



LITHUANIAN - SWISS COOPERATION PROGRAMME

8th ANNUAL MEETING

Wednesday, 20 April 2016

Venue: Ministry of Finance, Vilnius
Conference Room 331
10.30 – 13.30h

MINUTES

Switzerland (CH):

1. Mr. Markus Dutly, Ambassador of the Swiss Confederation to Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia,
2. Mr. Adrian Maitre, Deputy Head of Department for Cooperation with Eastern Europe, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC),
3. Mr. Ulrich Stürzinger, Head of the New EU Member States Division, State Agency for Development and Cooperation, SDC,
4. Mr. Markus Eggenberger, Programme Manager, Division NMS (New EU-Member States), , Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC),
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, 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 Plieniūtė, 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. Ms. Giedrė Vilčinskaitė, Head of the Swiss Programme Unit, International Programmes Management Department, CPMA,
8. Ms. Asta Liutkevičiūtė, Project Manager of the Swiss Programme Unit, International Programmes Management Department, CPMA,
9. Ms. Neringa Janušienė, Project Manager of the Swiss Programme unit, International Programmes Management Department, CPMA
10. Ms. Gytė Sirgedienė, Head, International Projects Management Division, Ministry of Health,
11. Ms. Rimgailė Strumbrytė, Chief Specialist, International Projects Management Division, Ministry of Health,

12. Mr. Stanislovas Žurauskas, Deputy Head of the Science Division, The Department of Study, Science and Technology, Ministry of Education and Science,
13. Ms. Vaida Petravičienė, Deputy Head of the Division of Informatics, National Courts Administration,
14. Ms. Aistė Vilkanauskytė, Head of the International Programmes Division, Research Council of Lithuania.

Opening of the Meeting

Mr. A. Vitkauskas welcomed all the participants and opened the 8th Annual Meeting of the Lithuanian-Swiss Cooperation Programme to Reduce Economic and Social Disparities within the Enlarged European Union (Lithuanian-Swiss Cooperation Programme).

Mr. M. Dutly thanked for hosting the Meeting and highlighted that they wanted to discuss on three topics: 1) external evaluation which had been made; 2) final Report which should be prepared for the next year; 3) next annual meeting which could be combined with the closing event. Mr. M. Dutly was grateful for the informative and helpful Annual Report on implementation of Swiss contribution in Lithuania. He also noted a very good cooperation between the competent authorities in Lithuania (especially the NCU) and Switzerland.

The Chairman presented the main topics of the draft Agenda and proposed to approve the Agenda. The Swiss delegation had no additional comments. Agenda was approved. After that Mr. Vitkauskas asked Ms A. Nikšaitė to introduce the status of the Programmes and encouraged donors to express their opinion and make remarks after the presentation.

Ms. A. Nikšaitė started the presentation by highlighting that the year 2015 was very busy for all administrating bodies to ensure the timely implementation of originally planned activities (envisaged in the Project Agreements) but also to indicate and approve additional activities what became possible due to savings within the projects' budgets and currency exchange fluctuation. She thanked the Swiss partners for their cooperation in the whole implementation process.

Discussions/Decisions

Reporting on the status of the Programmes and other measures: status of implementation, issues, next steps in 2016

Introduction of Energy Efficient Technologies into the Lithuanian Hospitals Providing Perinatal and Neonatal Health Care Services

Ms. A. Nikšaitė pointed out that the most challenging programme was the Energy Efficiency in Hospitals Programme which had made a good progress from the last reporting period. She shortly introduced the results, operational progress and the risks of the Programme. She noted that the last year was crucial for finalising procurements for main works and launching procurements for additional activities (installation of solar collectors and photovoltaic power stations). Ms. Nikšaitė underlined the progress made in implementation of the Programme activities and monitoring of risks for timely completion of the Programme. Furthermore, she underlined that there was a possibility that some projects (to concrete hospitals) might need an extension of implementation deadline from August till November, 2016 (*more detailed information is provided in Slides No 5–9, Annex I*).

While commenting in general, Mr. U. Stürzinger thanked for the Annual Report which could be a good example of reporting on results (on the outcome level) and not on the efforts and activities done. He underlined health programmes as the best example within different thematic areas, at the same time acknowledging that for other projects it might be not so easy to present similar kind of results-oriented information. Mr. U. Stürzinger appreciated that the Lithuanian – Swiss Cooperation

Programme was presented in a context of main strategic and planning documents of Lithuania. He concluded by stressing the Swiss preference for cooperation in order to make concrete improvements for people instead of simply spending the allocated funds

Mr. U. Stürzinger enquired the Lithuanian side about the intentions to do post-completion monitoring of projects. Mr. A. Vitkauskas thanked for the remarks, recommendations and positive approach. He agreed that the post-completion monitoring is a very important issue. Ms. A. Nikšaitė added that the NCU already set a formal system for post-completion monitoring of projects, activities needed will be conducted by the CPMA, the administrative bodies will also follow the use of results achieved. Speaking about the achievement of results and reaching the target groups/audiences, she pointed out that the Ministry of Finance already initiated the procurement of the external consultancy services for the evaluation of achievements, effects, impact, sustainability, etc. under each programme financed and implemented.

Ms. P. Wey commented on the Energy Efficiency in Hospitals Programme and the on-site visit to Kaunas clinical hospital. She expressed her satisfaction about the progress made by this hospital and reflections that all works will be done in time. Ms. P. Wey also underlined that it is very important for the hospitals to have enough time to do all works in a good quality. Therefore, she proposed to be flexible as regards time extension, if needed. Ms. P. Wey enquired about energy audits in the hospitals after completion of works – if there will be one audit company for audits of all hospitals and if the requirements for procurement of this company will be similar to the original audits (conducted before starting the programme).

Ms. G. Vilčinskaitė informed that the Ministry of Health prepared technical specifications for procurement of this audit. She pointed out that each hospital would be audited and then the services provider would make general conclusions on achievement of log frame matrix indicators. Ms. P. Wey asked if this audit will be one-time activity or it will include also the post-completion energy efficiency monitoring over the years. Ms. G. Vilčinskaitė explained that it will be one-time energy audit and then during the post-completion monitoring the CPMA will check if hospitals maintain the results (but not measure the achievements (based on Log frame matrix indicators)).

Improvement of Perinatal and Neonatal Health Care Services in Lithuania Programme

Ms. A. Nikšaitė underlined the importance of the programme and presented progress, achievements and risks of this programme. She pointed out that currently the main task for the Executive Agency is to finalize procurements for additional activities (baby-friendly hospital initiative, additional trainings to extend the competence of doctors, etc.) and to use opportunities provided by savings. Ms. A. Nikšaitė noted that presently the most risky moment of the programme is the timely development e of the computer database for medical records about newborns and mothers (*more detailed information is provided in Slides No. 9– 16 , Annex 1*).

Mr. U. Stürzinger reflected about the on-site visit to Kaunas clinical hospital. He noted that the old equipment is still being used by the hospital in a professional manner. He expressed his satisfaction that doctors and nurses were very interested in improving their professional skills and raising qualification. Mr. U. Stürzinger noted that the software development activities usually take quite a long time and expressed an idea that the responsible ministry should foresee the necessary measures to put into practice in case this activity will not progress as planned during the operational period of the current programme.

Mr. A. Vitkauskas thanked for the observations presented and noted about the complexity of the exercise being done under the perinatal programme: on one side there is equipment and technologies, on the other - competence and knowledge. In order to be effective, these tools and instruments should be combined. He appreciated the Swiss financial support which is pushing and motivating the Lithuanian side to continue working on this issue. Reacting to the risk regarding the

IT database development, Mr. A. Vitkauskas stressed that this is a challenging exercise and asked CPMA to inform regularly about the mentioned software development issue.

Ms. G. Vilčinskaitė explained that there were some problems in implementation of this particular activity in a procurement stage. She informed that the company providing software development services is of a high professional competence. Ms. G. Vilčinskaitė also informed that regular meetings with that company on execution of tasks are being held by the Ministry of Health. She stressed that at the start of contract implementation a problematic situation appeared as regards the need for additional functions of the IT system and expressed the CPMA position that this still could be solved within the deadlines of the project (via additional procurement).

Ms. O. Berzina enquired about the timing of starting to test the developed software. Ms. G. Vilčinskaitė informed that testing will start in autumn as the deadline for making the main functions is set for September – October 2016 and afterwards the additional functions will have to be developed. Ms. O. Berzina suggested to keep some saving within the project budget because the practice shows that during the testing stage it often appears that hardware is of an insufficient capacity.

Ms. G. Sirgedienė added that most of the hospitals are involved in the e-Health system and this database is going to be a part of that system. She also informed that hospitals were supplied by necessary technical devices while implementing other projects. Ms. G. Sirgedienė observed that there might be several smaller (district) hospitals with some technical needs and added that the feasibility study made for e-health system 3 years ago showed the full supply of technical devices needed in most of hospitals, so hospitals just need a tool for data collection. As regards connection/integration of the IT database into the whole e-health system, Ms. G. Sirgedienė noted that the technical supervision company has been contracted which is aware of the possible problematic issues and prevention activities are being conducted already now.

Mr. A. Vitkauskas underlined the importance of e-health database in the electronic system. He stressed that CPMA should come up in advance with additional preventive actions which can serve for making this IT database operational as fast as possible.

Research and Development (R&D) Programme

Ms. A. Nikšaitė informed the participants about the operational progress, main issues and risks (*more detailed information is provided in Slides No. 17– 20, Annex 1*).

Mr. U. Stürzinger expressed his satisfaction that the funds were used very effectively (what allowed to organise additional call for institutional partnership projects). He provided some thoughts on indicators of the programme. Mr. U. Stürzinger informed that on a very general level of the Swiss Contribution the Swiss side will try to measure the outcomes of research projects financed in beneficiary countries. He mentioned the two classical measures in this regard – number of publications (attributed to the joint research projects) and patents (in the areas where this is feasible). It was also noted that scientific research is one of the driving factors of the economic development. Mr. U. Stürzinger enquired about the possibility to identify information on the two mentioned points for future reporting.

Ms. A. Vilkanauskytė informed that the number of publications had been indicated on the level of each sub-project and submitted within the interim reports on the level of research programme, so such information could be easily consolidated on the programme level. As regards the patents, she noted about the decision of the Joint Selection Committee to exclude the costs for patents from the projects since they thought that it is not possible to achieve results and to patent them in three years period. Nevertheless, the Executing Agency is aware that one project is in process of receiving the patent and this is also being reported on the sub-project level.

Mr. U. Stürzinger expressed an idea about possibility to collect data on continued partnerships. Ms. A. Vilkanauskytė informed that some projects already do this by submitting applications for other financial programmes (e.g. Horizon 2020, COST programme) for financing further research activities.

Mr. U. Stürzinger raised an issue on losses of the Swiss research institutions which appeared due to fluctuations of the currency exchange rate. In 2012 while developing the partnerships with Lithuanian research institutions, the budgets of research projects were made in local currency (of Lithuanian institutions). Part of these budgets was attributed to the Swiss partners who currently face financial losses due to the mentioned fluctuations. He wondered if the Lithuanian delegation is aware of this situation.

Mr. A. Vitkauskas pointed out that the Lithuanian side is very happy about the cooperation with Swiss researchers. He admitted that the NCU knows about this problematic situation and added that trust between partners is extremely important for the success of partnerships. He proposed two possibilities: either to use savings of the projects (if available) for the compensations to the Swiss partners or to create a compensation mechanism on a programme level. Mr. A. Vitkauskas underlined the importance of keeping partnerships sustainable.

Ms. A. Nikšaitė added that the responsible bodies already started discussion about the legal possibilities on dealing with this problematic situation in the best possible way. She stressed that firstly it is important to receive the consolidated financial information of all joint research projects and afterwards to approach the donors on the mechanism to be applied.

Mr. U. Stürzinger admitted that the Swiss side does not want to violate the set rules. Ms. A. Nikšaitė noted that this situation might be considered as *force major* and, therefore, necessary changes might be considered.

Mr. A. Vitkauskas noted that the NCU, CPMA and the institutions responsible for the implementation of research programme should think about the best possible way to deal with the situation.

Ms. A. Vilkanauskytė informed that the Research Council of Lithuanian as the Executing Agency of the programme, being aware of the problem, encouraged all joint research projects to search first of all for the internal resources of the sub-projects (in case the proportion 50:50 for sharing the budget between the Lithuanian and Swiss partners is being kept). She noted that several sub-projects already made changes of their budgets in order to allocate maximum possible amount to Swiss partners but admitted that the set rules cannot be violated by allowing to break the ceilings of proportions and let the Swiss partners to have 60 -70 per cent of the budget. Ms. A. Vilkanauskytė concluded that that the solution could be to create some kind of compensation mechanism.

Mr. U. Stürzinger expressed his satisfaction that Lithuanian partners are aware of the situation and have good intentions to find a solution to the raised problematic issue. He noted that this could be treated as a signal of fairness to the Swiss partners with regard to possible future cooperation.

Mr. A. Vitkauskas thanked the participants of the meeting for all information provided and suggested to proceed further with internal discussions on the technical level with the Lithuanian team and to come up with some recommendations.

Scholarship Fund (SF)

Ms. A. Nikšaitė informed that the Scholarship fund had been successfully finished and all available funds had been used by Lithuanian researchers (*more detailed information is provided in Slide No 21, Annex 1*).

Mr. U. Stürzinger noted that in Switzerland this fund is being treated as great success and very positive feedbacks were received from the researchers that received the financial support from this Fund (including Lithuanian representatives). The Swiss side did not present any specific comments on the implementation of this Fund.

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

Mr. U. Stürzinger noted that the intensity of the use of equipment is not so high yet.

Ms. V. Petravičienė made some comments on the courts’ situation. She pointed out that the use of technologies and equipment installed in courts is increasing, even other courts (not participating in the project) had shown an interest in using the video conferencing system. Ms. V. Petravičienė added that the NCA educates the responsible staff on how to use the new equipment and organise the video conferences, also shared information about this system during their annual publicity event. She expressed a position that all these measures and active role of the NCA will serve for promotion of the higher use of equipment.

Mr. A. Vitkauskas asked the Executing Agency to find ways to show how investments make a process more effective and influence the quality of working environment (for example how much they save time, money and other resources).

Mr. M. Dutly suggested that while discussing the information about the benefits of new technologies of courts it would be worth to think about safety improvement (as the equipment allows to keep persons in the imprisonment institutions). Mr. A. Maitre also suggested to analyse more about the protection of victims.

Mr. U. Stürzinger summarized that this was a typical project which lasted for three years and allowed to set up the technical infrastructure. He underlined the importance of making use of the project results and expressed a positive reaction that the Lithuanian side has already thought about the continuing activities inspiring the better use of equipment installed.

More detailed information on the project is provided in Slides No 22 – 28, Annex 1).

NGO Fund

Ms. A. Nikšaitė informed that implementation of Fund activities had been successfully completed, Fund is closed, post-completion obligations are followed by the CPMA (*more detailed information is provided in Slides No 29 – 30, Annex 1*).

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

Technical Assistance Fund (TAF)

Mr. A. Vitkauskas pointed out that there were no challenges and problems in implementation of this fund (*more detailed information is provided in Slide No 31, Annex 1*).

Mr. U. Stürzinger enquired about the evaluation activity foreseen under this Fund. Ms. A. Nikšaitė informed that the NCU is in process of procurement of external consultancy company – experts will have to evaluate the implementation of the Lithuanian - Swiss Cooperation Programme (in terms of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability). She underlined that results are expected at the beginning of 2017.

Other important issues in implementation of Lithuanian-Swiss Cooperation Programme

Disbursements

Ms. A. Nikšaitė presented the information (in general figures and by each programme) regarding the disbursements made during the reporting period and tentative disbursements in 2016 (*more detailed information is provided in Slides No 33 – 35, Annex 1*). She noted that in fact all disbursements are in line with technical progress of the projects implemented.

Mr. U. Stürzinger asked about the realistic forecast of the overall disbursement rate for September 2017. Ms. A. Nikšaitė noted that 100 per cent is not possible due to the currency exchange fluctuation. She stressed that a disbursement rate of more than 90 per cent is expected, 95 per cent is an objective for the NCU.

Mr. U. Stürzinger Informed that the Swiss message is not that 100 per cent disbursement has to be reached at any cost and that this is not the main interest of the Swiss side. He admitted that it is much more important to make the good use of funds invested. Mr. A. Vitkauskas expressed a position that the Lithuanian NCU will do well the set exercise.

Swissness

Ms. A. Nikšaitė presented information on Swissness in health sector programmes and programme „Research and Development“ (*more detailed information is provided in Slide No 36, Annex 1*).

Mr. U. Stürzinger noted that there are some very good examples of cooperation between the Lithuanian and Swiss institutions. The Swiss side did not present any specific remarks on the information submitted.

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 in general and under each concrete project. She noted that all responsible bodies were very active in these activities by communicating the results achieved (*more detailed information is provided in Slides No 37 – 41, Annex 1*).

The Swiss side did not present any specific comments.

Newly created video about the Lithuanian – Swiss Cooperation Programme was shown for participants of the meeting.

Mr. M. Dutly informed that the Embassy had received some letters from Lithuanian people thanking for the Swiss Contribution provided to Lithuania. Mr. U. Stürzinger expressed an appreciation of the Swiss side for the publicity activities conducted by the NCU on the overall programme level.

Independent Evaluation of the Swiss Contribution

Mr. U. Stürzinger presented the most important findings and recommendations of the Independent Evaluation of the Swiss Contribution which had been carried out during last year. He informed about the methods used, findings, recommendations and possible future activities (*more detailed information is provided in Annex 2*).

Mr. A. Vitkauskas thanked for the presentation and asked Ms. A. Nikšaitė to comment on the information presented. Ms. A. Nikšaitė pointed out that the NCU would like to support the recommendations provided by external evaluators on possible future Swiss contribution. Mr. A.

Vitkauskas added that the presentation was very valuable for further steps regarding future possible Swiss Contribution.

Mr. U. Stürzinger underlined that the recommendations of the evaluation were based on the findings of the evaluators in Latvia, Poland, Slovak Republic and Hungary. Due to the specific situation in Lithuania and the implementation of its programme, they might be of lesser relevance for the remainder of the first phase in Lithuania.

Completion Report for the Lithuanian – Swiss Cooperation Programme

Mr. U. Stürzinger informed that the Swiss side had prepared a template for the Final Programme Report (distributed during the meeting) on the country level. He asked the Lithuanian team about the timing of the Report to be prepared. He pointed out that the Swiss side would like the Lithuanian team to prepare this Report on the level of results and lessons learned, the financial final Report could be finalized later because of the audit related activities. Mr. U. Stürzinger noted that at the same time the Lithuanian side should prepare the Annual Report 2016. He also suggested to combine the last Annual Meeting with a results workshop or closing event. Mr. A. Vitkauskas pointed out that the Lithuanian NCU prefers to be effective and efficient as regards development of reports next year and organisation of meetings. He suggested to plan everything precisely later in future. Ms. A. Nikšaitė added that the NCU had already planned a closing event in May 2017, so the last annual meeting could be combined with the annual/completion meeting on the Swiss Contribution. It has been agreed that the common solution should be found by both parties together by the end of 2016 (after follow-up discussions at the Baltic Retreat).

Closing remarks

Mr. A. Maitre made some remarks on the Report discussed and projects implemented. He expressed his satisfaction that he was able to visit several Lithuanian projects on site. He also pointed out that the Annual Report was excellent, progress in implementation of the Lithuanian – Swiss Cooperation Programme was very big, risks were managed well. Mr. A. Maitre thanked for the very good communication and partnership efforts.

Mr. Vitkauskas thanked all the participants for their input during the discussions and closed the meeting.

Annex 1. NCU presentation 'Implementation of the Lithuanian-Swiss Cooperation Programme: 8th Annual Meeting', 43 slides.

Annex 2. Independent Evaluation of the Swiss Contribution, 11 slides.