



ROYAL MINISTRY  
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## Press Release

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### **New EEA Financial Mechanism negotiated – historic cooperation between Norway and the new EU member states**

**Today, the EEA/EFTA countries signed an agreement with the EU on new financial contributions. Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre commented: “The new EEA Financial Mechanism gives Norway a historic opportunity to strengthen cooperation with the new EU member states. Many of these countries are struggling with high unemployment and a difficult economic situation. It is very much in Norway’s interest to promote economic and social development in these countries.”**

Norway will provide around NOK 3 billion (EUR 347 million) per year to reduce social and economic disparities and promote cooperation in Europe in the period 2009–2014. Norway’s contribution for the period 2009–2014 is a 22% increase compared with its contribution for the previous period (2004–2009). The scope of the mechanism is now closer to Norway’s priorities, with focus on the environment, climate change, renewable energy and tripartite cooperation. The EEA Grants will be available to the 12 most recent EU members plus Portugal, Greece and Spain, while the Norway Grants will be earmarked for the 12 newest members. The priority sectors will be environment and climate, health, research, education and culture, decent work and civil society, the judiciary and human resources.

“The funding from Norway is targeted at areas where we can make a difference and that are in line with Norwegian and European interests. We intend to maintain a close dialogue with relevant Norwegian authorities on the development of the new programmes,” said Mr Støre, and he encouraged Norwegian actors to become involved in projects with partners in beneficiary countries.

Around a **quarter of the funds** (NOK 2.6 billion or EUR 297 million) is to be used for renewed efforts to address **environmental issues and climate change** over the five-year period. In addition around NOK 1.4 billion (EUR 160 million) is to be used for various efforts to develop and promote carbon capture and storage.

“We are entering into a critical phase in the global climate efforts, and we are pleased to have reached agreement with the EU on giving priority to climate change in the EEA cooperation with new member states,” said Mr Støre.

An important new element in the agreement is the focus on decent work. NOK 70 million (EUR 8 million) is to be transferred to a fund to promote decent work and tripartite dialogue, in line with the social partners’ wishes.

“In today’s common European labour market, tripartite dialogue and decent work are becoming even more important. The renewed focus on these areas will also pave the way for closer political dialogue with the new EU member states,” said Mr Støre.

A substantial sum will be allocated for further efforts to **strengthen civil society and for the health and research sectors.**

The agreement on the new EEA Financial Mechanism follows on from the previous agreement, which ran from 2004 to 2009.

“The negotiations have been long and challenging. The demand originally put forward by the EU has been reduced to a sum that is acceptable, and we have agreed on how our contribution is to be targeted in order to ensure good results for both Norway and the EU,” said Mr Støre.

Agreement was also reached with the EU today on further improving market access for fish in the period 2009–2014. The duty-free tariff quotas for fish that were negotiated in 2004 and 2007 will be continued. Norway has also negotiated an increase in the duty-free quotas for shrimp and processed herring.

More information about the EEA and Norway Grants can be found at:  
[www.europaportalen.no](http://www.europaportalen.no) and [www.eeagrants.org](http://www.eeagrants.org)