



ROYAL MINISTRY
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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Agreement reached on EEA enlargement – a historic contribution to Bulgaria and Romania

Norway will be contributing approximately NOK 1.1 billion to social and economic development in Bulgaria and Romania over the next two years. Almost half of the funds will be channelled through cooperation programmes between Norway and the two beneficiary states.

“We are pleased to have concluded an agreement with the EU on enlargement of the EEA. The agreement means that Norway will make an important contribution to two of the poorest countries in the EU, and provides a historic opportunity for closer contact and cooperation between Norway, Bulgaria and Romania,” said Minister of Foreign Affairs Jonas Gahr Støre.

“The agreement also means improved access for Norwegian fish and fish products to the EU market, which is important for Norwegian businesses,” said Mr Støre.

The financial contributions and improved market access for fish apply to the period from 1 January 2007 to 30 April 2009.

Agreement has been reached on new/expanded duty-free tariff quotas for imports to the EU of Norwegian herring, mackerel, capelin and shrimps, as well as a quota that includes wolf-fish. In addition, the EU will remove certain technical barriers to trade that have been particularly disadvantageous to Norwegian exporters.

Norway will administer the bilateral cooperation programmes with Bulgaria and Romania, which total approximately NOK 550 million (EUR 68 million) for the entire period. The programmes are intended to contribute to economic and social development in the two countries, and to promote innovation and technology transfer. “This is a new kind of programme, and we have high hopes for it,” said Mr Støre.

“The cooperation programmes will be focused on certain specific sectors in which Bulgaria and Romania have particular needs and in which Norway has expertise. The primary focus will be on energy, climate change and quality assurance,” said Mr Støre.

At Romania’s and Bulgaria’s request, funds may also be used for projects related to the health sector, implementation of the Schengen acquis and strengthening the judiciary.

Wherever possible, projects under the cooperation programmes will be implemented in the form of partnerships between Norwegian actors and actors in the two beneficiary states. Norwegian, Bulgarian and Romanian actors may all apply for project support and, in addition to private and public actors, NGOs and social partners will be eligible to participate.

A total of approximately NOK 580 million (EUR 72 million) will be channelled to Bulgaria and Romania through the existing EEA Financial Mechanism. Norway’s share of this amount is a little over NOK 500 million (EUR 67.8 million). Projects in the following areas will be eligible for support: the environment, sustainable development, health and child care, conservation of the European cultural heritage and human resource development

The agreement also provides for the same transitional arrangements as in Bulgaria’s and Romania’s accession treaties with the EU. These relate primarily to the free movement of persons. Individual EEA countries may maintain certain restrictions on workers from the two new countries.

The agreement will enter into force once the parties have concluded the necessary internal procedures. For Norway, this means that the agreement has to be approved by the Storting. As regards the EU, formal decisions must be taken by the relevant EU bodies.