



Norwegian Perspectives on EEA Projects

Identifying Factors Influencing Municipality Participation

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Abstract

The purpose of this research project is to evaluate Norwegian municipality participation in EEA projects. We examine the municipalities' grounds for participating or not, as well as their opinions on KS's efforts and assistance in this process. A survey following a round of interviews uncovered that the most satisfied municipalities are those who manage to find a project for a specific issue in the municipality; Bureaucracy along with a lack of information, time and resources are the biggest obstacles; and KS provides valuable help and information, but could be more visible to municipalities. Our survey and interviews showed that there is much interest out there for participation, and by making the information more accessible and understandable for non-experts we believe that more municipalities would join projects.

Keywords: EEA Grants, KS, International cooperation, Project work, Local government

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iv
Preface.....	vi
1: Introduction.....	1
1.1: EEA and Norway Grants.....	1
1.2: KS.....	2
2: Methodology and Data Collection.....	3
2.1: Data Collection.....	3
2.3: Strengths and Weakness of Methodology and Data.....	4
2.4: Statistical Analysis.....	5
3: Why Do Municipalities Participate in EEA Projects?.....	6
3.1: Respondents and Survey Design.....	6
3.2: Motivation.....	8
3.2.1: Most Motivating Factors.....	9
3.2.2: Less Important Motivational Factors.....	10
3.2.3: Are Motivational Factors Fulfilled?.....	10
3.2.4: Correlations for Motivation.....	12
3.2.5: Summarizing Motivation.....	13
3.3: Benefits from Participation.....	13
3.3.1: Do Municipalities Benefit from Participating?.....	13
3.3.2: A North–South relationship?.....	15
4: Obstacles for Participation.....	17
4.1: Main Deterrents for Participation.....	18
4.2: Experience Does Matter.....	20
4.3: Garbage Can Model.....	22
4.4: Thoughts on Obstacles.....	23
5: KS's role.....	24
5.1: Sources of Information.....	24
5.2: Support Needed from KS.....	25
5.3: Municipalities' Perception of KS's Support.....	26
5.4: Municipalities' Perceptions of Events.....	28
5.5: Municipalities' Feedback to KS.....	29
6: Conclusions.....	29
Bibliography.....	31
Appendices.....	32

Preface

This paper documents the investigation carried out for The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) by Project Forum, as part of the master's program in Organization, Leadership and Work (OLA) at the University of Oslo. Our group of five students were assigned the task of examining motivation, benefits and obstacles for Norwegian municipalities and county municipalities' participation in EEA and Norway Grants projects.

This research could not have been carried out without the close cooperation and support of KS, our tutor, Eivind Falkum, and instructors and administration at OLA. We appreciate this challenging, educational and inspiring opportunity, and are grateful to Project Forum for making it possible.

We would like to thank Hanne Heen, who has been leading this year's Project Forum, as well as all the lecturers who have been visiting, for the guidance and feedback they have provided. Student consultant Joakim Dyrnes has also provided invaluable help with all manner of administrative matters.

We thank the International Project team at KS for an interesting assignment, and the trust and support they showed us. Special thanks go out to our main contact in KS, Bjørn Rongevær, for providing access to all information and other resources we needed, and KS's advisor, Margareth Belling, for her assistance with Questback for our survey.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Eivind Falkum for insightful and constructive guidance, openness and tolerance to our ideas, lightning fast feedback, his eager encouragement, and simply all the good time we have spent together. Finally, we appreciate the time and openness of our informants and respondents, and their willingness to cooperate.

Oslo, 16.05.14

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1: Introduction

The purpose of this research project is to evaluate Norwegian municipalities participation in EEA projects. The EEA Grants and Norway Grants provide funding for programmes in 16 EU countries with the aim of strengthening bilateral relations and reducing social and economic disparities. Norwegian local municipalities are potential partners for municipalities in beneficiary countries within the 32 programme areas. Although many municipalities participate in different ways in projects, there is little knowledge of why they participate and how they evaluate the process afterwards. As KS is working to facilitate EEA project participation for Norwegian local authorities, this information can help them in their daily work with these issues.

Based on this, our research questions are: Why do some municipalities participate in projects, and what makes some not participate? What are the municipalities' opinion on KS's efforts and assistance in this process?

The report will begin with a short introduction of EEA and Norway Grants and KS before moving on to answering the questions posed above. In chapter two we present our methodological design and the process of collecting data. In chapter three we analyse the municipalities motivation for joining EEA projects. Our findings show that competence building, municipal strategy, networking and cultural exchange are important motivational factors. We also found that benefits is important for the municipalities and that they do not view participation as strictly a solidarity project but something they expect to get a return from. Chapter four discusses why some municipalities choose not to participate in projects. Bureaucracy, lack of information, time and resources are the most common obstacles. Finally, we present the municipalities views on KS's efforts and support.

1.1: EEA and Norway Grants

Norway has a close relation with the EU due to its geographical position, international trade and political cooperation through different agreements. Norway was one of the founders of European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1960, and was one of the three EFTA countries that signed the EEA Agreement in 1992—the others being Iceland and Liechtenstein—which, as soon as the agreement entered into force in 1994, ensured Norway's access to the single market. One of the obligations of this membership is a financial contribution to the European single market, known as the EEA Grants. This financial contribution “shall contribute to the reduction of economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area” (EEA 2014). The countries contribute according to size and economic wealth. Norway's contribution to the EEA Grants equals 94 percent of the total amount, approximately € 187 million annually for the 2009–2014 period. In addition to this,

Norway increased their commitment to what is known as the Norway Grants through a separate deal with the EU for the period 2009–2014, with an annual contribution of € 160 million. This contribution takes aim “to contribute for a five year period to the reduction of economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area, and to the strengthening of its relations with the Beneficiary States” (EEA 2010). The combination of EEA Grants and Norway Grants makes Norway’s total contribution almost € 1.79 billion over the current five year period of the deal.

The EEA Grants and Norway Grants provide funding for 32 programme areas within different sectors in 16 EU countries with the aim of reducing social and economic disparities within the 13 new members from 2004 and onwards as well as Greece, Spain and Portugal (EEA Grants only). These are programs where the beneficiary countries cooperate with donor countries (EEA countries) to a set of programmes “based on national needs and priorities and the scope for cooperation with the donor countries” (eeagrants.org). Norwegian local municipalities will as a result be potential partners for municipalities in beneficiary countries within these 32 programme areas.

The EEA Grants scheme is run by the Financial Mechanism Committee, composed of representatives from the Foreign Ministries of the three EEA countries. The Norway Grants scheme is run by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The donor states appoint Donor Programme Partners (DPPs) to support the beneficiary states with their programs as well as advice on project partners in donor countries. KS often function as a DPP in Norway. The local municipalities often take part as project partners with a beneficiary partner.

1.2: KS

The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) is Norway’s biggest public employer’s organisation, representing all municipalities and county municipalities except Oslo—in total 440,000 employees. They perform assessments and documentation, provide council and negotiate with employee’s organisations and the state. KS meets regularly with the government, and generally has a say when laws are made that affect the municipal sector. Their stated goal is an independent and innovative municipal sector.

Part of KS’s work is to brief municipalities on relevant European developments, and KS is also represented in Brussels. They work on externally financed international cooperation projects, in collaboration with Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A part of this work is the EEA projects, for which KS wants increased participation from Norwegian municipalities, county municipalities and inter-municipal organisations.

2: Methodology and Data Collection

The research design of this project was selected in response to the complexity of the research phenomena. From the outset, we had to deal with a dilemma—whether qualitative or quantitative methods would be most appropriate for our purposes. On the one hand, qualitative methods provide a complex, detailed understanding of the subject matter and make connections apparent. According to Robert K. Yin (1994), with research like ours, focusing on the “why” or “how” of contemporary events, case studies are often most appropriate. On the other hand, due to the complexity of the subject and a high diversity of variables, we could not get the whole picture with only qualitative research. Furthermore, since this investigation has a practical application (to be used as an argument in negotiation with the authorities), we are interested in providing KS with significant information about motivation, benefits and obstacles for Norwegian municipalities participating in EEA Grants projects. This information, if sufficient preparation is made to discover relevant alternatives, could be quantified. Thus, we landed on a methods triangulation approach for this project. For the qualitative phase, we decided on performing in-depth interviews, followed by a quantitative phase consisting of a survey.

2.1: Data Collection

In order to better understand the research phenomena, we gathered a variety of information on EEA Grants projects from their website (eeagrants.org), reports and other relevant project documentation, as well as conducting two preliminary interviews with KS’s consultants. The information gathered was used to outline an interview guide for in-depth interviews and to sketch our initial hypotheses.

In the exploratory phase of the investigation, we deepened our focus of study to issues determining the extent to which Norwegian municipalities get involved in EEA Grants projects. With help from KS we defined four different cases based on degree of participation. All of these have participated in one or several of KS’s events on EEA Grants projects, but have participated in various degrees after that:

1. Municipalities that haven’t applied to any EEA Grants projects;
2. Municipalities that have proceeded further with the application process, but have since withdrawn;
3. Municipalities that have applied to participate, but have been rejected;
4. Municipalities that have successfully participated in one or several projects.

The entire set (or research unit) of participants of KS’s events in 2013 consists of 170 representatives of 64 organizations (where 44 are municipalities, 17 county municipalities, 3 inter-municipal cooperation organization).

The sampling of municipalities/counties for each case was made by KS. Municipalities/counties situated nearby Oslo were preferred for ease of interviewing, as there was no reason anyway to get a representative sample in the exploratory phase. These ten in-depth interviews with key informants in each municipality/county were conducted in the period between 04.03.14 and 17.03.14. Interviews were held with those local authorities' representatives who personally participated in KS's events and to some extent have been working with EEA Grants projects. Eight of ten interviews were conducted face to face, the other two by phone.

In this phase we made some initial findings, and our main hypotheses were outlined afterwards. To test these outlined hypotheses, we employed a survey based on information collected under the first phase.

The survey was carried out through the online service Questback in the period between 10th and 25th of April. The questionnaire was sent to the 170 representatives mentioned above. Regrettably, despite sending out reminders, we got a moderate feedback—only 73 respondents (43 percent).

2.3: Strengths and Weakness of Methodology and Data

The triangulation of in-depth interviews with a survey is, in our opinion, a strong component of our investigation. It allowed us to combine the benefits of two different types of methods—both qualitative and quantitative. In-depth interviews helped us discover what could motivate or prevent Norwegian local authorities to participate in EEA Grants projects, how local authorities make their decisions on participation, and so on. The flexibility of this method makes it possible to adjust the interview plan and questions in conversation with informants. That gave us the opportunity to explore important nuances more in-depth. We tried to carry out the interviews as conversations where informants could tell about their experience with EEA Grants projects in a free manner, in order to avoid influencing their response.

The weakest side of our investigation is the moderate representativeness of the survey. While discussing the research design, we decided to limit the research unit to only participants of KS's events. We were eager to get the whole picture of local authorities' participation in EEA projects, since there exists no overview of this. However, we were aware that sending unaddressed mail with the questionnaire to every Norwegian municipality and county would result in a low response and thus be unrepresentative. Besides, KS has limits on conducting such wide and comprehensive surveys. Thus, we decided that it would be more expedient to get more representative information about a smaller group of local authorities that we knew had some experience with EEA Grants projects. We tried to increase the response percentage by a sending our questionnaire directly to those representatives of the local authorities who personally have participated in KS's events, with postponing deadlines and sending reminders.

The diversity of backgrounds in our research group could be considered both as a drawback and strength of this project. On the one hand, some of us had no experience with a research projects, conducting interviews, etc. On other hand, this diversity enriched our investigation with the wide variety of ideas and opinions, as well as allowing everyone to contribute more to the phases that suited their abilities best.

2.4: Statistical Analysis

In order to analyze the data obtained from our survey, we used SPSS (ver. 22). We first calculated percentage distributions, as well as the medians and modes. Since our data is mainly ordinal (the rest being nominal), we did not use the mean as a measure of central tendency, as its use is controversial in the case of ordinal data (Jamieson 2004). Instead we used the median and mode. Our data is ordinal since there is no natural relative degree of difference between the possible answers. This is because: *i*) the respondents do not perceive the different answers in the same way, and *ii*) it is impossible to measure the difference between two respondents who picked two different items (e.g., to a low degree and to a large degree) on the same question.

Besides calculating percentage distributions, we also used SPSS to calculate correlation coefficients and to run independence test (Fisher's exact test and Chi-Square), in order to find possible patterns in our data, i.e., possible associations between people's answers to different questions. Since our data is not numeric, Pearson's R is not the appropriate correlation coefficient to use. We therefore used Spearman's rank correlation coefficient which is appropriate for ordinal data, as is most of the data in our case.

Testing independence between different variables can be done by the Chi-Square test; however, the main assumption of this test is that the value in each cell is greater than 5, which is rarely true for small samples like ours. In such cases, a different test called Fisher's exact test can be used. There are, however, controversies in the use of fixed significance levels with this test (such as the significance level of .05 used in the Chi-Square test). It is therefore a good idea to run both tests. To fulfil the assumption on which the Chi-Square test is based, we collapsed the 5 categories of answers to some of the questions to 3 categories, in order to increase the likelihood that the cells will contain values greater than or equal to 5.

In our results, we only included statistically significant Spearman correlation coefficients, i.e. those for which $p < 0.05$. For each Spearman correlation coefficient we also obtained a p-value smaller than 0.05 on Fisher's exact test, meaning that we can reject the null hypothesis that the two variables we look at are independent, i.e. that they are likely to be dependent.

3: Why Do Municipalities Participate in EEA Projects?

Having presented the research questions of our study, background information on EEA projects and our methods for investigating these subjects, we now move forward to the analysis of our data. The following chapters will discuss key topics regarding why municipalities choose to participate in EEA projects. After a brief introduction to our survey and the introductory questions, we present our findings on motivation for joining a project and whether or not these motivational expectations are met for those who have participated in projects. Then we show the municipalities' views on the benefits of participation and to what degree participation is a valuable experience.

3.1: Respondents and Survey Design

Before looking into the analysis of the survey response, we want to present how the survey was routed. The first five questions were pure background questions, posed to all respondents. Question six was about how far the unit had gotten with EEA projects, based on the project which had gotten furthest. This question was important to subsequent routing, so we will list the alternatives in full here.

Question 6) Irrespective of number of projects: Choose the alternative which represents the furthest you have come in the process of any EEA project.

a—No experience; **b**—Gathered information; **c**—Searched for partner; **d**—Searched for project; **e**—Worked on application; **f**—Application being processed; **g**—Application rejected; **h**—Currently on project; **i**—Project cancelled; **j**—Completed project

These are sorted so that for any answer, a respondent will have been through all the previous steps. There are some exceptions: A respondent could well have been looking for a project before they started looking for a partner, and it is entirely possible to have completed a project without ever having an application being rejected or another project cancelled. However, these exceptions were irrelevant to all our questions. For routing, this order is not really necessary, but it is convenient, and it should be remembered that when a question is posed to those who answered 6h–j, then it is assumed that they have also been through stages a–g and can answer questions about them.

The first routed question was 7, routed to 6d–j: How many projects have your unit announced interest for participating in? A requisite for announcing interest in a project is of course knowing about it. The next question was similar, but asking about actual participation, routed to 6h–j.

The first question was about the respondents' main area of work. The biggest category was International coordination/counselling at exactly one third. Next were "Other" at 22.2 percent and Culture at 18.1 percent. Next we asked how long the respondents had been working in their respective municipalities. The majority 63.9 percent selected the highest option, "Six years or more." We did find a moderate negative correlation (Spearman correlation coefficient -0.501) between the number of years of work in the municipality and the degree to which the respondent experienced difficulties with finding a project partner. This correlation could be interpreted as follows: The longer a respondent has been employed in the municipality, the less she experienced difficulties with finding a project partner and vice versa. Even if no conclusion can be drawn from this negative correlation, we may argue that working for a longer period of time in the municipality could make the respondents more aware of the municipality's priorities and of the partners with whom it is better to cooperate in order to get the best results for the municipality.

Concerning educational background, 42.5 percent came from the social sciences, 20.5 percent from pedagogy and 17.8 percent chose "Other." We then asked about international experience, other than EEA projects. 71.2 percent claimed such experience, while 28.8 percent did not.

When asking about attendance at KS events on EEA projects, 90.2 percent said they had. The mailing list KS supplied us with was supposed to only consist of people who actually had been to such events, and this question was included for control. It's not easy to say whether the seven people who claimed not to have been to any events actually had not, or just had forgotten. At any rate, we could not find any correlations with other questions here.

Question six was the one about furthest progress outlined above. The most common response was simply "Gathered information," which 25 percent claimed to be the furthest they had gotten. At the other end, nearly as many, 22.2 percent had finished at least one project, while 15.3 percent were currently involved in a project. Note that no-one reported cancelling a project once started. Regrouping these by considering h and j ("Currently on project" and "Completed project") as one, and all the others as "Not [yet] participated," we find that 37.5 percent have participated, versus 62.5 percent who have not.

Next, we asked respondents answering 6d-j how many projects they had expressed interest in. That leaves 42.6 percent who answered two to three, and 34 percent answered one. 8.2 percent answered four to five, and 10.6 percent answered more than five.

Similarly, we asked respondents answering 6h-j how many projects they had actually participated in. Of those who answered 37.5 percent reported having participated in one project. 20.8 percent reported two to three projects, 29.2 percent reported four to five, and 12.5 percent reported more than five. An inverse correlation (Spearman correlation coefficient -0.421) was found with question twelve, subquestion "Difficulties seeing own utility." Whether this means that the more projects one has participated in, the easier it is to see utility, or that people who easily see

utility are more likely to participate, remains to be seen. Still, it suggests that making a point out of how projects can work to the municipalities' self-interest, might entice more municipalities to participate.

What exactly entices municipalities to participate will be explored further in the following chapter as we turn to the motivational factors that are important in the decision-making process.

3.2: Motivation

“We searched very actively for information from the start and were ready to participate early on” (Informant)

One of the main topics of our study is the municipalities' motivation for participating in EEA projects. What drives them to seek information, and why do they decide to participate? In this chapter we discuss the factors that motivate the respondents when considering joining an EEA project.

In our survey, we presented a list of motivational factors and asked the respondents to what degree these are motivating for participation in EEA projects. As mentioned in our “Statistical analysis” section, since the data analyzed in this section is of ordinal type, we used the appropriate measures of central tendency for such a statistical data type, i.e., the median and the mode. Intuitively, the median is the answer that separates the list of answers into two halves, after listing them in increasing order of their ranks. The mode indicates the most popular answer to a question. As the bar chart below shows, the people in our survey find most of our listed factors to be motivating to a high degree.

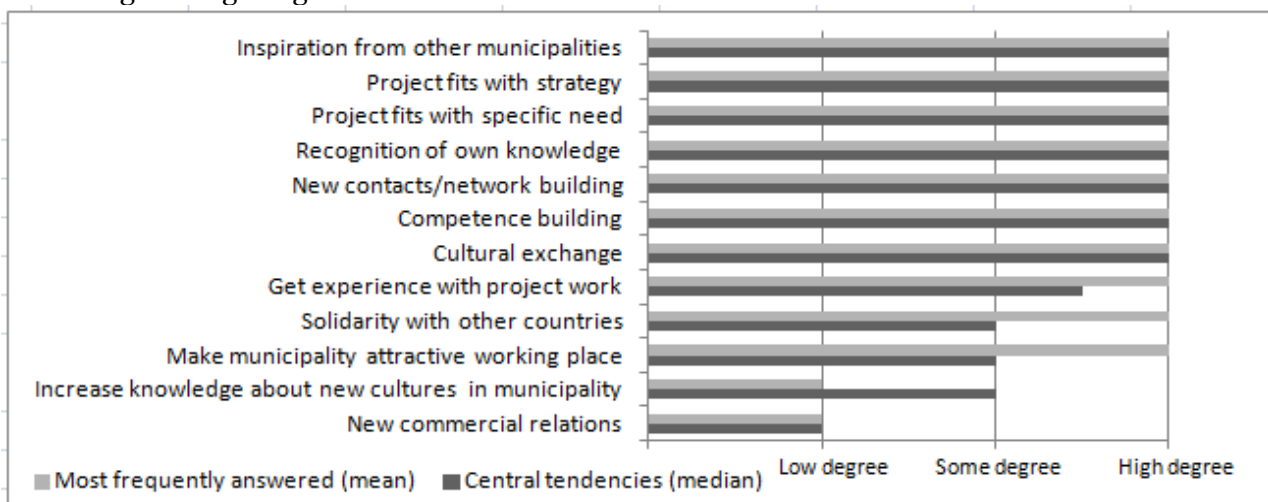


Figure 3.2: Central tendencies and most frequent answer for the motivating factors included in the survey.

3.2.1: Most Motivating Factors

Our survey shows that *competence building* is the most motivating argument for participating in EEA projects among the survey participants, closely followed by *the project fitting with the municipality's strategy*, *new contacts/network building* and *culture exchange*.

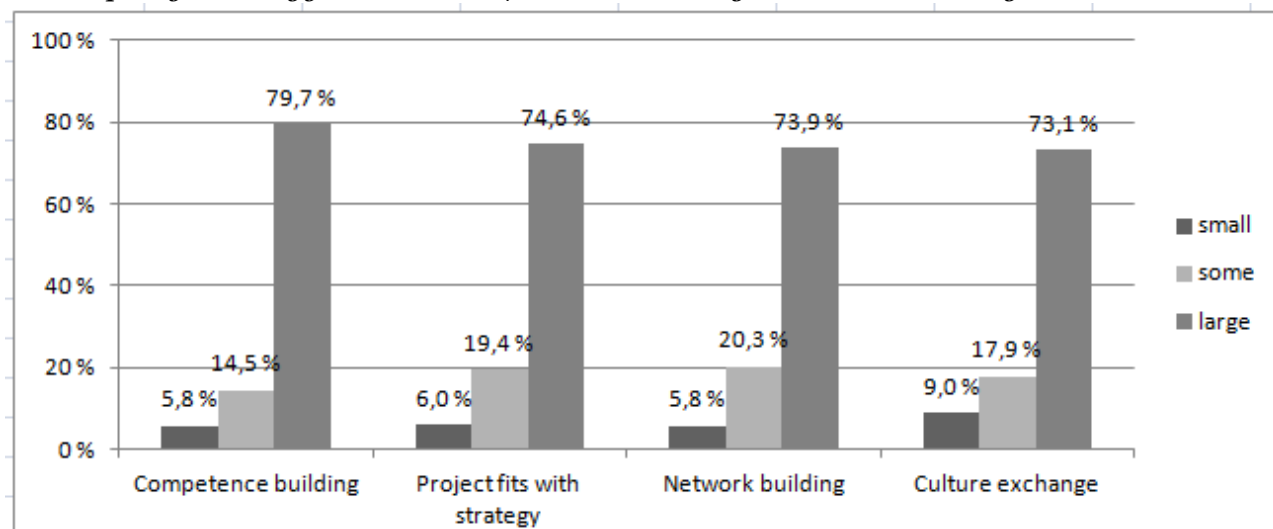


Figure 3.2.1: The four factors most often referred to as motivating to a large degree.

The answers indicate that these are important motivational factors for the employees in the municipalities and county municipalities in our survey. Almost 80 percent of the respondents found *competence building* to be a motivational factor. An uncertainty in these results arises from the fact that the survey was distributed to individual employees in the municipalities. *Competence building* could therefore represent the individual's motivation more than the municipality's collective motivation. EEA projects also vary in size, funding, collaboration with partners and the topics addressed, so *competence* also covers a wide range of different factors including project work in general.

EEA project participation is voluntary. Municipalities cannot be forced to join and it is important that they regard the activity as rewarding in itself for them to consider participating. Thus, their motivation needs to be intrinsic. Ryan and Deci (2000, 70) argue that events "that conduce toward feelings of competence during action can enhance intrinsic motivation for that action." In our results, *building competence* (80 percent high degree) was a larger motivational factor than getting *recognition of their own knowledge* (51 percent high degree). As both these alternatives motivated a majority of respondents to a high degree, feelings of competence are evidently important in the decision-making process.

74.6 percent of the respondents say that the municipal strategy is an important motivational factor. Many municipalities have international strategies, and some of them encourage participation in bilateral projects specifically. One could argue that strategy and plans are always a big part of public sector and therefore naturally play a big part when deciding on

whether or not to pursue new projects. Nevertheless, working in accordance with their local strategy apparently is a strong motivational factor and can be interpreted as a sign that they want the projects to be relevant to their daily tasks. Evidently, 66.2 percent are motivated to a high degree by a project that fits with a specific need in the municipality.

Network building and culture exchange are also among the four most important motivational factors. Many of the informants in our preliminary interviews mentioned these as important for the employees working with the projects. One of them said; “It expands the horizon a bit, and it motivates.” Another pointed out that “it can be motivating for employees to travel a little outside Norway’s borders and get new impulses and stuff from there, so that’s probably a great motivational factor.” The survey shows us that municipalities to a high degree are motivated by networking and culture exchange, and the interviews indicates that this is especially true for the individual employees in their daily work.

3.2.2: Less Important Motivational Factors

Increased knowledge about cultures represented in the municipality is not a large motivational factor for the respondents. Several of the informants in our in-depth interviews mentioned this as an important motivation for the municipality to adapt to a changing demography and learn more about the people moving to their community from countries in Eastern Europe. However, 41 percent of the respondents say this is a less important motivational factor, and 31.7 percent say that this is motivating to some degree.

New commercial relations is another low ranking factor. But The importance of commerce increases when looking at correlations between participation rates and satisfaction with commerce, as we do find a positive correlation (Spearman correlation coefficient of 0.556) between those who participate in a high number of projects and those who find commerce a satisfying part of the projects. Taking into account sample size, we can say this indicates that municipalities who partake in a high number of projects find more benefits in the commerce side of it than others. This could mean that while commerce does not seem to be an important motivation for entering into a projects, it becomes increasingly more important and beneficial part of participation as you get more experience with projects.

3.2.3: Are Motivational Factors Fulfilled?

After asking about motivational factors, we wanted to find out how people with explicit experience with EEA projects evaluate these factors. In other words, do people get what they expect when entering these projects? While the previously discussed answers can tell us something about the expectations employees in municipalities have when considering EEA project participation, these answers can say something about whether or not these expectations are realized. The question about fulfilment of motivational factors was asked only to those who previously answered either

that they are currently participating in a project, that their project was discontinued or that the project was completed.

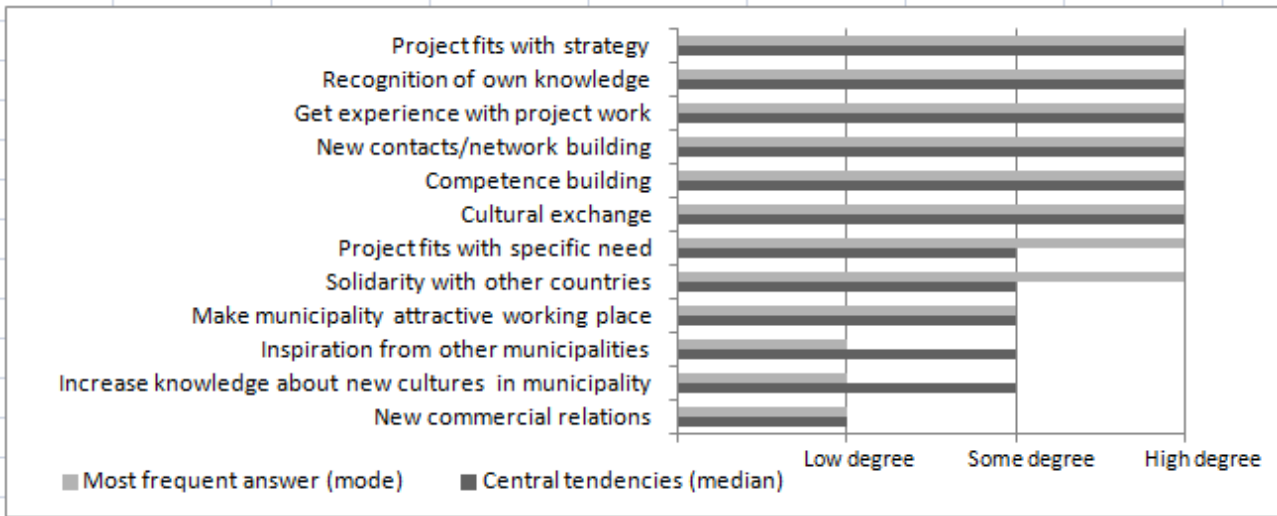


Figure 3.2.3a: Central tendencies and most frequent answer for the experience with listed factors in project participation.

The tendency is that the factors that were most motivating (fig. 3.2) were met in project participation. This is shown in figure 3.2.3b, below.

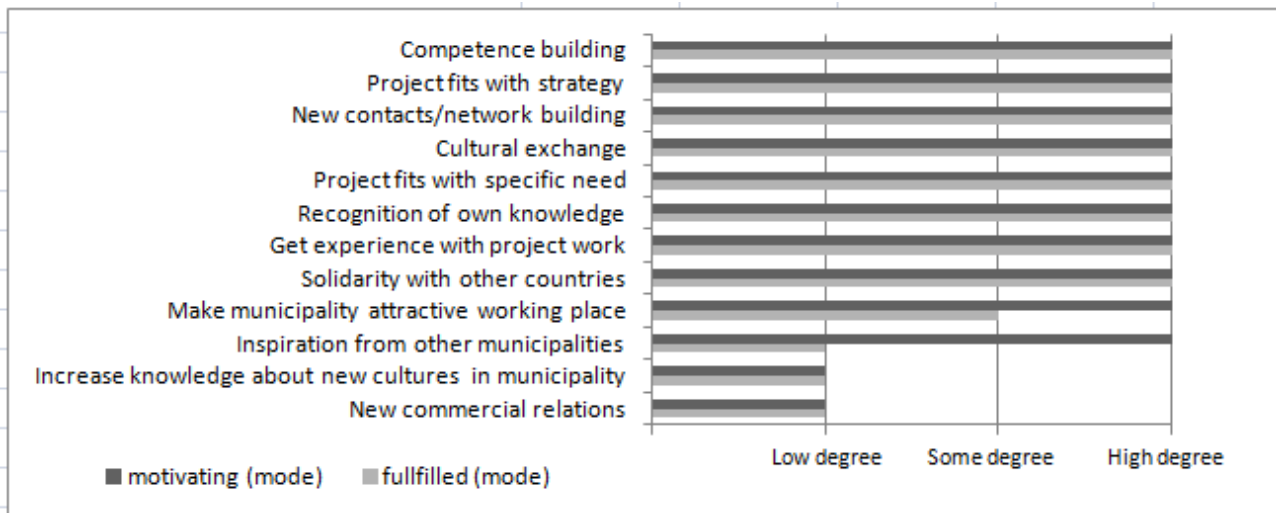


Figure 3.2.3b: The figure shows both degree of motivation by factors, and degree of experience with motivational factors in the project process.

The motivational factors that got most answers on “met to a high degree” was *network building*, *culture exchange*, *project fits with municipality’s strategy* and *get experience with project work*. In our interviews, informants told us that participation gave important project managing expertise. It is our impression that many view this as an investment to make the project process smoother in

the future. As the chart below shows, all respondents think this motivational factor was fulfilled to some or high degree in project participation.

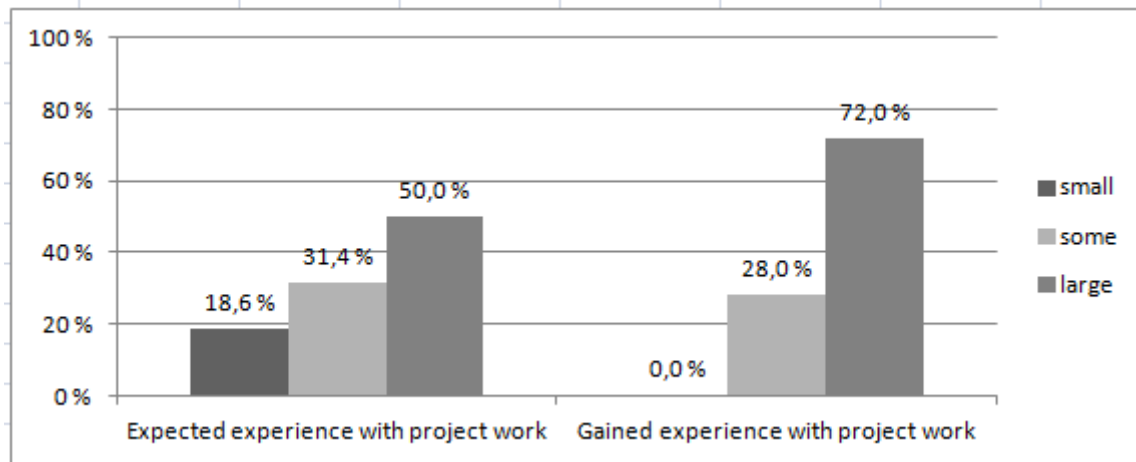


Figure 3.2.3c: Expected experience with project work (motivational factor) and gained experience with project work (factor met in participation)

The factors that have the highest median on both motivation and fulfilment of motivational factors, were *network building*, *culture exchange*, *strategy*, *recognition of own knowledge* and *competence building*.

A strong motivational factor was that the *project fit with a specific need in the municipality*. While the majority answered that this factor had been met to a high degree in the participation, the central tendency is “some degree.” This shows that although it was important for the employees to find a project that had direct relevance to their own challenges, they disagree on whether or not the project actually was relevant.

3.2.4: Correlations for Motivation

Some of the motivational factors were positively correlated with the factors that were fulfilled in project participation. For example, the more a person thought that *recognition of their own knowledge* motivated them to participate, the more they experienced that their knowledge was recognized in the project. This does not necessarily mean that the respondent experienced this because of their motivation, but there is a significant correlation between the two answers.

The motivational factor *project fits with the municipality’s strategy* also had a strong positive correlation with the experience of the same factor. This also applies to *inspiration from other municipalities*. The factor *network building* in the two questions had a medium positive correlation. This trend of positive correlation is to be expected and can be explained by Leon Festinger’s theory on cognitive dissonance. According to him, people want to have consonance between what they feel and what they experience, and to reach this consonance they will “actively avoid situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance” (Festinger 1957, 3) This could lead to a situation where the individual actively ignores information not in line with his

experience, and might even lead to the individual only accepting the information telling him he is right even though more factors could be telling him he is wrong. (Festinger 1957, 6).

For us this could mean that we might have to temper our excitement from the correlation. Even though correlations and survey data suggests that people are happy with the expectations they had going in, parts of this could be explained by cognitive dissonance and the fact that people tend to want consonance in the relationship between what they believe and what is experienced. Their believing in the importance of these factors going into the project could have an impact in the way they grade these factors on the back end to achieve consonance between belief and experienced reality. Thus, according to Festinger's theories, the real utility of these projects could be lower than what our numbers suggests.

3.2.5: Summarizing Motivation

Our findings in this section indicate why municipalities choose to participate in EEA projects. The biggest motivational factors are *competence building, networking, culture exchange* and *how the project fits with the municipality's strategy*. In addition, our results show that municipalities to a high degree have their expectations fulfilled when it comes to these factors. They also experience *recognition of their own knowledge* and get *project managing skills*. This is valuable information when it comes to working towards encouraging municipalities to participate. By focusing on these aspects, communication can be improved and made more efficient.

In addition to the knowledge of motivational factors, KS and others working to increase the number of municipalities involved can intrigue potential project partners by presenting "success stories" from other participants. The next chapter presents the respondents' views on the value of participating in EEA projects. We also discuss the respondents' views on the mutuality between partners when it comes to the benefits from being involved.

3.3: Benefits from Participation

"One must be involved in the project at a very early stage to ensure that both parties receive equal dividends." (Informant)

As part of our analysis we looked at how municipalities view the benefits of participating in the EEA and Norway Grants programs. This was done with the aim of finding out how the municipalities gauge their own participation: Are these programs something they feel good about participating in? In addition we wanted to know how the municipalities viewed the distribution of benefits. Which partner, if any, should get the biggest output from participation?

3.3.1: Do Municipalities Benefit from Participating?

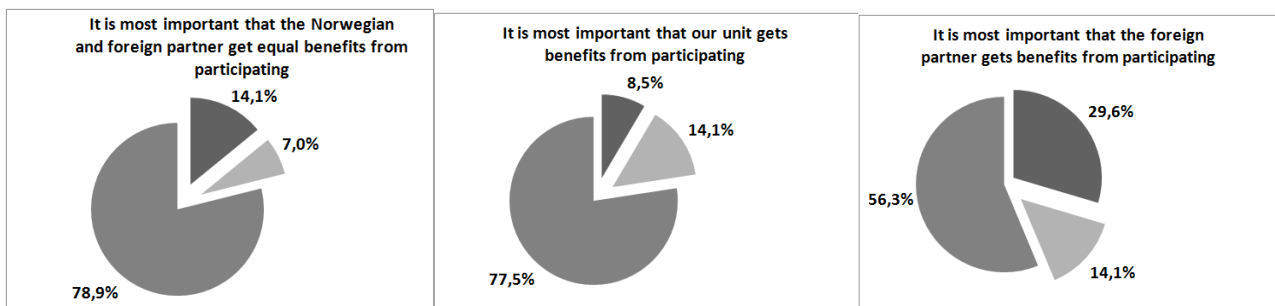
To gauge this we asked: "So far, to what degree has your participation in the EEA project been beneficial?" 70.4 percent answered "to some degree," and 25.9 percent answered "to a high

degree.” This question was given to the informants who were currently participating in a project, or who had participated in a project.

These findings, connected with our findings of motivation and usefulness, tells us that the municipalities indeed find value in participating. And that the most important factors for benefiting are *networking, learning possibilities, cultural exchange* and *possibility for solving a specific problem in the municipality*. This indicates that in spite of the challenges the municipalities do experience, they end up feeling that the overall experience of participation is beneficial for them and we have to a high degree isolated the most important factors as the four mentioned above.

The second question regarding the importance of benefits was designed to tell more about how the municipalities view the importance of benefiting from participation. This is to find out how the municipalities view the importance of the distribution of benefits within the projects. What project participant should receive the lion’s share of the benefits according to the municipalities? To gauge this, we gave all the participants three different statements to which they were to agree, disagree or have no opinion. The statements were:

- “It is most important that the Norwegian and foreign partner get equal benefits from participating.”
- “It is most important that the foreign partner gets benefits from participating.”
- “It is most important that our unit gets benefits from participating.”



Figures 3.3.1a–c: Perceptions of benefits. Agreement in mid grey, neither/nor in light grey, and disagreement in dark grey.

78.9 percent of the respondents agree with the statement that both partners should get equal benefits from participation. When we compare the other two questions, we find an interesting discrepancy between the percentage who thinks of benefits for the foreign partner as most important, and those who think of themselves as the most important part. 56.3 percent agrees that the foreign part should receive most benefits from participating, while 77.5 percent agrees that their own unit should receive most benefits from participation.

This indicates that while the municipalities would like to have equal share of the benefits, their own benefit in the project is more important than the benefits of the foreign project partner.

The discrepancy indicates that the municipalities are not mainly motivated by what they can contribute to their partners, but by what their partners and the programs can contribute to them. Helping a project partner seems to be a nice added value to the partnership, but not more important than benefits to the municipalities themselves.

3.3.2: A North–South relationship?

Trying to place this kind of partnership in a theoretical context is a challenge. Traditionally, research on this topic is focused on North–South issues in aid between more economically developed countries (MEDC), and less economically developed countries (LEDC). The EEA project, on the other hand, is a situation where MEDC provides funding and project partners through EEA and Norway Grants to new member states in the European Union. On the surface, this kind of program seems to place the participants on more equal footing than what has traditionally been the case in North–South discussions, where the donor states expect soft learning outcomes (Johnson and Wilson 2009, 4). This does not mean that EEA projects is, or is intended to be, an equal partnership. The EEA and Norway Grants describe themselves as arrangements between a donor and a beneficiary country, recognizable from classic North–South relations (Johnson Wilson 2009, 4): “To enhance cooperation and knowledge exchange, partnerships between organisations in the donor and beneficiary countries are widely encouraged for mutual benefit and strengthening of the programme and project’s quality” (eeagrants.org/who-we-are). This principle of mutuality is similar for North–South partnerships, who are also expected to deliver benefits for both parties: “Northern and southern partners are both assumed to gain from them, whether in similar or different ways” (Johnson and Wilson 2009). One of the ways the EEA projects involve both parties is by giving the beneficiary countries the responsibility of coordinating and writing the application for EEA Grants, while the donor countries contribute with expertise by choosing projects to their liking.

Reading the description of the EEA Grants, it becomes apparent that they share some important traits with what Johnson and Wilson describes as “the practitioner-to-practitioner methodology” in North–South relations “based on the idea of professional equivalence and relative parity of status and collegiality” (Johnson and Wilson 2009, 4). These characteristics are very recognizable in the EEA projects. Donor partners are expected to cooperate with beneficiary partners by entering into an agreement about a project they will work on together, with the beneficiary partner as the managing partner. Using Johnson and Wilson’s theories, we can understand the EEA projects as a practitioner-to-practitioner methodology between donor countries and beneficiary countries. Doing this allows us to understand these projects with the theoretical framework that is used to describe North–South relations and we can use their theories as a perspective to understand the distribution of input/output and what the Norwegian municipalities are looking to get out of a EEA project.

Traditionally, the literature on North–South partnerships is focused on areas like power, participation, trust, sustainability and mutuality (Johnson and Wilson 2009, 6). We will focus on mutuality and how the relationship between donor and beneficiary partners in EEA projects can be understood in light of the relationship between donor and recipient in traditional North–South relations as described above.

Johnson and Wilson conclude that the possibility of mutuality is an incentive for cooperation and that the idea of “rough parity and equality between local government officers who participate in cooperation clearly also oils the wheels of their engagements” (Johnson and Wilson 2009, 25). The importance of mutuality in North–South theory can be used to understand the relationship between donor and beneficiary partner in EEA projects. We see that a high degree of respondents (78.9 percent) agrees that partners need to benefit equally from participating. This is also reflected in how the municipalities see the importance of networking and cultural exchange as important motivational factors when entering a project. The importance of mutuality expressed by the municipalities seems to replicate those that are found in North–South relationships.

Johnson and Wilson (2009, 11) write about how the “mutuality gap” complicates cooperation. The point being that for these relationships to work, both parties need to benefit from participating. Working with learning models, Johnson and Wilson concludes that “by making the learning explicit, such partnerships draw attention to the possibilities for making both the learning and the partnerships more effective” (2009, 22). By explicitly wanting something out of the project, the project is more likely to be effective. We can actually observe this in our data, by looking at the correlation between those participants who found that the project was beneficial for a specific need of the municipality, and those who found the participation in a project beneficial as a whole. This represented the highest correlation between one single factor and benefits, with a Spearman correlation value of 0.452, indicating that there is a moderate correlation between people who found that the projects they participated in served a specific need in the municipality and the ones who found participation beneficiary. The fact that this correlation scores the highest, indicates to us that the municipalities who enter these projects with a clear goal to what they want to achieve are more likely to exit the projects with a greater sense of having benefited from participating.

The relative success of projects can, according to Johnson and Wilson’s model, be understood as a result of the importance municipalities put on benefiting from participating. By understanding the relationship between EEA Grant donors and recipients as a North–South relationship, described by Johnson and Wilson as a “practitioner to practitioner methodology” (Johnson and Wilson 2009, 4), we can view the success of a project as a result of the level of mutual benefits the municipalities manage to get out of their involvement.

The fact that municipalities feel it is more important that they benefit, rather than the recipient, goes contrary to what was found when a report was done on the municipality of Gran about North–South relations there. Interviewing the municipality they found that “it is not

important to them that Gran as a municipality should gain from the partnership” (Høie et al. 2012, 21). That report found that a lack of mutual outcome could be described as a result of them looking at this more as a solidarity project than a mutual benefit arrangement with strategic goals, and one of their suggestions was for a more strategic planning of mutual output for the northern partner (Høie et al. 2012, 29).

Why are our findings different than theirs? One explanation could be that when dealing with countries closer to oneself, geography, history and shared reality through a community like the European free market, one is more likely to expect equality from their partner and make it something beyond a solidarity project. This notion of solidarity taking the back seat to other motivational factors is supported by our survey data. The percentage of respondents seeing motivation in solidarity is significantly lower than for the most important factors. Around 70 percent think networking, cultural exchange, development of skills and new contacts are motivational to a high degree, while solidarity scores in the middle with 45.5 percent agreeing to a high degree. This suggests that the EEA projects are different from the classical North–South relationship in the way that donor partners expect more from their participation by expecting this to be something more than solidarity.

4: Obstacles for Participation

The accounts of motivational factors and benefits from participation gives indications on why municipalities choose to participate in EEA projects and their overall assessment on the process. Although our results show that employees in municipalities find project participation valuable, they also identify several barriers that either stop them from going forward in the first place, or that make the work more tiresome.

One of the research questions we try to clarify in this investigation is what kind difficulties and obstacles can prevent Norwegian local authorities from participating in EEA projects. The interviews with KS’s consultants suggested that limited resources (human, financial or temporal) can be such difficulties. Researching information resources on EEA projects (eeagrants.org, program catalogues, etc.), we found that each program and project is developed and managed by entities in the beneficiary states. As a result, all information is customized to the beneficiary entities as well. That is why we have suggested that the following factors could be obstacles for Norwegian local authorities’ participation in EEA projects: information on objectives, terms, partners, participating process, etc. is not enough clear and available for Norwegian local authorities; their interests are not taken into consideration in these projects; and their opportunities to influence projects objects and terms are very limited. These factors were partly confirmed in the interviews.

4.1: Main Deterrents for Participation

Aside from the factors mentioned above, the key informants pointed out such difficulties/obstacles as: cultural distinctions; communication (language) problems; “bureaucracy”; and some degree of distrust to unknown partners and lack of skills. Wanting to get a more quantitative overview of difficulties and obstacles for participation in EEA projects, we included three questions about these in the questionnaire:

1. To what degree can the following factors prevent you from applying to EEA and Norway Grant projects?
2. To what degree have you experienced some of the following factors?
3. What could make you to choose not to participate in EEA and Norway Grant projects?

Both in the first and the second question, respondents were to evaluate the same factors on a 5 point scale from “no degree” to “very high degree,” but the first question was put to all respondents, while the second could be answered just by those who have some practical experience with the EEA projects (6c–j). The third question was put to all respondents, with a 5 point scale from “completely disagree” to “completely agree.”

As shown in figure 4.1a, the most significant factors preventing Norwegian local authorities from applying to EEA projects are *too much bureaucracy/reports*. 63.2 percent respondents agreed to a “high” or “very high” degree that this was preventive, *demands too much time* (54.3 percent), *too short deadlines* (50.0 percent), *participation demands to spend municipality’s budget money* (49.3 percent), *difficulties finding appropriate project* (39.1 percent).

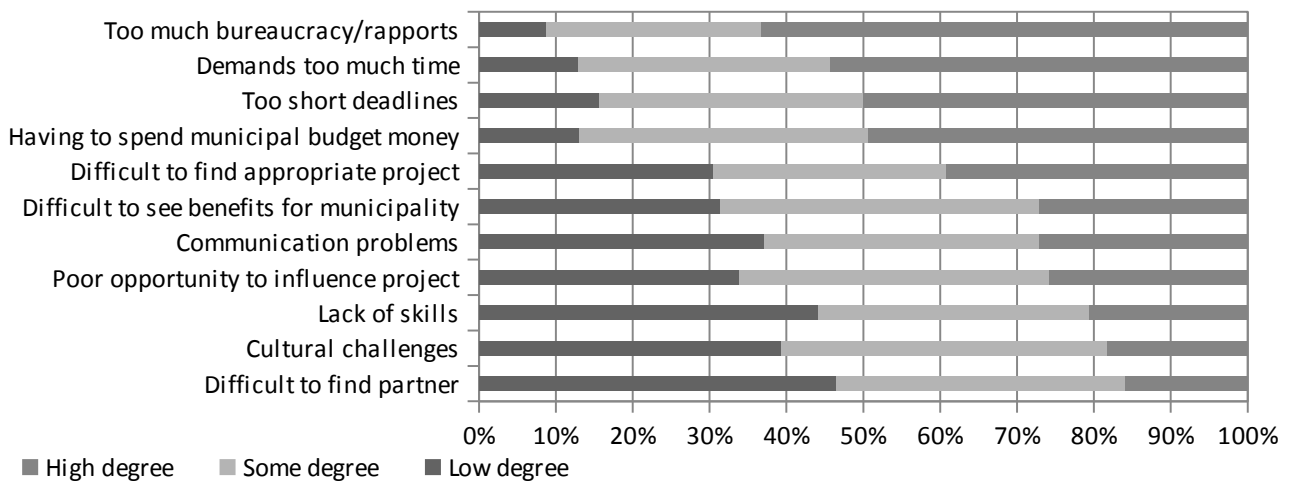


Figure 4.1a: To what degree can the following factors prevent you from applying to EEA projects?

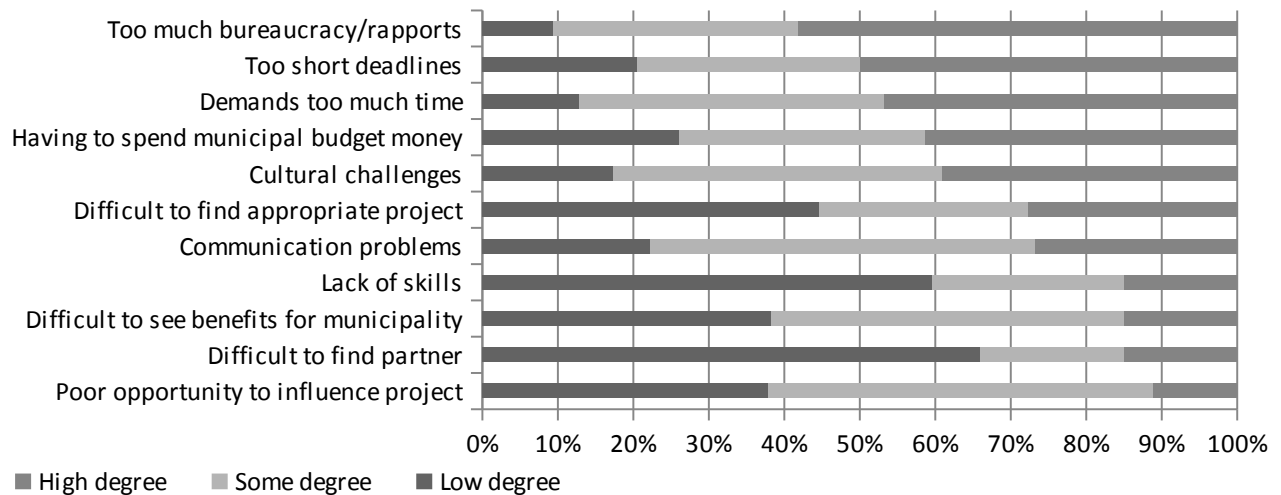


Figure 4.1b: To what degree have you experienced some of the following factors?

Having compared figures 4.1a and 4.1b, we should also mention that respondents with some real experience within EEA projects claim that they have experienced such factors as *too much bureaucracy/reports* (58.1 percent), *demands too much time* (46.8 percent), *too short deadlines* (50.0 percent), *participation demands to spend municipality's budget money* (41.3 percent) in a high degree in the projects. In interviews the informants described these problems in these ways:

There is also this unfamiliar bureaucracy there, it is something you cannot do that much about really, but it is something you must take with you when you go into these kinds of projects. And I would also say that there is a huge reporting burden, and I think that scares quite a lot of people from participating.

It can take a long time from first contact to getting actual information. Then there is a short time between announcement of deadlines and the deadlines themselves. The deadlines can be in the middle of summer, when it is difficult for us to get in competent people.

Another experience is that in the two years before the project was implemented, there was lots of work. But the expenses in relation to it are not covered. So we spent a lot of money for two years that are not included in the accounts.

Another confirmation of this data we can find in Norwegian Bilateral Relations in the Implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanisms Rapport (Whist and Holtedahl 2008, 42):

Some of the main barriers to a participation by Norwegian enterprises in projects financed by Financial Mechanisms are probably the complexity and time consuming procedures of the Financial Mechanisms, the generally high level of activity in Norwegian economy, and the high cost level in Norway seen in combination with public procurement rules in the beneficiary states.

Initially, we expected that Norwegian local authorities would experience having poor opportunity to influence projects. However, over half of the respondents have experienced this to some degree, and although about a quarter submitted in the survey that it can prevent them from applying to

projects, most of the informants claimed in interviews that it was not a problem for them. One of the interviewees, however, pointed out that some partners

will cooperate only to be eligible for an application. There is little willingness to meet Norwegian needs. This means that some EEA projects only result in extra work for Norwegian partners. Municipalities and county municipalities are so pressed, we cannot do charity work just for solidarity. We need something in return for this, too.

In figure 4.1c, factors are shown that can hinder respondents from participating in EEA projects. As we can see, the same factors are at play here: lack of time, overcommitment, and tight economy.

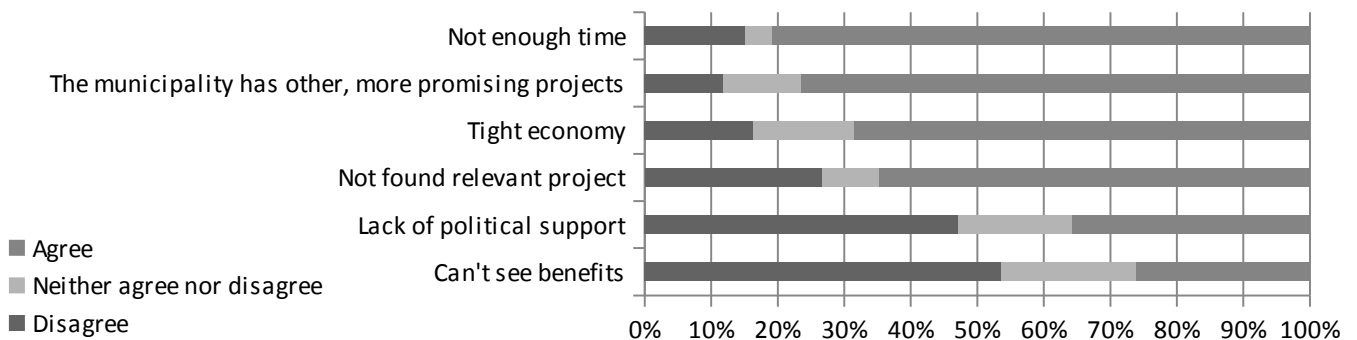


Figure 4.1c: Factors that can make respondents choose not to participate in EEA projects.

4.2: Experience Does Matter

There are also some important differences between how respondents evaluate factors experienced in the projects as obstacles and factors that can prevent them from participating (figures 4.1a and 4.1b). Finding an appropriate project seems to be a smaller problem to respondents with project experience: Just 27.7 percent mentioned that it was difficult (39.1 percent mentioned that it can prevent them to apply). We can see a similar distinction in the evaluation of the difficulty of finding a partner. 66 percent of the respondents who did participate in projects experienced this factor to no or low degree, while 46.6 percent of all respondents classified this factor as an obstacle for participation to no or low degree. These distinctions can be explained in natural way—those who haven't participated in EEA projects could justify it with that they haven't found a relevant project or appropriate partner. Both the statistical analysis (Spearman's correlations coefficient, Chi square test and Fisher's exact test) and in-depth interviews indicate that there is a strong correlation between difficulty finding a partner and respondents' experience. The longer respondents work in entities and more projects they have had, the easier for them to find a partner. We found a similar tendency in the interviews—those who had not come as far with their projects, tended to emphasise these difficulties. Another explanation is that municipalities with successful experience in projects get more offers to participate in new projects (one of the respondents mentioned that KS prefers to involve the same entities in projects). The correlation analysis shows that there is a correlation between factors that respondents experienced in projects and factors that

they think can prevent them to apply to projects. The correlation varies from moderate to strong (Spearman's coefficient varies in diapason from 0.44 to 0.72). This means that factors that respondents experienced as negative can prevent them from applying to a project, or vice versa, the more projects they have participated in, the less they find them problematic. The more projects respondents show interest for, the easier for them to find relevant projects (Spearman correlation coefficient value of -0.426, Fisher's exact test p-value 0.023) and the more likely they are to participate (Spearman correlation coefficient value of 0.732).

Another difference between figures 4.1a and 4.1b is that problems with cultural differences was experienced to a high degree by 39.1 percent of the respondents, while just 18.3 percent think that this can be an obstacle for participation to a high degree. Communication (language) problems can prevent 37.1 percent of the respondents from applying to EEA projects in some degree, while 51.1 percent experienced this problem to some degree in the projects. In interviews we understood that informants with little or no experience in EEA projects didn't expect this kind of problems in the projects, as they didn't mention them. Some of the informants with real experience in projects stated that they were not prepared for such problems. Some mentioned that they needed a professional interpreter, and some said that KS should warn them about such things at information events. Many informants experienced cultural differences as difficult, because partners used to organize their work in different ways. Some complained about too much "superior orientation" and "red carpet things," too much time was used on things that seemed unimportant to informants, like doubling of information, rapports etc., while planning was insufficient—informants claimed that they were used to work with clearer plans from the outset of projects. This quote from one of the interviews depicted how participants experienced this:

They had huge, top-heavy meetings with lots of words, very little concrete. The first time I attended this kind of planning meeting we sat for two days, and I came out of it without understanding a thing of what it was really about.... I just think it's a bit like that in (their country), they use very many words to say something. They are not very direct, in Norway we are very direct. We go straight to the point. Here they beat around the bush, many, many, many times before they get down to business. So then I was pretty desperate. I did not understand what it was all about.

Another kind of obstacle to participation is distrust of unknown and culturally different partners. One of the informants said that there is some scepticism about East European states and their capabilities to provide equal exchange of experience. Norwegians are traditionally orientated to Western culture, so perhaps some don't expect that they can get valuable experience from cooperation with an East European partner. Another informant said that it is "not possible to know who is serious and who is not." Another told that they had to visit the beneficiary entity to clear out how things go on there, because it was too much uncertainty about the project.

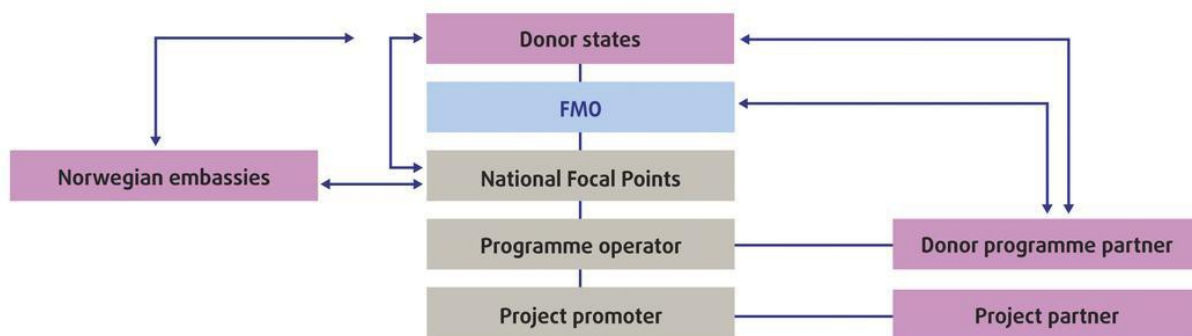
Lack of skills is another difficulty that is more worrying to persons with little experience in the projects. As one of the informants pointed out: "It's scary to be involved in something new and

unknown.” Another informant experienced that it was difficult to explain complicated items on English.

4.3: Garbage Can Model

But there is another potential hindrance to Norwegian participation in EEA projects, namely a peculiarity in the decision-making process. The peculiarity of EEA projects is the multiplicity of organizations that are involved in the projects on the different phases and in different ways, and the multiplicity of the levels where decisions are made. The structure of the organizational interaction is shown in the figure below (eegrants.org/who-we-are/our-organisation):

ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN MANAGEMENT OF THE GRANTS



To get a successful EEA project, the interests, efforts and resources of all these entities should meet each other in some place and time. The responsibilities of these organizations are described on their website. For us it is important to take into consideration that, as mentioned earlier, the EEA Grants are rooted in the EEA Agreement and are instruments for the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to pursue Norwegian national interests on an international (European) level. Norwegian local authorities who directly participate in EEA projects as project partners act in the interests of their “stakeholders” (citizens, employees, state, etc.) and deal with problems on a local level. The initiating and coordinating of EEA projects is delegated to the beneficiary state’s entities (project promoter).

Usually, we perceive a decision making process as linear: problem—searching for possible solutions—evaluating of resources—making choices. But in complicated structure such as the EEA Grants, the decision making processes seems to be non-linear and more like the garbage can model developed by J. March and J. Olsen in their 1976 book *Ambiguity and Choice in Organizations*. “In a Garbage can situation, a decision is an outcome or an interpretation of several relatively independent ‘streams’ within an organization” (March and Olsen 1979, 26). Those organizational streams are: problems, solutions, participants, choice opportunities, and the garbage can is a place they may or may not meet each other. “Although the streams are not completely independent of each other an organizational choice is a somewhat fortuitous confluence” (March and Olsen 1979,

27). Although this model was developed for explaining decision making process in an organization, it seems to be appropriate to the entire EEA Grants structure.

EEA projects are offered to Norwegian local authorities by donor programme partners (DPPs, for example KS) or directly by project promoters. These projects often serve the interests of other organizations. In this situation Norwegian local authorities try to act rationally and find out what benefits the municipality/county municipality can get from the project. Both survey and interviews shows this. 66.2 percent of the respondents agree to a high degree that the project fitting a specific need will motivate them to participate in projects. As mentioned above, 77.5 percent think that it's more important that they get benefits than the recipient country. As one of the respondents said: "Always ask: What's in it for you?" The garbage can model works for Norwegian local authorities in a way that choice opportunities come to them independently from the problem, so they have to find a problem that they can solve with this opportunity. Or, as one of informants said, they need to understand the relevance of the projects.

Moreover, the organizational structures, processes, and responsibility assignment in Norwegian municipalities and counties are very different. This makes it more difficult to find not just an appropriate project, but a participant who will be interested in this project as well. From interviews we have learned that key persons involved in project can play crucial role. Thus, one of the respondents told us that manager of his entity had a special interest to international projects, another respondent mentioned project coordinator in beneficiary entity who had good control over project process, deadlines, etc. Furthermore, one informant suggest that more people, possibly in higher positions in municipalities, should be informed about the projects in order that they can find projects appropriate to their municipalities.

March and Olsen (1979) considered that "a major feature of the garbage can process is partial decoupling of problems and choices," and "choices are made only when the shifting combinations of problems, solutions, and decisions makers happen to make action possible." (March and Olsen 1979). One of the informants described the EEA project system as "characterized by enthusiasts and coincidences."

In a situation where municipalities emphasize that they are overcommitted, lack time and other resources to find a relevant project, they also have problems finding a relevant project. As one informant said: "it is like looking for a needle in a haystack."

4.4: Thoughts on Obstacles

In this chapter we found that the main obstacles and difficulties for participating in EEA Grants project are: bureaucracy and the reporting burden, too short deadlines, lack of temporal, human and financial resources. Our findings completely confirmed our initial hypotheses. The hypothesis that Norwegian local authorities have poor opportunity to influence objectives and contents of the

projects was confirmed just partly, since most of the informants rejected this statement. We also have found that the experience with EEA Grants projects has significant influence on the way which respondents evaluate obstacles and difficulties in the projects. There is sufficient correlation between the factors that respondents have experienced in the projects and the factors that they assume as hindrances to participate. There is also a correlation between the number of projects respondents have participated in and the factors that they evaluate as obstacles or the factors that can prevent them to participate. Thus, the more projects municipalities have had, the easier it is for them to find partners or appropriate projects. Another kind of obstacle is the peculiarity of the decision-making process regarding EEA Grants projects that seems to be to high degree opportunistic.

5: KS's role

The third question of our study concerns the overall perception that the municipalities have about KS's efforts and support during an EEA project. We tried to answer this question by analyzing the sources of information that the municipalities use to learn about EEA projects, the means of support from KS that municipalities need throughout an EEA project, the municipalities' perception about KS's support in their EEA projects, as well as municipalities' perceptions of the events organized by KS. As mentioned in our Methods section, in order to detect various associations in our data, we used Fisher's exact test of independence and calculated Spearman correlation coefficients. Our statistical analysis is complemented by the feedback we obtained by interviewing several municipality representatives.

5.1: Sources of Information

Concerning the sources the municipalities used to get information about EEA projects (question 18 in our survey, "To what degree have the following sources helped you find information about EEA projects?"), the most popular sources were the EEA Grants' website, KS's website, direct contact with KS and information from other Norwegian authorities. On the other hand, the results from our survey indicate that municipalities used information from other municipalities and from the beneficiary countries to a smaller extent.

Furthermore, we noticed that there is a positive correlation between the use of KS's website as a source of information and direct contact with KS, i.e., the more the municipalities used direct contact with KS as a source of information, the more they used KS's website, and vice versa. Moreover, when it comes to the use of the KS's website as a source of information, we noticed a positive correlation between this and the question 19 in our survey: "Did you keep in touch with KS

in relation to EEA projects outside the events they organized on this topic?" This can be interpreted as follows: the more the municipalities used KS's website as a source of information about EEA projects, the more they kept in touch with KS outside the events they organized. From this, we may argue that *KS's website plays a significant role in keeping the municipalities in touch with them outside the events.*

Another positive correlation that we found was between the municipalities' participation status ("participated" or "did not participate" in EEA projects) and the use of the beneficiary countries as a source of information. Namely, the more the municipalities participated in EEA projects, the more they relied on beneficiary countries for information about the projects. This has also been mentioned in the interviews: "We were lucky and we had a super project leader (...) who took care of all the deadlines and who gave us information about all the documents that had to be sent. He took care of everything." Therefore, we may argue that, *once the Norwegian municipalities participate in an EEA project, they tend to rely more on information from the beneficiary countries than on information from local Norwegian authorities or from websites.*

5.2: Support Needed from KS

Another question that we included in our survey was about the kind of help Norwegian municipalities need from KS regarding their participation in EEA projects (question 20 in our survey: "To what degree do you need the following help from KS?"). This question was only answered by the municipalities that had contact with KS regarding EEA projects outside KS's events. The majority of municipalities answered with "to a high degree" to almost all the possible answers—i.e., information about concrete projects, help with finding a partner, help with the application process, help with reporting/documentation, as well as help with advice and general expertise. In addition to this, we found strong and moderate positive correlations between the answers, which allow us to argue that, *once the municipalities need help in one of the stages of their participation in EEA projects—e.g., information about concrete projects or help with finding a partner—they need help in all the other stages of a project.* That is, help with the application process, help with interpretation and communication with the beneficiary country, help with reporting and documentation, as well as help in general with advice and expertise. From this we could further argue that, in order to increase the likelihood that municipalities participate in EEA projects, KS should not only provide them with help on a single stage of a project, but on all stages. This idea is also supported by the qualitative data we gathered from interviews, i.e., "The less time the municipalities must allocate to find out about [EEA projects], the easier for them to participate [in EEA projects]."

Moreover, using the data we obtained with our survey, we found a moderate to strong *negative* correlation between the use of the EEA Grants website as a source of information and the

degree to which municipalities need help from KS with reporting or documentation regarding the projects. This could mean that, the more the municipalities use the EEA Grants website as a source of information about EEA projects, the less they tend to need help from KS with the reporting and documentation. From this, we could argue that the municipalities feel that *the EEA Grants website provides them with enough information on reporting and documentation*. This is also supported by one of the interviewed municipality representative who said that “EEA Grants’ website is a good and easy to use source of information.”

Among the municipalities that kept in touch with KS outside their events, we found another moderate to strong negative correlation between the use of other Norwegian authorities as a source of information about EEA projects and the degree to which the municipalities need help from KS with interpretation and communication with the beneficiary countries. This could mean that, the more the municipalities use other Norwegian institutions as a source of information about EEA projects, the less they tend to ask KS for help with interpretation and communication with the beneficiary states. This allows us to argue that the municipalities feel that *other Norwegian institutions might fulfil their need to interpret and communicate with the beneficiary countries, instead of KS*.

5.3: Municipalities’ Perception of KS’s Support

We further asked the municipalities that have some experience with EEA projects, and that kept in touch with KS outside their events, to what degree did KS meet their needs while they were involved in EEA projects. We asked this question in order to obtain feedback about KS’s work related to EEA projects. When looking at the central tendency (the median and the mode) of each aspect of the question—i.e., information about concrete projects, help with finding a partner, help with the application process, interpretation/communication, help with reporting/documentation and general advice and expertise—we see that the respondents tended to answer either with “to a low degree” or “to some degree,” with no central tendency to answer “to a high degree.” This could mean that, *overall, people were only satisfied to some degree with KS’s help on the different matters we asked in our survey regarding EEA projects*.

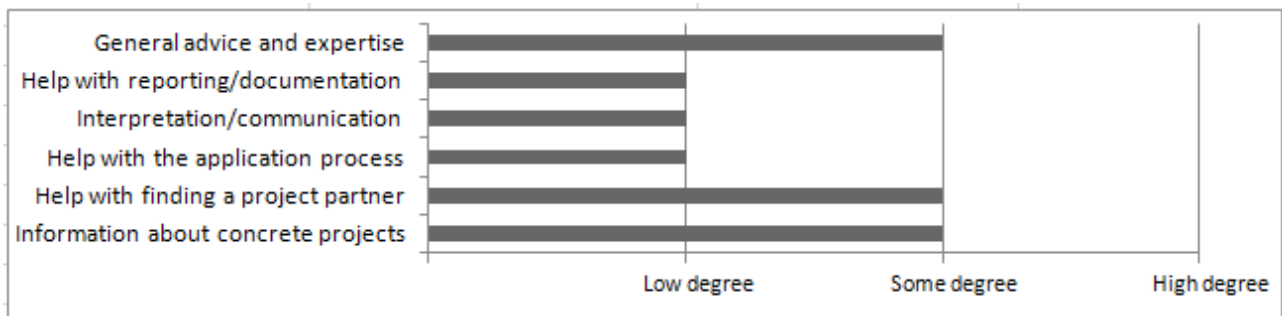


Figure 5.3a: To what degree has KS met your needs while your were involved in the project? Medians in municipalities' perception of KS's support on different aspects

Concerning the municipalities that have some experience with EEA projects, we noticed a moderate to strong positive correlation between the answers to the question of whether or not they kept in touch with KS outside their events, and the answers to some of the aspects of the question about the degree to which KS met their needs while they were involved in projects. This can be interpreted as follows: *the more the municipalities kept in touch with KS outside their events, the more likely that KS would satisfy their needs concerning help with finding a partner, help with the application process, help with the reporting and documentation, as well as with advice and expertise in general.*

Furthermore, we noticed a moderate to strong positive inter-correlation—i.e., each answer to four different aspects of the question (help with finding a project partner, help with the application process, help with interpreting/communication, as well as help with reporting/documentation) is moderately to strongly correlated with all the others. This means that, *once KS helps municipalities with one issue, it is consistent and helps them with all the other issues in the same degree.*

Concerning the municipalities that have some experience with EEA projects and that kept in touch with KS outside their events, we noticed that, the more satisfied they were with KS's help with providing information about concrete projects, the more likely they were to participate in EEA projects. Therefore, we may argue that, *one important factor that decides whether a municipality participates in EEA projects is the amount in which KS provides them with information about concrete projects.* The graph below comes to support this association.

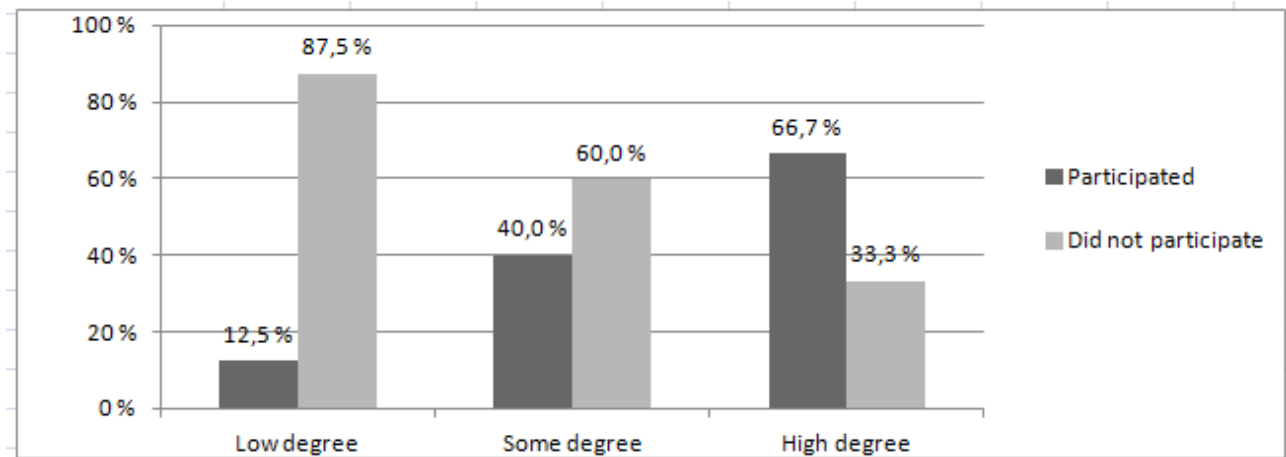


Figure 5.3b: To what degree did KS help you with information about concrete projects?

5.4: Municipalities' Perceptions of Events

The last question in our survey had the aim to obtain feedback regarding the events that KS organizes. Looking at the central tendencies, the assertions that were answered with “to a high degree” from the majority of respondents were “I believe that the meeting was well organized” and “The event increased our interest in participating in EEA projects.” This would allow us to conclude that, generally speaking, the events that KS organized reached their objective, i.e., to encourage municipalities to participate in EEA projects. However, this was not reflected in all the interviews as some of the respondents mentioned that “It was not like I went home and said to myself ‘wow, this is an opportunity’, or that I didn’t become more curious.”

On the other hand, we noticed a moderate positive correlation between the answers to the question “To what degree did you experience difficulties with finding a project partner?” and “To what degree do you agree that the information given in KS’s events was too general?” This can be interpreted as follows: Among the municipalities that have some experience with EEA projects—including those that did not participate in EEA projects, but tried to find a project or a project partner, or worked with the application process—the more the municipalities faced difficulties finding a project partner, the more they perceived the information provided by KS during their events as too general. *This may mean that the information given by KS on possible project partners tends to be too general, and that the municipalities need more concrete information about possible partners in EEA projects.* The idea that “the information was too general” is also supported by some of our interviewed respondents who said that “I was in a way expecting that things had been more clear, more pronounced.” and that “I felt it was sort of just thrown up loads (of information), I didn’t manage in a way to manoeuvre in it, they pointed to very many links, like ‘you can go in there,’ but the information was not so clear there. And so one had to spend a lot of time to find out what all this is, really. And it was time that we didn’t have.”

In addition to this, by a statistical analysis of the data we collected from the survey, we obtained moderate to strong negative correlations between “I believe the meeting was well organised” and “I believe that the meeting was a waste of time,” as well as between “The event increased our interest in participating in EEA projects” and “I believe that the meeting was a waste of time.” The first negative correlation can be interpreted as follows: The more the municipalities perceived KS's events as being well organized, the less they tended to consider the event as wasted time. Moreover, the second negative correlation could be interpreted as follows: the more the events motivated the municipalities to participate in EEA projects, the less they tended to consider the event as wasted time. *These two negative correlations may mean that the expectations that the municipalities have about KS's events are that they should be well organized, and that they should be able to motivate them to participate in EEA projects.*

5.5: Municipalities' Feedback to KS

Based on the statistical analysis of the data from our survey, which we discussed in this section, combined with the qualitative data we obtained from interviews, we could conclude that, in general, the municipalities are satisfied with KS's support on the various issues connected to EEA projects. However, our data suggests that KS could help and motivate the municipalities to participate even more by providing more concrete information about these projects, as well as by providing support to the municipalities on all stages of an EEA project.

6: Conclusions

To stimulate Norwegian municipalities to participate in EEA and Norway Grants projects it is essential to understand the motivational factors driving participation, as well as the obstacles they are faced with when joining a project. For KS this is important knowledge to better understand what help they can provide for the municipalities to better facilitate participation. Through our research we have found what motivates municipalities to participate, we have found what obstacles they face and we have discovered how KS can help facilitate participation. These are some of our key findings:

We found the most important motivational factors for the municipalities to be *competence building, finding a project fitting with the municipality's strategy, new contacts/network building* and *culture exchange*. When judging their own benefits from participating the municipalities who experience most benefits are those who found a project fitting with their strategy.

Based on these findings, we suggest that when informing the municipalities about projects, KS can emphasize how these projects can help realize an already existing municipal strategy. There should also be a focus on how in addition to serving a specific purpose for the municipalities, participation can give soft benefits such as cultural exchange, networking and competence building.

We found the biggest obstacle for participation to be *bureaucracy* and *limited resources (temporal, human and financial)*. Understood through the perspective of “Garbage Can” theory, we theorize that an additional obstacle could be a decision making process more opportunistic than rational in its nature. But on the other hand we found that experience to a degree cancel out the effect of the obstacles. If you can get the municipalities to participate they are less likely to be hindered by these obstacles in future project participation.

Informing the municipalities of the added burden of more formal bureaucracy as early as possible might lead to a higher degree of applicants who are making value-rational decisions with projects fitting their strategy, resulting in them benefiting more from participation. Too much focus on the obstacles can of course possibly “scare” potential participants from investigating participation further. Nevertheless, our findings show that many are not adequately prepared for these difficulties.

Concerning KS’ role we found that most municipalities who contact KS are satisfied, but that KS can strive towards making more of the information easily accessible, preferably online, and make it easier for the municipalities to identify how these projects can help them solve a specific issue or challenge they are experiencing. KS could more clearly state what they support the municipalities with and not. There seems to be some confusion among the municipalities about what kind of assistance they can expect from KS, possibly functioning as a barrier for contact between the two parties.

As this report has shown, the more familiar municipalities are with EEA project participation, the more they see the possible benefits and handle the obstacles better. When negotiating coming EEA agreements our findings can enhance the understanding of the Norwegian perspective and make for better utilization of the municipal level in the work to reduce social and economic disparities and strengthen bilateral relations.

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Web

EEA Grants website, www.eeagrants.org

Appendix 1 – Revised project mandate

Oppdragsgiver: KS internasjonale prosjekter

Gjennomføring: Prosjektforum 2014

Institutt for sosiologi og samfunnsgeografi

Boks 1096 Blindern

0317 Oslo

Oppdrag: Vurdere nytte for norske lokale myndigheter ved deltakelse i prosjekter under EØS midlene (www.eeagrants.org/).

Arbeidstittel: EØS ordningene - muligheter og nytte for norske kommuner

Bakgrunn

EØS midlene 2009 – 2014 har som mål å bidra til økonomisk og sosial utjevning i EØS området og styrke bilaterale relasjoner mellom giver og mottaker. Dette fordrer samarbeid på en rekke fagområder og mellom ulike forvaltningsnivå. Regionalt og lokalt nivå har særlig fått plass på programområdet «kapasitetsbygging for nasjonale, regionale og lokale myndigheter» hvor KS er programpartner for giverlandene i 4 mottakerland og arbeider mye på feltet regional utvikling.

KS har i tillegg deltatt på arbeidsgiversiden i satsingen for anstendig arbeid gjennom trepartssamarbeid. Anstendig arbeid legger til grunn sosial dialog, styrking av arbeidstakernes rettigheter, sysselsetting og sosial beskyttelse. Gjennom «Fondet for anstendig arbeid og trepartssamarbeid» prioriteres for første gang dette i EØS ordningen. Satsingen har vært vellykket og er svært dagsaktuell. KS sammen med de andre aktørene på norsk side anbefaler at arbeidet videreføres.

KS erfaringer fra i første rekke programmeringsfasen for inneværende periode er oppsummert i en felles rapport til UD fra alle norske programpartnere av 12. mars 2013. Denne rapporten slår fast at programsamarbeidet er vellykket og ønskes videreført. Den gir likevel konkrete anbefalinger for hvordan arbeidet kan styrkes i neste periode. Særlig viktig er anbefalingen om tidlig å få komme med faglige innspill innfor gitte politiske rammer.

Inneværende periode har demonstrert at regionalt og lokalt nivå, som medansvarlige for regional og sosial utvikling, har viktige oppgaver i utjevningsarbeidet. Satsingen på anstendig arbeid hvor KS som arbeidsgiverorganisasjon deltar har også vært vellykket. Det regional og

lokalt nivået kan komme ned gode innspill også på andre områder som omsorg, velferd, sysselsetting, næring, oppvekst og miljø hvor de i dag har er en mindre framtreddende rolle.

I tillegg til en generell anbefaling om at regionalt og lokalt nivå utnyttes bedre oppleves det at mottakerlandene i svakere grad enn giverlandene utnytter det potensialet som finnes på disse forvaltningsnivåene.

Problemstilling

Et stort antall norske kommuner og fylkeskommuner deltar på ulike vis i prosjekter finansiert over EØS-midlene. Det finnes imidlertid lite systematisk kunnskap om hvorfor norske lokale myndigheter (kommuner og fylkeskommuner) engasjerer seg i dette arbeidet og hva de får ut av dette. KS ønsker å undersøke relevans av EØS-innsats fra sine medlemmer, motivasjon for å delta og nytten dette arbeidet har for dem for bedre å kunne tilrettelegge for slik innsats.

KS ønsker også å kartlegge kommunenes opplevelse av deres innsats overfor medlemmene på dette feltet. Et betydelig arbeid legges ned i å informere medlemmer om muligheter for prosjektdeltakelse innenfor EØS midlene og å motivere og tilrettelegge for slik deltakelse. Studien må derfor også undersøke om KS har fylt sin rolle på en tilfredsstillende måte.

Problemstillingen blir dermed

- Av kommuner som har deltatt på arrangementer om EØS-samarbeid: Hvorfor deltar noen kommuner i prosjekter og hvilke faktorer spiller inn på at noen ikke deltar?

- Hvordan vurderer kommunene KS' innsats og støtte ved inngåelse og underveis i prosjektsamarbeidet?

Metode

Prosjektforum vil gjennomføre en survey blant de kommuner som har vist interesse av EØS-prosjekter gjennom deltagelse på ulike arrangementer. Dybdeintervjuer med ulike kategorier deltagere vil i forkant av surveyen generere hypoteser relatert til problemstillingene som testes i survey. Kommunene vil deles inn etter følgende kriterier: **alle som har vært** med en eller annen gang, **2: dem som etter hvert faller fra** og hvorfor, **3: samt dem som går videre** og hvorfor for så å ende med **4: alle som «ser lovende ut»**. (Fylkes)kommuner som aldri har vist interesse tas ikke med i utvalget.

Formål

Analysen skal presenteres i en rapport til KS. Konklusjoner fra undersøkelsen vil inngå i KS innspill til regjeringens forhandlingsposisjon om ny EØS finansieringsperiode 2015 - 2020, når programstruktur for denne perioden drøftes, samt når programinnhold foreslås.

Gjennom bedre dokumentert nytte vil KS kunne påvirke struktur og innhold i ny EØS finansieringsperiode og bedre kunne tilrettelegge for at medlemmene deltar. Regionalt og lokalt myndighetsnivå vil slik kunne utnyttes bedre i programgjennomføring og bidra til bedre å fylle sin rolle i arbeidet for sosial og økonomisk utjevning i EØS området.

Produkter og gjennomføring

Prosjektforum 2014 skal levere en rapport på inntil 30 sider til KS innen 31. mai 2014. Den skal skrives på engelsk. Når oppdragsgiver har akseptert rapporten skal Prosjektforum lage en PowerPoint presentasjon på engelsk over funn, konklusjoner og anbefalinger. Denne skal KS fritt kunne bruke i sitt arbeid. Det kan være aktuelt å be prosjektgruppen i Prosjektforum 2014 om å holde denne presentasjonen.

KS vil stille til Prosjektforums 2014 disposisjon nødvendig bakgrunnsmateriale og adresselister til alle relevante kommuner og fylkeskommuner. KS stiller med kontorplass til disposisjon for prosjektgruppen en dag i uken etter nærmere avtale. Avtalt honorar for oppdraget utbetales når rapporten er akseptert og presentasjonen mottatt.

Kontaktperson

Bjørn Rongevær, Spesialrådgiver

e-post: Bjorn.Rongevaer@ks.no

tlf: 24 13 28 31/93 20 50 07

Appendix 2 – Interview guide

Gruppe 1: De som har vist interesse, men ikke fulgt opp. (De som kommer på møtet, men ikke gjør noe mer)

Gruppe 2: De som har vist mer interesse, (undersøkt videre) men trukket seg

***Gruppe 3: De som har søkt, og fått avslag**

***Gruppe 4: De som ifølge KS “ser lovende ut” (får sannsynligvis prosjekt)**

*** = kan stilles til kategori 3 og 4**

Kort presentasjon

[Oppvarmings spørsmål] Hva er din erfaring med EØS-prosjekter?

Omfang

1. Hvem har vært involvert i prosessen? Avdelinger? Hvor mange? Posisjoner?
2. *Hvilke forskjellige roller har dere hatt? (hva var erfaringene med de ulike rollene?)
3. Arbeidstid (inkl prosent)/Innsats?
4. *Hvordan opplever dere kravene for å delta?
5. Har dere involvert andre ressurser? Lokalsamfunnet? Tilstelninger? Andre organisasjoner/avdelinger/lignende? Hva har vært gjort for å skape engasjement?

Motivasjon

6. Hvorfor deltok du på informasjonsmøtet? Kommunens intensjon, egen intensjon?
7. Hvilket inntrykk fikk du av EØS-prosjektdeltagelse på informasjonsmøtet? (fordeler, ulemper)
8. Hvilke forventninger hadde kommunen til prosjekter i utgangspunktet?
9. Hva er din/din kommunes motivasjon for å utforske/søke om deltagelse? F. eks: solidaritet? Lokaløkonomi - handel? Kunnskapsutviklingen? Rekruttering? Image? Ansattes motivasjon?
10. Er det noe i dette som har vært demotiverende? F. eks. krav, språk, kulturforskjeller, osv.

Strategi

11. Har kommunen deres en internasjonal strategi?
12. Hvilke mål inngår i denne strategien?
13. Hvordan prøver kommuner å oppnå den internasjonale strategien?
14. Hvordan passer disse prosjektene inn i deres strategi?
15. I hvilken grad opplever du at deltagelse i EØS-prosjekter har lokalpolitisk støtte?
16. Hvilke internasjonale prosjekter har dere deltatt i (Eventuelt utenfor EØS-midler)?

Medvirkning

17. Hvordan oppleves mulighetene for å påvirke målformuleringen i prosjekter?
18. Hvordan tror du muligheten for å ivareta enhetens interesser blir ivaretatt?
19. *Hvordan foregikk prosessen rundt målformulering? (hvem, når, hvordan?)

Prosess

20. Kan du fortelle om hele prosessen hvordan enheten bestemte seg for å engasjere seg i prosjekter?
 - a. Hvordan fikk enheten informasjon om prosjekter? (eventuelt om andre prosjekter også)
 - b. Hvem i kommunen tok initiativ for å delta i prosjektet?
 - c. *Hvilke faktorer spilte inn i beslutningsprosessen?
 - d. *Var det diskusjon om prosjektet i enheten? Hvilke argumenter bruktes for eller mot å delta i prosjektet?
21. Hvordan gikk prosjektet?
 - a. Hvor langt kom dere?
 - b. Er det noen hendelser som har hatt betydning for engasjement?
 - c. Uavhengig av resultat, var det en verdifull erfaring?
 - d. Eksempler på ting som har gjort det verdifullt/uheldig?
22. Hvilke faktorer kan bidra til at prosjektet lykkes?
23. utfordringer/forhindringer for engasjement? Programpartner? Søknad; Utføring.
24. Hva kunne vært gjort annerledes?
25. Har dere hørt om erfaringer fra andre kommuner/enheter?
 - a. Hvor? Hva?
 - b. Hvilken motivasjon og forventninger hadde de?
 - c. Hvilke utfordringer hadde de?

Nytte/resultater

26. Kan du fortelle om positive/negative erfaringer så langt i prosessen?
27. Hvilken nytte ser du/dere for dere ved å delta i prosjekt? (Fordeler for enheten, ansatte, økonomi, lokalsamfunn osv)
28. Kjenner du til noen EØS-prosjekter som har konkrete positive resultater?
29. Hvordan ser du for deg at erfaringene fra et eventuelt EØS-samarbeid kan brukes videre i deres arbeid?
30. *Frem til nå: Foreløpige resultater av prosjektet din enhet var involvert i?
31. *Hvordan måles resultater av prosjektsamarbeid (myke/harde resultater? eksempler?)

32. *Hvordan svarte resultater til mål og forventninger?
33. *Opplever du at begge parter har like stort utbytte av å delta i prosjekter?
34. *Hva har arbeidet med prosjekter gitt deg personlig?
35. *Hvordan har du brukt det du har lært? Har du tatt med deg den kunnskapen ut av prosjektet? (formidlet til andre, brukt på andre felt)
36. *Har du hatt du noe personlig motivasjon for å engasjere deg i dette? Hvilke faktorer påvirker din motivasjon?

KS' rolle

37. Reiste du til informasjonsarrangementet alene eller sammen med med kollegaer?
38. Hva synes du om informasjonsarrangementene som KS har holdt? (Nyttig? stort nok? komplekst nok?)
39. Har du vært på arrangementer om dette temaet holdt av andre enn KS? (erfaringer, vurderinger)
40. Hvilke andre kilder bruker dere for å få informasjon om EØS-prosjekter?
41. Hva tror du er KS' oppgaver i når det gjelder EØS-prosjekter?
42. Hvilke forventninger har du til KS?
43. Hvilken kontakt har du hatt med KS i forbindelse med dette?
44. Hvilken støtte har din enhet behov for i forbindelse med dette?
45. Hvilken støtte har din enhet fått?
46. Var dette tilstrekkelig? Er dere fornøyd med kontakten/oppfølgingen fra KS, andre DPP)
47. Hva kunne vært gjort annerledes/bedre?

Til slutt:

48. Er det viktig at norske kommuner deltar i slike samarbeidsprosjekter? Hvorfor?
49. Vil dere si noe mer?
50. Er det andre vi bør snakke med?

Appendix 3 – Survey

Velkommen til en kort spørreundersøkelse om norske kommuners opplevelse av EØS-prosjekter!

Prosjektforum ved UiO utfører nå på oppdrag av KS en kartlegging av norske kommuners motivasjon og nytte av å delta i EØS-prosjekter. Spørreundersøkelsen sendes til deg som har vært på et eller flere av KS' arrangementer hvor EØS-prosjekter har vært et tema.

Vi er spesielt opptatt av å undersøke om EØS-prosjektdeltagelse oppleves som relevant, hva som motiverer for å delta i EØS-prosjekter og hvilken nytte av deltagelse kan gi. Det er også relevant å samle erfaringer fra kommuner/fylkeskommuner som av ulike grunner ikke er involvert i et EØS-prosjekt. Derfor håper vi at også dere svarer!

KS arbeider med å informere medlemmene sine om muligheter for prosjektdeltagelse, samt motivere og tilrettelegge. Spørreskjemaet vil derfor også fokusere på hvorvidt KS har fylt sin rolle på en tilfredsstillende måte.

Undersøkelsen er anonym, og det er selvfølgelig frivillig å delta. Om du har spørsmål kan du ta kontakt med Margrethe Modalsli (977 58 985 / margrethehm@gmail.com) eller Chris Rønningstad (915 45 756 / chris.ronningstad@gmail.com) i Prosjektforum.

Konklusjoner fra undersøkelsen vil blant annet inngå i KS' innspill til regjeringens forhandlingsposisjon om ny EØS-finansieringsperiode 2015-2020.

Tusen takk for at du tar deg tid!

1) Hva er ditt hovedarbeidsområde?

Velg alternativ

Internasjonal koordinering

Samferdsel

Kultur

Næring/Handel

Politisk nivå

Kommunikasjon

Utdanning

Annet, spesifiser

Turisme

2) Hvor lenge har du jobbet i kommunen/fylkeskommunen?

- mindre enn 3 år
- 3-5 år
- 6 år eller mer

3) Hva slags type utdanning har du?

- Samfunnsfag
- Tekniske fag
- Helsefag
- Økonomi
- Realfag
- Jus
- Pedagogikk
- Annet

4) Har du jobbet med internasjonale spørsmål tidligere bortsett fra EØS-prosjekter?

- Ja
- Nei
- Vet ikke

**5) Har du vært på et KS-arrangement der EØS-prosjekter ble diskutert?
(Temadag, infoverksted, partnersøkseminar osv)**

- Ja
- Nei
- Vet ikke

De neste spørsmålene handler om din enhets erfaring med EØS-prosjekter.

6) Vi vil gjerne vite hvor langt dere har kommet med EØS-prosjekter. Velg alternativet som representerer det lengste dere har kommet i prosessen med EØS-prosjekter.

- a) Ingen erfaring
- b) Innhentet informasjon
- c) Lete etter partner
- d) Lete etter riktig prosjekt
- e) Arbeide med søknad
- f) Søknad til behandling
- g) Fått avslag på søknad
- h) Deltar i pågående prosjekt
- i) Avbrutt prosjekt
- j) Fullført prosjekt

(Hvis 6d-j)

7) Hvor mange EØS-prosjekter har din enhet meldt interesse for å delta i?

- 1 2-3 4-5 5+

(Hvis 6h-j)

8) Hvor mange EØS-prosjekter har dere deltatt i? (Inkludert pågående)

- 1 2-3 4-5 5+

18) I hvilken grad har følgende kilder hjulpet dere å finne informasjon om prosjekter?

	Har ikke brukt	Ingen grad	Liten grad	Noen grad	Stor grad	Meget stor grad
EEA Grants' egne nettsider (eeagrants.org)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
KS' nettsider (ks.no)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Direkte kontakt med KS	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Andre nettsider	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Informasjon fra andre kommuner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Informasjon fra andre norske instanser	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fra mottakerland eller potensielle mottakerland	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19) Har dere hatt kontakt med KS vedrørende EØS-prosjekter utover arrangementet dere har deltatt på?

- Nei
- Ja, noe
- Ja, mye
- Husker ikke

(Hvis 19 ja)

KS fungerer som et mulig bindeledd mellom EØS-midlene og norske kommuner. For å utfylle denne rollen på best mulig måte, trenger de tilbakemeldinger fra dere om hva slags hjelp de kan bidra med.

(Hvis 5 ja)

Du har tidligere bekreftet at du har deltatt på et arrangement/seminar av KS hvor EØS-prosjekter var et tema.

22) Hvor godt stemmer følgende påstander om informasjonsmøtet fra KS?

	Helt uenig	Litt uenig	Hverken eller	Litt enig	Helt enig	Vet ikke/ønsker ikke svare
Jeg synes møtet var godt organisert	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Informasjonen var for generell	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Informasjonen var for konkret	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Språket var for teknisk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Arrangementet ga oss lyst til å søke om deltagelse	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg synes møtet var bortkastet tid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Det var for mye informasjon på kort tid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Tusen takk for at du tok deg tid til å svare på undersøkelsen!

Appendix 4 – Main correlations

* We denoted the different subquestion of a question with letters from “a” to “l”.

Table 1 Positive correlations concerning the first part of our research question, i.e., motivation, benefits, obstacles influencing the municipalities’ participation in EEA projects

First Variable	Second Variable	Spearman correlation	Spearman p-value	Pearson correlation	Pearson p-value	Fisher p-value
7	8	0,732	0	0,728	0	0
7	14	0,413	0,034	0,439	0,036	0,019
8	10.e	0,556	0,008	0,479	0,029	0,002
8	9.e	0,531	0,014	0,489	0,03	0,017
9.a	9.c	0,449	0	0,42	0,001	0,011
9.e	10.e	0,61	0,003	0,603	0,004	0,027
9.g	10.g	0,684	0	0,631	0,001	0
9.g	15.b	0,44	0	0,454	0	0,002
9.h	10.h	0,504	0,019	0,468	0,035	0,025
9.i	10.i	0,737	0	0,759	0	0,001
9.j	10.j	0,729	0	0,722	0	0,001
9.j	9.k	0,577	0	0,584	0	0
9.k	10.k	0,77	0	0,846	0	0,001
9.l	10.l	0,821	0	0,789	0	0
10.j	10.k	0,504	0,017	0,508	0,011	0,034
10.j	14	0,452	0,021	0,44	0,03	0,021
11.a	12.a	0,484	0,001	0,485	0,001	0,011
11.a	11.b	0,452	0	0,459	0	0,001
11.b	12.b	0,628	0	0,624	0	0
11.c	12.c	0,674	0	0,688	0	0
11.c	11.j	0,484	0	0,479	0	0,001
11.c	12.j	0,443	0,003	0,461	0,002	0,021
11.d	12.d	0,586	0	0,587	0	0
11.e	12.e	0,67	0	0,643	0	0
11.e	17.b	0,459	0	0,507	0,002	0
11.f	12.f	0,661	0	0,714	0	0
11.f	11.g	0,508	0	0,524	0	0
11.g	12.g	0,636	0	0,651	0	0
11.g	12.f	0,407	0,005	0,439	0,003	0,006
11.h	12.h	0,486	0,001	0,503	0,001	0,006
11.h	17.d	0,417	0,001	0,439	0	0,001
11.i	12.i	0,466	0,001	0,501	0	0
11.j	12.j	0,615	0	0,625	0	0
11.j	12.c	0,454	0,003	0,469	0,003	0,02
11.k	12.k	0,719	0	0,772	0	0
12.a	12.b	0,493	0,001	0,47	0,001	0,005

12.a	12.c	0,486	0,001	0,491	0,001	0,013
12.a	12.d	0,432	0,005	0,409	0,01	0,038
12.c	12.j	0,535	0	0,577	0	0
12.d	12.k	0,431	0,005	0,441	0,004	0,035
12.g	17.d	0,559	0	0,548	0	0,001
12.h	17.d	0,475	0,001	0,469	0,002	0,003
12.j	17.c	0,516	0	0,518	0	0
12.j	17.a	0,433	0,005	0,437	0,005	0,033
17.a	17.c	0,457	0	0,481	0	0,001

Table 2 Negative correlations concerning the first part of our research question, i.e., motivation, benefits, obstacles for municipalities' participation in EEA projects

First variable	Second variable	Spearman correlation	Spearman p-value	Pearson correlation	Pearson p-value	Fisher p-value	Chi-Square p-value
2	12.f	-0,501	0,001	-0,531	0	0,004	-
7	17.d	-0,33	0,023	-0,426	0,004	0,023	-
10.f	17.f	-0,434	0,019	-0,535	0,011	0,025	-
11.g	Participation	-0,447	0	-0,445	0	0,001	0,001

Table 3 Positive correlations concerning the second part of our research question, i.e., municipalities' feedback to KS

First variable	Second variable	Spearman correlation	Spearman p-value	Pearson correlation	Pearson p-value	Fisher p-value
18.c	18.b	0,44	0	0,472	0	0
18.g	Participation	0,404	0,001	0,403	0,001	0,007
19	21.c	0,588	0,001	0,639	0,001	0,001
19	21.e	0,559	0,002	0,65	0,001	0,002
19	21.f	0,456	0,009	0,439	0,009	0,018
19	21.b	0,455	0,004	0,456	0,006	0,012
19	18.b	0,411	0	0,425	0	0,009
20.a	20.c	0,433	0,005	0,453	0,008	0,011
20.b	20.f	0,598	0	0,593	0	0,001
20.b	20.c	0,463	0,004	0,479	0,003	0,012
20.d	17.d	0,489	0,002	0,475	0,003	0,003
21.a	Paarticipation	0,409	0,016	0,411	0,017	0,046
22.b	12.f	0,425	0,005	0,416	0,008	0,037

Table 4 Negative correlations concerning the second part of our research question, i.e., municipalities' feedback to KS

First variable	Second variable	Spearman correlation	Spearman p-value	Pearson correlation	Pearson p-value	Fisher p-value
18.g	11.f	-0,421	0	-0,411	0,001	0,009
20.a	11.e	-0,497	0,003	-0,454	0,008	0,041
20.d	18.f	-0,458	0,003	-0,474	0,002	0,035
20.e	18.a	-0,522	0,001	-0,486	0,002	0,004
22.a	22.f	-0,503	0	-0,521	0,001	0,002
22.e	11.a	-0,449	0	-0,428	0,001	0,004
22.e	22.f	-0,465	0	-0,419	0,002	0,001