<b>Romania</b>
Programme title	<b>Research within Priority Sectors</b>
Programme number	<b>RO 14</b>
Planned total expenditure (euro)	<b>23.529.412</b>
Planned total eligible expenditure (euro)	<b>23.529.412</b>
Grant rate awarded	<b>85%</b>
Grant awarded (euro)	<b>20.000.000</b>
Date of donor decision	<b>05/08/2013</b>
Programme planned completion date	<b>31/12/2017</b>

## **1. Executive summary**

Under the current reporting period, the Programme Operator has continued to successfully implement the Programme by pursuing all the activities undertaken within the Programme Agreement and in particular those related to the ongoing contracts for the funding of 23 joint research projects in the four priority sectors namely: “Renewable energy to fight climate change”, “Health and food safety”, “Environmental protection and management” and “Social sciences and humanities”.

At mid-February 2016, the interim payments of 90% of the 2016 earmarked budget for all contracts were paid by the Programme Operator. The Annual Scientific and Technical Reports and Annual Financial Reports for 2015 were evaluated with the support of independent external experts and verified by the Programme Operator staff. Based on the positive evaluation and evaluators recommendations to continue funding of the projects, certification of declared costs and authorization of payments, followed by transfer of due payments in the case of eleven contracts were done. Finally, notification was sent to all project promoters on the results of the second reporting period.

In terms of output indicators, the targets were reached and exceeded. Beyond the progress registered for “number of internationally refereed scientific publications” and “number of postdocs and/or PhD students”, there are additional indicators reported, like the indicator for the number of patent applications.

The trend of outcome indicators is showing progress in reaching the Programme objective, i.e. an enhanced research based knowledge development in Romania, illustrated by the substantial increase (more than two times higher compared to 2015) for the indicator counting the number of internationally referred joint scientific publications.

Different measures of the Action Plan for the use of the bilateral relations fund were put in place like the organization of two seminars on communication and ethics, opening the call for proposals for support projects under the bilateral relations fund, a study visit and a training course held in Norway.

Representatives of the Programme Operator attended the Research Programme Operators seminar organized in Lulea, Sweden, on June 2016 by the Research Council of Norway, as a “back-to-back” event with EARMA (European Association of Research Managers and Administrators) conference. These events were an excellent occasion for the exchange of expertise and good practices among the Programme Operators and at the same time for the promotion of the Programme achievements with the poster, roll-up and leaflets during the EARMA conference. Another opportunity for raising awareness on the Programme publicity issues at project level was the workshop dedicated to communication held in Sibiu on May 2016. In addition, a partnership with Radio Romania Cultural has been set up in the framework of a communication campaign for the promotion of research projects’ results by means of a series of interviews.

A number of monitoring instruments were used by the Programme Operator staff, for the benefit of a smooth and efficient implementation of the joint research projects, including eight on-the-spot monitoring visits performed last year.

Risks identified under this reporting period did not affect the achievement of the planned Programme outcome. Assessment of the identified risks was undertaken, followed by the mitigation actions carried out by the Programme Operator in order to eliminate them to the best possible extent.

## **2. Programme area specific developments**

With regard to the four thematic priority fields relevant for this programme area (i.e. “Renewable energy to fight climate change”, “Health and food safety”, “Environmental protection and management” and “Social sciences and humanities”), the first series of calls for the current programming period were open at national level in 2016 under the Operational Program for Competitiveness, Axis 1 “Research, development and innovation for the support of economic competitiveness and business development” and the 3<sup>rd</sup> National Plan for Research, Development and Innovation.

Given the different timing of the calls and of their timetable, in most cases the competition stages are not entirely pursued and therefore the final lists with funded contracts are not yet available. As such, neither analysis nor statistics on the current developments of these thematic priorities can be carried out for the moment. However, it is expected to see a considerable allocation of funds towards the programme thematic priority fields, at least for three out of four of them. According to the National Strategy for Research, Development and Innovation 2014-2020, two of the programme thematic priorities (energy and environment) were defined as smart specialization areas whilst another programme thematic priority (health) was set as a priority area of national interest.

In terms of potential synergies with EU programmes, new funding instruments were launched in 2016 under a specific action line of the structural funds dedicated to research, technological development and innovation called “Building synergies with Horizon 2020”. In addition, the open call under the bilateral relations fund of the programme is encouraging submission of support projects for seeking partners and preparation of project proposals in connection with Horizon 2020 and other European programs and initiatives, measure which is likely to facilitate the potential synergies with EU programmes.

In this reporting period, apart from an increase of 13% of the RDI public expenditure as compared to the previous year, there are no important developments in the programme area in respect of policy or administrative aspects to report on. Thus, in the absence of major changes with potential negative impact there are no risks occurred that might affect the achievement of the main objective of the Programme (i.e. to enhance research based knowledge development in Romania through increasing research cooperation between Romania and Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein).

### 3. Reporting on outputs

3.1 As set by the Programme and endorsed by the Programme Agreement, four outputs with their related indicators are contributing to the achievement of the Programme expected outcome, an increased research cooperation between the EEA EFTA and Romania.

The trend of the values of output indicators, generated by the funded joint research projects, are available for three reporting periods so far (2014, 2015 and 2016), as given in the summary table shown below. At the request of the Programme Operator, the indicators values for 2016 were reported by the Project Promoters in January 2017, in advance of the submission within the deadline of the projects annual scientific and technical reports.

No	Output	Output indicator(s)	Target	Value for 2014	Value for 2015	Value for 2016	Achieved in 2016 (data for DoRIS <sup>1</sup> )
1	Increasing number of research institutions	Number of research partners involved in joint research projects	50	87	87	86	-1
2	Increasing number of researchers	Number of researchers involved in joint research projects	150	356	492	474	-18
3	Better use of research results in terms of cooperation between Romania and EFTA States	Number of internationally refereed scientific publications	60	14	54	57	57
4	Increased role of postdocs and / or PhD students in R&D field	Number of postdocs and / or PhD students participating in joint research projects	50	125	130	134	4

<sup>1</sup> Documentation, Reporting and Information System, a web based system for the implementation of EEA and NO grants funded programs

The table shows the minor decrease in number of research partners involved in projects (from 87 to 86) due to the withdrawal from the project consortium of one Romanian project partner and also in number of researchers involved in projects (from 492 to 474) due to staff changes in certain projects occurred in line with the projects plan of activities.

Despite the small decline of these two output indicators, the other two indicators show progress for this reporting year in terms of research results, with 57 additional internationally refereed scientific publications and also a slight increase in number of postdocs and / or PhD students participating in projects (plus 4) as compared to the previous value of 130.

Other worthwhile achievements are three additional output indicators declared by the Project Promoters apart from the ones mentioned in the Programme, as follows:

- 5 patent applications (4 patent applications filled by contract no. 1SEE “Improving food safety through the development and implementation of active and biodegradable food packaging systems” and 1 patent applications filled by the contract no. 6 SEE “Cervical Cancer Control for Roma and Other Disadvantaged Groups in North-Western Region of Romania”);
- 46 conferences/workshops organized;
- 35 new project applications submitted under the various calls of the European/international programs or initiatives.

A detailed situation of the output indicators values with the level of contribution of each project and their spread by thematic area for 2016 is given in *Annex 1*.

To sum up, for all the indicators set through the Programme, the targets were reached and exceeded. Moreover, it has to be underlined in particular, the achievement of the additional indicator related to the patent applications.

3.2 The Programme has no pre-defined projects.

3.3 The Programme has no small grant schemes.

#### 4. Reporting on Programme outcome(s)

The outcome indicators achieved in this reporting period and their values for 2016 are presented in the table below, which allows comparison with the figures reported previously for 2014 and 2015. These indicators are measuring the progress in reaching the Programme objective, namely an enhanced research based knowledge development in Romania.

Outcome	Outcome indicator(s)	Target	Value for 2014	Value for 2015	Value for 2016	Achieved in 2016 (data for DoRIS)
Increased	Number of internationally referred joint scientific publications	20	3	21	50	50

research cooperation between Romania and EFTA States	Number of joint research projects between Romania and EFTA States	20	23	23	23	0
	Number of small medium sized enterprises engaged in research, development and/or innovative activities	5	8	8	7	-1

Whereas the Programme has foreseen a single call for proposals, the value of the indicator concerning the number of joint research projects remains unchanged until the Programme completion. The withdrawal of one Romanian project partner, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is diminishing also the indicator for the number of SMEs. On the other hand, it is worth noting the substantial increase (more than two times higher compared to 2015) for the indicator counting the number of internationally referred joint scientific publications. This indicator, which is measuring the results of common activities of the research teams from Romania and donor states, gives an indication of the level of collaboration between the project partners and on the efficiency of the created partnerships and ultimately brings the highest contribution to meeting the Programme outcome.

*Annex 2* is providing the detailed overview of the outcome indicators values for each funded project and by thematic area for 2016. For example, the distribution for the “internationally referred joint scientific publications” indicator by thematic area is the following:

- 16 for “Health and food safety”
- 8 for “Social sciences and humanities”
- 21 for “Environmental protection and management”
- 5 for “Renewable energy to fight climate change”.

All risks identified for this reporting period are presented in detail in *Annex 3*. They had no impact on the achievement of the Programme outcome since the risks are not related to the cohesion objective. The targets for the outcome indicators were already achieved, as seen in the above table, and furthermore the indicators total values show promising results.

Concerning the other two categories of objectives, the identified risks had low possible consequences and were not related to crucial issues in the Programme implementation. Moreover, due to the mitigation actions taken by the Programme Operator these risks were removed totally or in part.

As a general comment, better communication with Project Promoters and greater efforts on all sides concerned to shorten the response time in dealing with issues related to the contracts or to the Programme Operator’s administrative or financial matters can contribute to a smoother implementation process of the Programme.

### **Progress on horizontal concerns**

In addition to the previous programme annual reports, there are no further aspects occurred in relation to the Programme specific concerns as provided by the country Memorandum of Understanding on the implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 and the Programme Agreement. As a reminder, all conditions (i.e. the funding threshold for the “renewable energy”, the minimum level of investment for the improvement of the situation of the Roma population and for the “social sciences and

humanities”) were met since 2014, once the funding decision of the joint research projects was taken after the completion of the call stages.

Part of the projects monitoring process, updated data is now available on output indicators achieved in 2016 by those seven projects that are dealing with the improvement of the situation of the Roma population as presented in *Annex 4*.

## 5. Project selection

Not applicable for this Annual Programme Report.

## 6. Progress of bilateral relations

The concrete measures of the Action Plan for the use of the bilateral relations fund were the result of close collaboration and support provided by the DPPs (Norwegian Research Council and Icelandic Research Centre) aiming at strengthening the bilateral relations between Norway, Iceland and Romania in the future activities undertaken under the Programme.

Activities undertaken in 2016 under the bilateral relations fund were the following:

- two seminars on Communication and Ethics were organized by the Programme Operator in Sibiu on May 25th, respectively 26th. The events addressed a number of approximately 50 participants and they were very interactive, involving Programme Committee members and observers, project promoters and partners, representatives of the Norwegian Embassy, Ministry of European Funds, Ministry of Public Finance (certification unit) and experts/National Contact Points from the Programme Operator;
- the bilateral relations fund open call for proposals was launched on May 10th, 2016 together with the necessary documentation: Guide for applicants and Annexes, funding contract, reporting and payment formats as well as the evaluation procedure for the support project applications and composition of the evaluation panel (consisting of full members/alternate members of the PO). The call for proposals falls under Measure B “networking, exchange, sharing and transfer of knowledge, technology, experience and best practice between the Donor States and the Beneficiary State” of the „Bilateral Relations Fund” of the Programme.

The main objective of the call is to strengthen bilateral relations in the field of research, regardless of the thematic area, through networking, exchange, sharing and transfer of knowledge, technology, experience and best practice. Financial support is provided for support projects developed in partnership between entities from Romania, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, in line with the provisions of Article 7.7 to the EEA Regulation.

With an earmarked budget of 200.000 euro, the open call will end on April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017 and provides for the applicants the following two funding instruments:

1. Participation to events/meetings/visits/training/courses
2. Organization of events/meetings/visits/training/courses

Both type of funding instruments undertaken in relation to the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation Horizon 2020 and other European Programmes and initiatives (e.g. Eureka, article 185 initiatives like Eurostars and others, JPIs, JTIs, KICs, etc.)

aiming at seeking partners and preparation of project proposals are in particular encouraged.

Currently, the total number of applications submitted in 2016 is 32, out of which 13 were accepted for funding (applications come from higher education organizations, universities and institutes of the Romanian Academy). From the point of view of the geographical coverage, the majority of applications were submitted from Timisoara (6), while the rest of applications were from Bucharest (4) and then Iasi, Brasov and Cluj -Napoca (1 each). The contracted budget in 2016 represents 47% of the total call budget.

The identified risk of low interest from the potential applicants was mitigated in part by the systematic promotion of the call through various channels, including the visibility on the Programme webpage. Targeted dissemination was carried out by e-mail messages addressed to the Project Promoters as well as to the project applicants to the main call and also by making use of the mailing lists of Horizon 2020 National Contact Points (which are hosted by the Programme Operator).

- a ½ day training course was organised for the Programme Operator staff on 26 October 2016 at the premises of the Research Council of Norway, focusing on topics such as programme administration in the reporting system of the RCN and the financial reporting.

- a study visit was organized during 26-27 October for the delegation consisting of the Programme Operator staff, Programme Committee members and observers, at the headquarters of the following 5 Norwegian project partners located in Oslo:

1. "The Ethnography of the Prisoner's Transitions" (Norwegian partner: The University of Oslo, Faculty of Law);
2. "Remote sensing, model and in-situ data fusion for snowpack parameters and related hazards in a climate change perspective" (Norwegian partner: Head of Section for Earth Observation, Norwegian Computing Center, Norsk Regnesentral);
3. „Molecular authentication of complex herbal food supplements for safety and efficacy" (Norwegian partner: Naturhistorisk museum);
4. "Perovskites for Photovoltaic Efficient Conversion Technology" (Norwegian partner: University of Oslo, Department of Physics);
5. "Cervical Cancer Control for Roma and Other Disadvantaged Groups in North-Western Region of Romania" (Norwegian partner: Oslo University Hospital/ Cancer Registry of Norway).

Both the training course and the study visit have been extremely useful for the implementation of the Programme activities and they have contributed significantly to the consolidation of the bilateral collaboration at institutional level, leading to a better comprehension of the programme management practices in Norway, but also to exchanging ideas about the sustainability of the partnerships created by the Programme.

- preparation by the Programme Operator, starting with December 2016, of a thematic conference in Cluj- Napoca in the first trimester of 2017. The conference will address the project promoters and partners, with the view to promote other funding opportunities made available by European funding programmes such as H2020. The agenda is being built on the participation of the NCPs responsible for those H2020 scientific fields mirroring the 4 thematic areas of the Programme.

## **Complementary action**

After the seminars organized in May 2016 in Sibiu, the Programme Operator has organized a cultural sight-seeing tour in Alba-Iulia city on May 26th 2016, visiting the

projects developed by the Programme Operator for Culture Programme, with the view to strengthen the cooperation with other programme operators from Romania and to exchange best practices and experiences in the implementation of the EEA and Norwegian funded projects.

Representatives of the Programme Operator have participated to Research Programme Operators seminar organized in Lulea, Sweden (June 2016) by the Research Council of Norway, as a “back-to-back” event with EARMA (European Association of Research Managers and Administrators) conference. During the seminar, the participants have discussed the “future Annex 12” to the Regulation of EEA grants and possible improvements. The Programme Operator staff attended also the parallel sessions of the EARMA conference, “Research Strategies and Policies, including Research Metrics and Global Dimension”, respectively “Recognition of the Profession: professional Development and career development; Support structures” and has also participated in the poster session set up during the conference breaks, when the opportunity was given to distribute the promotion materials (dedicated Programme posters, roll-ups, leaflets) and to exchange information with other research programme managers and administrators from EU and invited guests of EARMA.

## 7. Monitoring

The projects monitoring was performed by designated teams consisting of project officers, financial officers and purchase officer within the Programme Operator structure. The Programme Operator was assisted in this task by independent external experts, contracted for a fixed period of time in order to pursue the scientific monitoring of projects for each of the running projects.

The main monitoring instruments used are the following:

- Annual Scientific and Technical Reports, Financial Reports, Final Reports and Reports on scientific publications (according to the contract provisions and specific templates) and other documents requested by the PO for reporting purposes;
- On-the-spot visits for the verification of the projects’ implementation (their compliance with contract provisions, legal framework etc.);
- Instructions, notifications, and other official communications addressed to Project Promoters concerning rules and procedures to be followed during projects’ implementation
- Counselling provided to PPs by phone, e-mail, notes, etc.;
- Written answers to PPs on notifications, applications for amendments to the contracts and other applications;
- Technical meetings – organized by the Programme Operator with the Project Promoters in order to clarify aspects occurred during the projects’ implementation and prepare annual/final reporting.

**The Annual Scientific and Technical Reports and Financial Reports** were checked by the Programme Operator staff (project officers, respectively financial officers and public purchase officer). The Annual Scientific and Technical Reports were assessed by independent external experts, in accordance with the provisions of the evaluation service contract.

**Desk monitoring activities** are permanent activities undertaken by project officers, financial officers and financial responsible, as well as programme coordinators (by phone, e-mails, written notes answering Project Promoters' requests etc.).

**Evaluation of the Financial Interim Report** – at the beginning of November 2016, the Financial Interim Report for all 23<sup>rd</sup> projects was requested to Project Promoters. The financial data provided by these reports were checked and gathered by the financial officers in order to feed into the Programme Interim Financial Report.

A **technical meeting** dedicated to Project Promoters and financial managers was organized by the Programme Operator on 26<sup>th</sup> of September, in Bucharest, focusing on the certification of the personnel costs reported by part of the projects (inaccurate framing of the personnel costs within indirect costs, instead of direct costs). A practical exercise for the correct framing of personnel costs was elaborated and presented by the financial responsible of the Programme Operator. The related instruction, respectively the model for the addendum to contract was sent by PO to the Project Promoters concerned.

**On-the-spot monitoring visits** - based on the Programme Operator Monitoring Plan for 2016, as revised in the last trimester, the monitoring visits were foreseen for March-December 2016, taking into account the following selection criteria:

- Budget under 375.000 euro/partner, no proof of expenditure is required
- Difficulties in project implementation, risk of non-compliance with the project objective
- Geographical coverage

Eight on-the-spot monitoring visits have been performed by the Programme Operator teams (project officers, financial officers and public purchase officer), at the following Project Promoters' headquarters:

1. University of Craiova
2. „Emil Racovita” Speleology Institute, Bucharest
3. University of Bucharest (2 projects)
4. National R&D Institute for Biological Sciences, Piatra Neamț
5. “Carol Davila” University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Bucharest
6. Institute for Geodynamics of the Romanian Academy, Bucharest
7. University of Târgoviște

The following topics have been assessed during the monitoring visits:

- a) Capacity of the Project Promotor to implement the project;
- b) Eligibility of expenditures;
- c) Financial and accounting activities of the project;
- d) Procurements;
- e) Progress state of the project implementation;
- f) Communication Plan, fulfilment of publicity requirements & visual identity; existence of the good practices of the good governance, sustainable development and equal opportunities;
- g) Capacity to keep the tracks, create and maintain the audit trail through collection, preservation and archiving the documents;

- h) Risk factors, capacity to identify and characterize problems that occurred or may occur during implementation;
- i) Suggestions/ recommendations for remedial actions.

The Programme Operator teams have checked:

- Financial and accounting documents;
- Procurement files;
- Working plans for research activities, achieved results before the on-site monitoring mission; indicators for project achievements;
- Working programs, agendas, minutes of board meetings, technical working folders containing e-mails among the project consortium;
- Projects' websites.

As a result of the on-the-spot monitoring visits, the following conclusions were drawn:

- The project management and research activities are correlated with the allocated budget expenditures and are confirming progress in achieving the proposed objectives;
- The financial and accounting practices of the contractors comply with the legislation in force. Nevertheless, minor ineligible expenditures have been detected in some of the projects, which have been withdrawn from the payment and had no major impact on the project activities development.
- Whenever costs reallocations were needed, the initially planned annual budget has been updated accordingly; addenda to contracts have been concluded in order to reflect the modifications occurred, in particular the correct framing of cost category "personnel costs" for some projects (personnel costs as direct cost, not as overhead).
- Postponed purchase activities or changes in the research teams have been identified, but solutions have been found in terms of re-planning of research activities, hiring PhD students for some of the project tasks, modifying the project team, etc. No negative impact on running the project activities has been detected. In some cases, difficulties in the PhD research activities and project implementation have been signposted, due to miscorrelation of the PhD duration versus project duration, but other funding sources have been sought and found to cover the research activities undertaken by the projects.
- The particular focus towards project indicators, detailed by reporting periods and partners, has been highlighted during the monitoring visits as an extremely important part of the reporting process to the Programme Operator.
- Shortcomings in achieving the publicity and information requirements Guidelines. All websites are bilingual (EN/RO) and the information is complying with the Programme's Guide for information and publicity; however, not all PPs have a link to project partners' webpages.
- Among various reporting requirements to the Programme Operator during the lifetime of the project, the section of scientific publications is still lagging behind, despite the efforts to present and inform about the Programme Guide requirements and contract obligations. However, given the specificities of a research programme, the bulk of the scientific results are likely to be achieved towards the end of the projects.

The Projects Monitoring Plan for the year 2017 is presented in *Annex 5*.

## 8. Need for adjustments

Having regard to the incompatibility between the national specific legislation applicable to public entities in accordance to which funding can be provided only by pre-financing of costs (100% of total estimated eligible costs) and the provisions of point 4.1 "Payment flows" of Annex II „Operational Rules" to the Programme Agreement, where no distinction is done between the public entities and the other entities, the Program Operator submitted for the approval of the Financial Mechanism Committee a modification to Annex II of the Programme Agreement.

On July 14, 2016 the approval was granted by the Financial Mechanism Committee and hereby, the amendment to the Programme Agreement that allows only for the public entities which are Project Promoters or project partners to receive as annual advance payment their entire budget earmarked for the last year of project, entered into force on the same date.

## 9. Risk management

The Programme Operator has taken all the necessary measures and has successfully mitigated the risks identified in the previous reporting period. Simultaneously, the PO staff quickly adapted to the new administrative conditions generated by the setting up of the new top level management of the National Authority for Scientific Research and Innovation at the beginning of 2016, with the view to reduce any delays in the Programme implementation (e.g. transfer of interim payments, events organization and related public purchase procedures, financial management, project monitoring visits, PO study visit, etc.).

The Programme Operator staff undertook close monitoring of the projects implementation. There were situations registered at project level when support and mediation actions from the Programme Operator, involving project promoters, project partners, National Focal Point and national audit authorities were necessary in order to ensure a swift communication at all levels for the optimization of the project implementation process.

With reference to the risks identified under the reporting period, the analysis of the situation and the mitigation actions carried out or planned are briefly presented in *Annex 3*. The risks identified did not affect the achievement of the planned Programme outcome.

## 10. Information and publicity

In line with the Communication Plan provided by the Programme proposal, several activities were carried out during the reporting period. The PO webpage <http://www.research.ro/ro/articol/3551/program-see-eea-grants> was constantly updated.

At EARMA conference organized in Lulea, Sweden on June 2016, the Romanian representatives of the Programme Operator had the opportunity to distribute the promotion materials (dedicated Programme poster, roll-up and leaflets) and to exchange information with other research programme managers and administrators from EU.

Two workshops were organized in Sibiu in May 2016, dedicated to Ethics in Research and Communication/Publicity. The workshop on Communication was one of the activities foreseen in the strategic Communication Plan for the implementation of Programme RO14 "Research within Priority Sectors" as well as in the "Action Plan for the use of the bilateral relations fund" of the Programme. The workshop primarily focused on the importance of the communication and publicity issues, as a significant part behind the research activities within the entire framework of the funded projects under the Programme RO14. The target audiences for the event were the Project Promoters and their project partners as well as the Programme Operator staff. The role of each stakeholder (Financial Mechanism Office, Programme Operator, Project Promoters) in the communication process during the lifetime of this Programme funded by the EEA grants was underlined. Thought as an interactive dialogue and training event rather than a fast series of presentations, the workshop offered the opportunity for its attendees to better understand the rational of constructive communication and daring publicity and to successfully adopt and practice smart techniques and instruments for both written publications and oral presentations of their research results.

The open call under the bilateral relations fund launched on May 10<sup>th</sup> has been broadly disseminated to the research community via different channels of dissemination (PO website, mailing lists, etc.), including with the support of Horizon 2020 National Contact Points within the Programme Operator institution.

A partnership with Radio Romania Cultural has been set up in the framework of a communication campaign for the promotion of research projects' results. A series of interviews has been done at the headquarters of Project Promoters and project partners (5 interviews in Bucharest at the Biochemistry Institute, the National Research and Development Institute for Microbiology and Immunology; 4 interviews in Cluj-Napoca at the University Babes- Bolyai). The ultimate goal of this partnership is to take interviews to all the 23 projects until the end of the Programme.

The interviews will be published on the PO's website (<http://www.research.gov.ro/ro/articol/3478/program-see-projects>) and some of them already went online on Radio Romania Cultural website (<http://radioromaniacultural.ro/stiinta-in-cuvinte-potrivate-plantele-sursa-pentru-vaccinuri/>).

## **11. Cross-cutting issues**

### **11.1 Good governance**

In line with the provisions of the Regulation on implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2009-2014, the Programme Operator complied for this reporting period as well with the good governance principles (participatory and inclusive, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient and following the rule of law). Actions and activities were pursued according to all of the procedures set under the Management and Control System of the Programme, and in particular to the operational procedure for irregularities.

Funded projects continued to be closely monitored during 2016 by making use of the various available instruments for monitoring. A sample of projects has been subject to on-the-spot monitoring visits, in line with the specific operational procedure, practices applicable at the Programme Operator level and revised Projects Monitoring Plan for 2016.

### **11.2 Sustainable development**

Environmental protection has been taken into account in all stages of the Programme planning and implementation. Nine out of the twenty-three joint research projects are focusing on the environmental protection and management as a primary or secondary aim of their activities. Projects results are expected to provide solutions to this global societal challenge and bring improvements with impact for environmental sustainability in Romania and donor states.

Economic sustainable development is another issue considered during the preparation and implementation of the Programme. Effects in terms of economic development generated by the funded projects will be made available after their completion. Small and medium-sized enterprises were eligible for funding through the EEA grants and were encouraged to participate to the call for proposals. As a result, seven SMEs are currently participating to the funded projects and thereby, the link between academia and industry is reinforced with this Programme and a better market uptake of innovative products and services are likely to occur.

Social dimension of the Programme is ensured at both Programme Operator and project level. By all means, the Programme has contributed to building the social capital not only inside the countries concerned but also across the borders. Issues like equality, anti-discrimination, fight against poverty, social exclusion, major threats to public health, access to health care and access to education and skills training are in particular addressed by seven projects funded under the thematic priority “Social sciences and humanities” and by other three projects funded under the thematic priority “Health and food safety”.

### **11.3 Gender equality**

At every step in the Programme implementation, gender equality on Programme Operator and project level has been ensured with the aim of avoiding discrimination on the grounds of gender and to promote equality in terms of opportunities, rights and obligations between women and men. The key set of indicators on the situation of women in science and research, as presented by the “She figures” edition of 2012 with data collected from 2009, a European Commission publication, underpinned the evidence-based decision to focus during the Programme planning phase on other issues. For Romania, the proportion of women researchers in 2009 as well as in 2012 was well above the average E.U. target of 40%. In the comparative table below, a set of indicators<sup>2</sup> on gender in research and innovation are presented for Romania, Norway and Iceland.

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<sup>2</sup> Source of information: “She figures” editions of 2012 and 2015

Indicator	Romania		Norway		Iceland	
	2009	2012	2009	2012	2009	2012
proportion of women researchers	45%	45,1%	35%	36,2%	41%	37,3%
women researchers by higher education sector	46%	46,7%	44%	45,7%	44%	47,3%
women researchers by government sector	50%	47,2%	42%	44,8%	47%	42,3%
women researchers by business sector	38%	37,8%	22%	22,2%	32%	25,5%

At the stage of final reporting, detailed information on socio-economic impact, wider societal implications and gender equality will be made available to the Programme Operator by all funded projects and thus more data on the cross-cutting issues will be collected, analysed and presented for the Final Programme Report.

## 12. Reporting on sustainability

Not applicable for the Annual Programme Report

## 13. Attachments to the Annual Programme Report

The Annual Programme Report has the following attachments:

Annex 1 – Output indicators

Annex 2 – Outcome indicators

Annex 3 – Risk assessment of the Programme

Annex 4 – Output indicators for projects on the improvement of Roma population

Annex 5 – Projects Monitoring Plan for 2017