



ANNUAL MEETING ON THE LITHUANIAN-SWISS COOPERATION PROGRAMME

Thursday 16, April 2009

Venue: Ministry of Finance, Vilnius
Conference Room 331
9.00 – 12.30 h

MINUTES

Lithuania (LT):

Mr. Rolandas Kriščiūnas, Chairman, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Finance, National Coordination Unit (NCU),
Ms. Audronė Nikšaitė, Head of International Financial Assistance Coordination Division, Ministry of Finance, NCU,
Ms. Jūratė Vlaščenkienė, Deputy Head of International Financial Assistance Coordination Division, Ministry of Finance, NCU,
Ms. Roma Beržinytė, Chief Specialist of International Financial Assistance Coordination Division, Ministry of Finance, NCU,
Ms. Eglė Puodžiukaitė, Chief Specialist of International Financial Assistance Coordination Division, Ministry of Finance, NCU,
Mr. Viktoras Sirvydis, Director of Central Project Management Agency (CPMA),
Ms. Jolanta Kačinskaitė, Deputy Head of the International Programmes' Management Department, CPMA,
Ms. Ieva Lunskienė, Head of the Swiss Programme Unit, CPMA,
Ms. Neringa Janušienė, Project Manager, Swiss Programme Unit, CPMA.

Switzerland (CH):

Mr. Hubert Eisele, Co-chairman, Deputy Head of Department, Cooperation with Eastern Europe, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC),
Mr. Martin Lippuner, Programme Manager, SDC,
Ms. Franziska Keller, Deputy Head of Division, Swiss Enlargement Contribution / Cohesion, State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO),
Ms. Christine Grieder, Head of the Swiss Contribution Office (SCO), Embassy of Switzerland,
Ms. Olita Berzina, Programme Officer SCO, Embassy of Switzerland.

Others participants

Ms. Lina Rimkutė, Information and Communication Officer, European Commission Representation.

Presentation on the Implementation of the Lithuanian-Swiss Cooperation Programme

Mr. R. Kriščiūnas opened the meeting and presented the implementation status of the Lithuanian-Swiss Cooperation Programme (see Annex 1).

Discussions/Decisions

Allocation of non-committed funds

CH proposed the allocation of non-committed funds (7,086 million CHF) as follow:

- 5 mln. CHF for a new “Security” field;
- 1 mln. CHF for R&D or Scholarship Fund;
- 1 mln. CHF for the programmes prepared by the Ministry of Health.

Suggested Focus areas in the new field “Security”:

- Measures for securing borders;
- Improvement of the management of the immigration asylum issues;
- Access to information system on security law and developing the legal aspects of security;
- Modernization of judiciary;
- Strengthen institutions and capacities for combating corruption and organized crime, etc.

CH added that the nuclear safety, natural disasters prevention, and regional development areas are not under consideration for financing. LT informed that CH proposals will be discussed with responsible LT institutions.

Advanced payments of the Swiss Contribution

LT inquired about the possibility to get the advanced installments of the Swiss Contribution. CH took note of the LT request and informed that the answer would be given after the discussion with the HQs. CH indicatively responded that in general advanced payments are not made, with the exception of the NGO block grant.

Amendment of Annex 3, part D of the Framework Agreement

It was proposed to amend Annex 3, part D of the Framework Agreement, regarding the signing parties of the Scholarship Fund Agreement. It was agreed that the Scholarship Fund Agreement should be signed by the NCU, the Ministry of Education and Science as the Intermediary Body and the Lithuanian Research Council as the Coordination Body on the LT side and by the SDC on the CH side. It was decided to formalize an amendment on the level of NCU and SDC.

Co-financing of the Swiss grant

CH inquired about the availability of the LT funds for co-financing. LT confirmed that co-financing will be assured from the central budget.

Compliance and system audits

CH inquired about the progress of the compliance and system audits. LT informed that internal audits were not performed as the process of the implementation of the Lithuanian-Swiss Cooperation Programme is not very much advanced. Compliance assessments will be performed and submitted to CH before the approval procedure of the Final project proposals by CH will be finished.

NGO block grant

CH asked about the problems/lessons learnt while implementing the NGO block grant financed by the EEE/Norwegian financial mechanisms. LT briefed that the main problems LT faced while implementing the NGO block grant financed by the EEE/Norwegian financial mechanisms were not enough specific requirements for the suitability of the potential applicants set and too many and

broad priorities were laid out. More than 400 applications submitted by a big variety of different level organizations (varying from the small local communities to the national sectoral umbrella organizations). The assessment procedure was complicated as very different in the scope of the problem to be solved and results to be delivered had to be compared.

Therefore, for the Swiss NGO block grant initially it was decided to perform a comprehensive feasibility study to specify the priorities, means, applicants, and etc.

CH also asked about the lower and upper limits of the financial dimension of the sub-projects. LT informed that there were two segments: sub-projects from 10 000 to 50 000 euros; sub-projects from 50 000 to 100 000 euros.

CH expressed the expectations that the NGO block grant feasibility study will give an overall landscape of the NGO sector in Lithuania including the current situation and the needs and will – based on this – define approach and orientation (e.g. target groups) of the NGO Fund.

LT informed that municipalities could be the partners of the NGOs in the implementation of the sub-projects. LT added that Swiss NGOs will be considered as partners too.

“Rehabilitation and modernization of basic infrastructure and Improvement of the environment“ and „Health“ Programmes

Referring to the ”Health” programme (22,6 million CHF) CH informed that there is a different and more complicated procedure for approval of the projects exceeding 20 million CHF in CH. CH inquired about the specific project approval procedures in LT and the possibilities to reduce the financial volume of the draft ”Health” programme. LT answered that for the project approval in Lithuania it is the same procedure whatever the budget is, and the separation of the perinatal and neonatal elements in the ”Health” programme would require additional administrative, financial and other resources.

It was agreed that all operational questions regarding these programmes will be discussed with the Intermediate Body in the working meeting on 16 April 2009.

Research and Development Programme

CH thanked for the outline of the Research and Development Programme.

It was agreed that all operational questions regarding this programme will be discussed with the Intermediate Body in the working meeting on 17 April 2009.

Steering Committee (SC) of the Lithuanian-Swiss Cooperation Programme

CH inquired who represents non-governmental sector in the SC. LT clarified, that a director of the NGO information centre is delegated to represent it.

CH asked what could be the other institutions invited as observers to the SC meetings mentioned in the Annual Report (pg. 10). LT answered that there is no strict list of institutions to be invited as observers to the SC meetings. It depends on the agenda of the meeting.

CH also was interested in the SC composition expansion. LT clarified that this question is under consideration at the moment. SC members have the right to suggest other institutions to the SC.

LT informed that SC minutes in Lithuanian language are published in the website of the Ministry of Finance. Translation of the minutes could be financed from the TAF after the procurement of the translation services. CH noted that it would be useful for HQ to get these minutes.

Forms/Templates for preparation of the requested documents

LT asked if CH could share the standard forms/templates for preparation of requested documentation. For example, template for the Implementation Report (Technical Progress Report), also eligibility guidelines for eligible/not eligible costs (pg. 15). CH promised to send some best practice examples.

Work plan for 2010

CH proposed that the work plan for the next year would be developed in September of the current year, in the yearly Baltic-Swiss meetings.

CH added that the work plan for the next year should not be included in the Annual Report. Instead of that Annual Reports should contain information about what was planned and what is done.

It was agreed that work plan will be prepared on the monthly basis, not quarterly.

CH meetings with Intermediate Bodies (IB)/ Executing Agencies (EA)

CH informed about the plans to meet with Intermediate Bodies, Executing Agencies to clarify the issues (if any) raised during assessment of the outlines/final project proposals. LT informed that NCU has interest to participate in such meetings.

Public procurement documents

CH expressed the interest to see the tender documents of the feasibility studies. It was agreed that specific parts of the terms of references (TOR) of the joint feasibility study for the “Rehabilitation and modernization of basic infrastructure and Improvement of the environment“ and the “Health” programmes and feasibility study for the NGO block grant will be translated and sent to CH.

Saved allocations of the Project Preparation Fund

LT and CH agreed that the question about saved allocations of the PPF will be discussed in the next annual meeting. LT added that the PPF could be used in case there will be a need for the new priority area financed from the non-committed funds.

Costs of the staff

LT inquired about the possibility to cover the costs of the staff. CH informed that hiring of the temporary staff exclusively for the administration of the Lithuanian-Swiss Cooperation Programme could be financed from the Swiss Contribution: NCU and CPMA staff costs could be financed from the Technical Assistance Fund (TAF), Intermediate Bodies staff costs – from respective programmes.

As the TAF budget was already approved by the CH side, it should be amended by the NCU accordingly and sent to HQ for approval. The total amount allocated for the TAF does not change.

Publicity issues

CH asked if there are any formal information policy rules setting what kind of information should be published. LT informed that legal acts approved by the Government, Parliament or other governmental institutions are published in the Official Journal. LT added that every important decision (including the Agreements signed) is published on the website of the Ministry of Finance www.finmin.lt

“Swissness”

“Swissness” will be included as a new chapter in the Annual Report with information regarding the direct connections between LT and CH (Scholarship Fund, partnership between LT and CH NGOs, etc.)

The date of the next Annual Meeting

LT and CH agreed that the preliminary date of the next annual meeting is 15 April 2010.

Minutes of the Annual Meeting

Parties agreed that the minutes of the Annual Meeting will be drafted by the NCU and submitted to CH for approval within 15 workdays after the meeting. Approved minutes will be published on the website of the Ministry of Finance.

Annexes

Annex 1. NCU presentation “Implementation of the Lithuanian-Swiss Cooperation Programme: 1st Annual Meeting”.