# Work Plan

FUND FOR BILATERAL RELATIONS

(In accordance with Article 2.6 of the Bilateral Fund Agreement and Article 4.9 of the Regulations on the implementation of the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2021-2028)

## BF work plan Portugal 2021-2028

(Version 1.0 adopted on 10.12.2025 by Joint Committee on Bilateral Fund)

### 1. Objective and priorities

**Enhanced cooperation and improved mutual knowledge and understanding between Donor and Beneficiary States.**

According to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), signed in July 2025 between Portugal and the Donor States, a Fund for Bilateral Relations (FBR) at national level with the amount of € 1,700,000 was established for the whole implementation period (until April 2032).

The FBR is regulated by the applicable provisions of the Regulation of Implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism for 2021-2028 (Regulation), the Agreement on Fund for Bilateral Relations, signed in October 2025 between the Portuguese National Focal Point (NFP) and the Financial Mechanism Committee (FMC), and by the Bilateral Guideline 2021-2028.

The Work Plan constitutes a brief description of the proposed implementation and activities for the duration of the Financial Mechanism and has been prepared considering recommendations to (i) be flexible, open for interdisciplinary and intersectoral initiatives from relevant stakeholders, namely in emerging areas and (ii) strengthen the dissemination of information about EEA Grants and FBR and promote matchmaking events and initiatives prior to the launch of the calls. This document should be amended based on lessons learned and needs identified at a later stage.

The MoU reflects the desire of strengthening bilateral cooperation and contributing to the reduction of economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area. The Work Plan should focus on extending opportunities to stakeholders and activities not directly envisaged through Programmes, where bilateral contacts are important opportunities.

According to these new opportunities and bearing in mind the experience from the previous Financial Mechanisms, there are two relevant levels of ambition for the FBR at National Level to develop a Strategic Vision:

1. promote bilateral relations and set the pillars for long-term cooperation in areas that have recently gained relevance on socio-economic and political agendas and
2. consolidate and strengthen bilateral relations and cooperation in areas where synergies already exist or may emerge, particularly those considered relevant to the current economic and political context, with a focus on areas not covered by the Programmes.

To support this approach, the following main areas of action can be considered:

- Focus on areas with potential to enhance bilateral relations, such as defence, security and foreign policy, including joint research and public engagement on topics such as hybrid threats, critical infrastructure, cybersecurity, maritime security and the future of European defence cooperation, without prejudice to others that be identified at a later stage;
- Bilateral cooperation that contribute to the reduction of economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area, namely on European Single Market, competitiveness and economic resilience, employment, social inclusion and reduction of poverty, public health.
- Build on bilateral cooperation initiated under the previous EEA FM 2014-2021;

Complementarity with the existing Programmes under EEA FM 2021-2028 should be promoted, while avoiding any overlap in scope or activities.

According to Article 4.5 of the EEA FM 2021-2028 Regulation on eligible expenditures, the support under the FBR can be directed at the following type of activities:

1. the search for partners for Donor partnership projects prior to or during the preparation of a project application, the development of such partnerships and the preparation of an application for a Donor partnership project;
2. networking, exchange, sharing, and transfer of knowledge, technology, experience, and best practice between entities in Beneficiary States and entities in the Donor States and, if relevant, international organisations, provided at least one entity within the Donor States is involved in the activity;
3. activities aiming at strengthening cooperation and exchanging experiences and best practices between the Programme Operators and similar entities within the Beneficiary States and Donor States and, if relevant, international organisations, provided at least one entity within the Donor States is involved in the activity; and
4. any other activity aiming at strengthening bilateral relations between the Donor States and the Beneficiary States.

## 2. Implementation system

The NFP oversees the management of the FBR at national level.

The funds may be distributed through activities carried out by the NFP, pre-defined initiatives or open calls.

**Activities carried out by the NFP** are directly implemented bilateral activities. These activities can be organized solely by the NFP or in partnership with the DPP and could also include Programme Operators and DPP. The financing of these activities is contingent on the previous approval from JCBF.

**Predefined activities** are considered activities that have been previously agreed in the JCBF based on demonstrated bilateral interest between entities from Portugal and from the Donor States, in compliance with the applicable national and European law on public procurement. Any member of the JCBF can present a pre-defined bilateral initiative proposal to be assessed.

A template was developed and is made available by the NFP. After a preliminary analysis of the proposal, the NFP submits to JCBF the detailed proposal including an outlined activity plan and a detailed budget to be approved through written procedure. Comments from the JCBF appointed members on the proposed activity plan and detailed budget shall be taken into account by the NFP.

The granting of the FBR through **open calls** shall be promoted by the NFP in accordance with the directions approved by the JCBF. The NFP proposes to the JCBF the call text for the support under the FBR. The open call follows the selection procedure for calls for proposals with a maximum grant amount per project of up to 100.000€, according to article 7.7 of the Regulation, with adaptions whenever needed.

The adoption of the call text by the JCBF can be made by written procedure. JCBF shall decide on the timing and the period during which the calls are open. It will also be decided by JCBF the minimum and maximum grant amount per call, which will be advertised by the calls for proposals. JCBF can also decide whether a particular call is open for entities from all Donor Countries or if it shall be of a more limited scope.

Once the call text is adopted, the NFP shall widely advertise the open call, in Portuguese and English, namely in the websites of EEA Grants Portugal, EEA Grants.org, and any other websites or relevant media for the open call, following the Regulations' provisions on communication requirements. The NFP is responsible for the call text considering the Regulation requirements.

The NFP is responsible for carrying out a formal analysis of the applications. If an essential element is missing, following the formal analysis of the applications, the NFP will notify the entities, within 10 working days, to eliminate the detected deficiency/insufficiency, under the penalty of exclusion. Upon completion of the formal analysis of the application, the NFP will promote the merit assessment following the procedures agreed by the JCBF and considering the selection criteria and sub criteria published in the call text. The JCBF will recommend the entities for funding, maximum allocations and the excluded entities, taking into account the evaluation of the merit carried out and the dotation available. The entities will be notified of the final decision on application by the NFP. The entities whose applications are not approved have a deadline set in the Code of Administrative Procedure to appeal/express their comments.

**FBR payments** may take the form of advance payment, interim payment, or final balance payment. All funds transfers shall be preceded by the signature of an Acceptance Agreement by the beneficiary, and shall define namely: scope, funding conditions, eligible expenditures, timeline, amount of the financial support and co-financing rate, payment method, beneficiaries bank account, obligations of the beneficiary, and situations of suspension and/or reimbursement of payment of the financial support in case of non-compliance.

The **report on the use of the FBR** at national level shall be delivered in each JCBF meeting and annually on the Country Report. Also, the beneficiaries shall report to the NFP on initiatives completed under FBR. These reports shall include, beyond financial information, a detailed description of the initiative, the results achieved, and its contribution to reach the overall objectives of the EEA Grants.

A more detailed description of the implementation system of the FBR can be found in the description of the management and control systems at national level, and also in the Fund for Bilateral Relations Manual.

## 3. Donor Shares and Donor Priorities

Donor Shares:

- Iceland: EUR 88,350
- Liechtenstein: EUR 150,000
- Norway: EUR 1,461,650

Donor Priorities:

Portugal and **Iceland** share excellent relations under the EEA Grants. Bilateral initiatives have taken place in areas such as blue growth, culture and gender equality. The cooperation under the FBR for the current implementation may continue in these fields and can also extend to additional areas of mutual interest, such as defense, security and foreign policy.

**Liechtenstein**'s priorities place particular emphasis on advancing areas that are not fully addressed under the current Programmes, notably digitalization, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity.

Portugal and Liechtenstein enjoy very good bilateral relations. At the core of this relationship lies their shared membership in the European Economic Area. The EEA Grants constitute an important element of this cooperation and serve as an effective instrument for further strengthening bilateral partnerships. In addition, Portugal and Liechtenstein work closely together in multilateral fora, such as the United Nations.

The priorities identified by **Norway** focus on promoting areas not directly covered by the current Programmes, namely defence, security and foreign policy, including cooperation on topics such as hybrid threats, critical infrastructure, cybersecurity, and maritime security.

As NATO members and maritime nations, Norway and Portugal share many interests in these areas, that should benefit from closer bilateral cooperation, in a period where our security and defense interests are increasingly under pressure.

The introduction of this new priority is directly linked to the consequence for Europe of the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine. Therefore, it shall also contribute for the EEA Grants objective to contribute to address the challenges experienced in both countries as a result of the invasion of Ukraine.

*Please include the individual Donor shares (in Euros) and any priorities indicated by the Donors.*

4. Open calls

| Title | JCBF approval date | Amount available | Applications received | Total grant applied for | Applications approved for funding | Total grant awarded |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

5. Predefined bilateral initiatives

| Title | Small initiatives |
|---|---|
| **Grant awarded from Bilateral fund** | |
| **Amount incurred** | |

5. Activities carried out by the NFP

| Title | Small initiatives |
|---|---|
| **Grant awarded from Bilateral fund** | |
| **Amount incurred** | |

## 6. Summary

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

| Title | Budget | Comments |
|---|---|---|
| Activities carried out by the NFP | € 0 | |
| Pre-defined activities (total budget for planned pre-defined activities at national level) | € 0 | |
| Funds still to be allocated | € 1,700,000 | |
| **Total** | **€ 1,700,000** | |