



# LITHUANIAN - SWISS COOPERATION PROGRAMME

## 7<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL MEETING

Wednesday, 15 April 2015

Venue: Ministry of Finance, Vilnius  
Conference Room 331  
9.30 – 12.00h

### MINUTES

#### Switzerland (CH):

1. Ms. Dominique Petter, Counsellor/Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of the Swiss Confederation to Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia,
2. Mr. Hugo Bruggmann, Head of Division, State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, SECO,
3. Mr. Patrick Etienne, Head of Swiss Contribution Office for Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia,
4. Mr. Markus Eggenberger, Programme Manager, Division NMS (New EU-Member States), Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation,
5. Ms. Paula Wey, Project Manager, Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO),
6. Ms. Olita Berzina, Project Manager, Swiss Contribution Office for Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia

#### Lithuania (LT):

1. Mr. Aloyzas Vitkauskas (Chairman), Vice-minister of the Ministry of Finance, National Coordination Unit (NCU),
2. Ms. Audronė Nikšaitė, Head of the International Financial Assistance Coordination Division, Ministry of Finance, NCU,
3. Ms. Jūratė Vlaščenkienė, Deputy Head of the International Financial Assistance Coordination Division, Ministry of Finance, NCU,
4. Ms. Lina Pleniūtė, Chief Specialist of the International Financial Assistance Coordination Division, Ministry of Finance, NCU,
5. Ms. Lidija Kašubienė, Director of the Central Project Management Agency (CPMA),
6. Ms. Rasa Suraučienė, Deputy Director of the CPMA,
7. Mr. Artūras Žarnovskis, Director of the International Programmes Management Department, CPMA,
8. Mr. Roman Romas, Deputy Director of the International Programmes Management Department, CPMA,
9. Ms. Giedrė Vilčinskaitė, Head of the Swiss Programme Unit, International Programmes Management Department, CPMA,
10. Ms. Asta Liutkevičiūtė, Project Manager of the Swiss Programme Unit, International Programmes Management Department, CPMA,
11. Mr. Valentin Gavrilov, Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Health,
12. Ms. Virginija Ambrazevičienė, Head of the International Projects Management Division, Ministry of Health (MoH),
13. Ms. Gytė Paltanavičiūtė, Deputy Head, International Projects Management Division, Ministry of Health,

14. Ms. Aušra Gribauskiėnė, Chief Specialist of the Study, Science and Technology Department, Ministry of Education and Science,
15. Ms. Vaida Keinaitė, Deputy Head of the Division of Informatics, National Courts Administration,
16. Ms. Aistė Vilkanauskytė, Head of the International Programmes Division, Research Council of Lithuania,
17. Ms. Jurgita Stonytė, Chief Specialist of the International Programmes Division, Research Council of Lithuania.

### **Opening of the Meeting**

Mr. A. Vitkauskas welcomed all the participants and opened the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Lithuanian-Swiss Cooperation Programme to Reduce Economic and Social Disparities within the Enlarged European Union (Lithuanian-Swiss Cooperation Programme).

The Chairman presented the main topics of the draft Agenda and proposed to approve the Agenda. The Swiss delegation (CH) had no additional comments. Agenda was approved.

Mr. A. Vitkauskas made a short overview about the progress and further planning of the Lithuanian-Swiss Cooperation Programme. Before the Annual Meeting the NCU prepared and submitted to Switzerland the Annual Report on implementation of Swiss contribution in Lithuania covering period from 1 January 2014 – 1 March 2015. Implementation of the Lithuanian – Swiss Cooperation Programme moved to the final stage of implementation. A number of tangible results are achieved already and benefits of the Swiss Contribution can be seen in practice.

Mr. H. Bruggmann informed about the CH delegation impressions from the joint site-visits of the projects (Health Sector Programmes and Individual Project) and noted fluent progress in implementation of the visited projects. Moreover, he informed that the entire Swiss Contribution is subject to an evaluation in 2015 and that he is looking forward to visit Lithuania with the Swiss State Secretary on 20 May 2015.

The Chairman stressed that in general the implementation progress could be evaluated as good, the details on implementation with some arising issues would be presented and discussed during the presentation under the 2nd point of the Agenda.

### **Discussions/Decisions**

#### **Reporting on the status of the Programmes and other measures: status of implementation, issues, next steps in 2015**

**Health Sector Programmes: ‘Introduction of Energy Efficient Technologies into the Lithuanian Hospitals Providing Perinatal and Neonatal Health Care Services’ (further referred as to the Energy Efficiency Programme) and ‘Improvement of Perinatal and Neonatal Health Care Services in Lithuania’ (further referred as to the Perinatal Programme)**

Ms. A. Nikšaitė presented the expected results, operational progress, achievement of key performance indicators, main issues and risks with mitigation measures and work plan for 2015 of the Energy Efficiency Programme (*see more detailed information in Slides No. 5-9 of the Annex 1*). She informed that the Energy Efficient in Hospitals programmes activities of the impact assessment trends reveals that the optimal allocation of resources, targeted and effective.

Mr. H. Bruggmann thanked for the well-prepared annual report. He noted that the technical meeting on energy efficiency was very useful for discussing the problematic issues and the use of the important savings in this programme. He asked to attach the written answers presented during the technical meeting to the minutes of the Annual Meeting. Moreover, he pointed out that CH position regarding the

savings is very clear. The Swiss Government would like to see all funds available utilized. Despite the fact that it is impossible to reach 100% of disbursements, at least 95% should be the aim. CH side promised to give all the support to the NCU and other related parties that would make possible full use of Swiss contribution without interferences. Savings are to be used in the framework of the same project and the use of savings should be in line with agreed project objectives. He highlighted that the projects need to be completed until the end of 2016. CH side appreciated that LT side not only see the risks but also at the same time foresees the measures to deal with them. CH encouraged having more intense monitoring in particular through monthly Steering Committee meetings under the energy efficiency programme to ensure a speedy implementation. Also the new e-procurement system was noted as advantageous, it helps to get a standardized material more quickly and implement procurements rapidly. Mr. H. Bruggmann noted that LT needs to ensure the additional co-financing for the use of savings and in case of depreciation of the Swiss franc ensuing additional costs are to be borne by LT.

Mr. V. Gavrilov thanked the Swiss representatives for efficient cooperation and promised to personally supervise the process of implementing both Health programmes.

Ms. A. Nikšaitė continued presentation with the information on expected results, operational progress, achievement of key performance indicators, main issues and risks with mitigation measures and work plan for 2015 of the Perinatal Programme (*see more detailed information in Slides No. 10 – 16 of the Annex 1*). As compared with the Energy Efficiency Programme, the implementation of the Perinatal Programme was more successful during 2014.

Mr. P. Etienne informed that CH side received the request for additional activities for which in principle have no objections. He noted that an official answer will be given in 15 days. He also inquired about the Swiss companies selected under procurement procedures. He stressed that CH side would like to have such kind of information as soon as possible.

Mr. H. Bruggmann recommended to include into the next annual report the charts on achievement of indicators and the information about the irregularities and the violations.

### **Research and Development (R&D) Programme**

Ms. A. Nikšaitė informed the participants about the expected results, operational progress, the achievement of key performance indicators, main issues and risks with mitigation measures and a work plan for 2015 of the Research and Development Programme (*see more detailed information in Slides No. 17-20 of the Annex 1*).

The Swiss side did not present any specific comments on the implementation of the programme.

### **Scholarship Fund (SF)**

Ms. A. Nikšaitė informed about the operational progress while implementing the SF (*see more detailed information in Slide No. 21 of the Annex 1*). It was noted that no major issues and risks could be stated in the SF implementation.

The Swiss side did not present any specific comments on the implementation of the SF.

### **Individual Project (IP) ‘The Creation and Implementation of the System for Video Transaction, Recording and Storage in Courts’**

Ms. A. Nikšaitė presented the information about the expected results, main activities, the achievement of key performance indicators main issues and risks with mitigation measures and a work plan for 2015 of the IP (*see more detailed information in Slides No. 22-25 of the Annex 1*).

Mr. P. Etienne shared the Latvian and Estonian experience in the implementation of the projects related to creation and implementation of video-conferencing systems and use of installed equipment after their completion.

## **NGO Fund**

Ms. A. Nikšaitė informed the participants about the achievement of key performance indicators, operational progress and the work plan for 2015 of the NGO Fund (*see more detailed information in Slides No. 26-30 of the Annex 1*).

Implementation of the sub-projects has been successfully completed. No risks are being foreseen for the timely completion of the reporting on the NGO fund level.

## **Technical Assistance Fund (TAF)**

Ms. A. Nikšaitė reminded that the TAF was mostly used as planned to facilitate the NCU and CPMA in their daily activities. The detailed information of the activities of the NCU and CPMA under the TAF during the reporting period is provided in *Slide No. 31 of the Annex 1*.

Mr. H. Bruggmann inquired about the money left under the Technical Assistance Fund and the NCU plans to use them. Ms. A. Nikšaitė informed that the TAF balance is 630 thousand CHF, she added that priority will be given for publicity activities to promote the Swiss Contribution.

## **Other important issues in implementation of Lithuanian-Swiss Cooperation Programme**

### **Disbursements**

Ms. A. Nikšaitė shortly presented the information (in general figures and by each programme) regarding the disbursements made during the reporting period and tentative disbursements in 2015 (*see more detailed information in Slides No. 33-35 of the Annex 1*).

Mr. Bruggmann informed that at the beginning of the Swiss contribution period CH procured a forecast to analyse the peaks of the disbursements. Today it is clear that such analyses was not accurate: disbursements rate went slower than it was anticipated in the beginning. Despite the fact that CH side cannot simplify disbursement procedures as it has to be justified firstly and LT side cannot speed up the internal bureaucracy to approve the payments, CH side looks forward for more intensive disbursements during 2015.

Mr. A. Vitkauskas agreed that it is important to proceed faster disbursements and added that as soon as the funds will be reimbursed, LT side will have more savings to finance additional activities.

A. Niksaite specified that it is planned to request for an additional 11,5 mln. CHF until the end 2015 from the CH. More detailed figures under the projects is provided in the *Slide 35*.

### **Swissness**

Ms. A. Nikšaitė presented information on Swissness in each programme and other measures (*see more detailed information in Slides No. 36-37 of the Annex 1*).

Mr. H. Bruggmann noted that visibility is very important. He stressed that the first priority for the publicity should be a successful implementation of the projects. According to Mr. H. Bruggmann, Swiss contribution in general is positively reflected in the mass media and there are no negative articles about Swiss contribution projects in Lithuanian so far. It is worth to mention that there are many positive articles about co-operation under Health sector that started from the 1990.

Mr. P. Etienne thanked for the organisation of the visit of the Swiss MPs to Vilnius Maternity Home in October 2014. He was impressed about the newsletter on Lithuanian - Swiss Cooperation Programme.

Ms. A. Gribauskiene reported on "Research and Development" programme publicity, she also shortly talked about the plans to organise the closing event of the programme.

### **Information and Publicity Activities**

Ms. A. Nikšaitė presented information and mentioned publicity activities that were successfully performed at the level of the Lithuanian-Swiss Cooperation Programme, under each programme, the NGO Fund and the IP (*see more detailed information in Slides No. 38-40 of the Annex 1*).

The Swiss side did not present any specific comments.

### **Other issues for Discussions**

In order to reduce the administrative burden and save time Mr. A. Vitkauskas proposed to discuss with the donors the possibilities to diminish their requirements on project administration.

Unlike from other international financial instruments administered by the Ministry of Finance, the Lithuanian – Swiss Cooperation Programme is being monitored by the donors on the procurements' level. As a consequence, additional time and resources are necessary for in fact technical matters (translations, submission of different procurement related documents). For all financial assistance instruments (EU, EEA & Norway Grants, Swiss Contribution) a system for supervision of procurements and approval of eligible expenditures is operational (CPMA and Public Procurement Office). While checking and approving eligibility of expenditures, the CPMA also checks if the procedures were conducted properly. NCU would like to propose for the donors to conduct the procurement-level monitoring of projects only in specific cases (based on risk assessment).

Mr. A. Vitkauskas pointed out that according to the latest requirements (which came into force on January 1, 2014) of the Public Procurement Law the public sector bodies must carry out their public procurements of goods, services and works through a Central Purchasing Organisation which can be found in the catalogue.

Mr. H. Bruggmann mentioned that at the moment beneficiary states are facing the time constraint. He distinguished two amounts of procurements: below and above 500,000 CHF. If value of procurement is less than 500,000 CHF, the CH side does not intervene, but if the procurement is more than 500,000 CHF, CH side has non-objection right to apply. He pointed out that experience with non-objection right is very positive, because the technical experts can give good suggestions to adjust tender documentation as they know the projects from the inside much better. Mr. H. Bruggmann raised the question how to speed up processes without taking unnecessary risks in the field of procurement. He noticed that if a project will organise procurement for the material that went smoothly in the past, CH side will be flexible and approve the draft documentation more quickly.

Mr. H. Bruggmann inquired how many high-value procurements are expected. Ms. G. Vilčinskaitė informed that under Energy Efficiency Programme there are several procurements above 500,000 CHF ongoing. There might be a few a more procurements for a new activities above 500,000 CHF under Perinatal Programme performed by Kaunas Clinics.

Ms. P. Wey agreed that in general CH side is satisfied with the project risk assessment system that exists in Lithuania. She highlighted that if LT side will see any risks from the procurement documents or during monitoring the projects, CH side will be pleased to get the information as soon as possible. The Chairman thanked the participants for their input during the discussions and closed the Meeting.

*Annex 1. NCU presentation 'Implementation of the Lithuanian-Swiss Cooperation Programme: 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting', 41 slides.*

*Annex 2. Answers to questions from Health Programmes (Energy efficiency), 6 pages.*