



Fact Sheet

Evaluation: Swiss Contribution to the Enlarged European Union

1. Evaluations at SDC

With the purpose of learning and accountability, the Swiss Agency for Development (SDC) and the Cooperation and Economic Cooperation and Development Division at the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) undertake regular and systematic assessments of on-going and/or completed projects, programs or policies. The aim is to determine the relevance, the development effectiveness and the efficiency, the sustainability and the impact of its different modalities of interventions in partner countries.

2. Objectives of the Evaluation

The purpose of the Swiss enlargement contribution is to contribute to the reduction of social and economic disparities between the partner states and the more advanced countries in the enlarged EU and to contribute to enhance bilateral relations between Switzerland and the partner states. In order to assess the effectiveness of the program and to identify lessons learned, SDC and SECO commissioned this independent evaluation.

3. Methodology and Main Results

The evaluation applied following methods:

- Analysis of the documentation on the SC and in particular of 29 randomly selected projects.
- Surveys and discussions with project partners and direct beneficiaries locally in Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Slovakia.
- Interviews with Swiss interest groups, including associations and non-government organisations (NGOs).
- An empirical study and analysis using questionnaires completed by local partners.

The findings and rating regarding the four OECD/DAC criteria relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability are presented in the main part of the report. The report presents as well all case study reports (factsheets) of the 29 projects selected for in-depth analysis.

The following findings are of special interest:

Overall, the overall performance is judged to be satisfactory ("good"). It has produced socio-

economic benefits both for the partner states and for Switzerland. It has also supported the further deepening and strengthening of bilateral relations between Switzerland and the partner states.

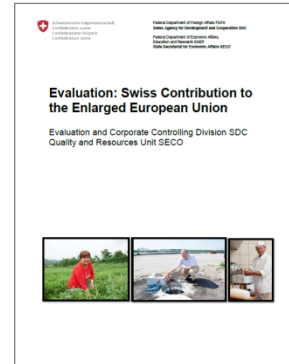
In terms of **relevance**, the overall goals of the SC are still relevant. The areas highlighted on the SC menu as to the Swiss offer of support include many areas where Switzerland can offer added value.

The **effectiveness** of the SC is judged to be satisfactory. The intended SC program/project outputs have/will be delivered beyond the original scale of target. The extended scale of delivery is primarily due to the appreciation of the Swiss Franc and the additional opportunities thereby provided for implementing program/project actions, rather than due to extremely innovative design or project delivery performance.

It is not realistic to assume the SC interventions can/will significantly close the disparities between the partner states and the EU-average in statistical terms, but based on the sample of projects it is evident that the interventions have/are providing added value and are/will make a positive contribution at some level to the promotion of socio-economic development in the specific targeted sectors/regions.

In terms of the benefits that have arisen for Switzerland due to the SC and the enhanced level of bilateral relations with the partner states, a number of positive direct and indirect impacts are identifiable, most clearly in terms of increased economic opportunities, but also in terms of enhanced environmental protection on the European continent.

In addition, the SC has renewed or supported new partnerships between organizations in Switzerland and in the partner states across a range of sectoral areas, at national, regional



and local level, for the public sector, civil society and other partners.

Even though the **efficiency** of the SC is judged to be satisfactory, it is evident that a number of partial constraints exist in terms of the adequacy of the overall system, e.g. (1) delays experienced by the partner states in preparing procurement dossiers, or due to procurement objections/complaints, or delays in the granting of building/works permits, (2) efficiency of the 'two-loop' approach could be enhanced, and overall administrative burden reduced, while still ensuring the quality in project design.

Sustainability and the prospects for further development and extension of the delivered results seems to be strong in the case of actions implemented by institutions with clear policy decision-making capacity and power and/or service-delivery cost-efficiency interest in the policy field.

4. Recommendations of the Evaluation

A total of 12 recommendations based on the conclusions of the evaluation are put forward to the SDC and SECO. Some concern the current programme, others any future support Switzerland may decide to offer to the partner states. The five most important recommendations are as follows:

- The partner states should be asked to step up their communication efforts regarding the current programme and any successor. For example, they could communicate results achieved at the thematic or regional level more actively and publicise achievements at programme level.
- If there is a successor programme, the partner states must improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their reporting. This presupposes simpler and more precise reporting requirements and editorial guidelines for the people in charge of projects.
- The partner states should be required to reduce the number of thematic and geographical focus areas in any future programme.
- The SDC and SECO should provide the partner states with even clearer guidelines on setting overarching objectives and using indicators to measure the extent to which they are achieved.
- The efficiency of the two-stage project approval procedure should be improved, but not in a way that detracts from the quality of programme and project planning

5. Consequences of the evaluation

Like the recent review by the Swiss Federal Audit Office, the evaluation confirms that the basic concept for implementing the Swiss contribution works while pointing out room for improvement in particular in terms of efficiency.

The recommendations put forward can be acted on immediately in the cooperation with Croatia: the bilateral framework agreement between Switzerland and Croatia was signed in mid-2015, and the projects are to be implemented by 2024 at the latest.

The SDC and SECO take the recommendation for a stronger thematic focus going forward very seriously. It will play a significant part in any possible future Swiss contribution.

However, the issues and suggestions set out in the evaluation report are also of great interest for the SDC and SECO in areas other than the Swiss contribution. Involving partner institutions, delegating responsibility and the way in which goal achievement is measured are key aspects of all international cooperation.

The evaluation report with the management response and the related public report have been published in various places including:

The Swiss federal administration's database of external studies: (<https://www.admin.ch/gov/en/start/documentation/studies.html>) and

the website of Switzerland's contribution to the enlarged EU: <https://www.erweiterungsbeitrag.admin.ch/erweiterungsbeitrag/en/home.html>

The publication helps to ensure accountability and allows lessons learned to be shared.

6. Tender Procedure

GOPA Consultants, Bad Homburg, Germany conducted the evaluation with a team of 4 people. The mandate was subject to an international tendering procedure.