



Note

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Management Response to the External Evaluation of the Human Security Division Programme in South-Eastern Europe 2010 - 2012

General Remarks

The present external evaluation covers the implementation period 2010 – 2012 of the Human Security Division (HSD) midterm strategy for South-Eastern Europe (strategy). The findings of the evaluation are pertinent and serve as a solid basis for future decisions on the South-Eastern Europe Programme (programme) which will be taken during the drafting process of the midterm strategy 2014 – 2016.

From 2010 – 2012, the HSD allocated a budget of CHF 9.7 Mio for the implementation of the programme, focusing geographically on Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina and thematically on Confidence Building, Power Sharing, Dealing with the Past (DwP) and Mine Action. The consultant acknowledged that the strategy responded adequately to the conflict context in South-Eastern Europe and pointed out the **added value** of Switzerland's engagement as an actor. The strengths of the HSD programme lay in the choice and close relationships with the implementing partners, its flexibility, its readiness to provide expertise and guidance without undermining the partners' independence and its willingness to engage with difficult and controversial issues when necessary.

The HSD Steering Committee has accompanied the evaluation throughout the entire process and the evaluation report has been shared for consultation within the HSD and the FDFA. The management response takes into account the feedback received.

Responses to the Main Conclusions and Recommendations of the Consultant

Recommendation 1: The formulation of a **Theory of Change** in the strategy is recommended to make assumptions explicit and to better define the outcomes and the pathways towards them.

Response: *the HSD concurs with this recommendation.*

Recommendation 2: As peacebuilding programmes and policy goals tend to be rather vague, **benchmarks** should be introduced to assess progress and step up monitoring efforts. **Prioritisation** of the projects in importance would enable HSD to select which to accompany directly, where to rely on internal monitoring systems and for which to invite external consultants.

Response: *The definition of benchmarks is a complex task in the fluid political context the HSD is working in. The drafting process of the new midterm strategy will allow for a discussion on the definition of strategic indicators, reporting mechanisms providing the necessary elements for the steering of the programme and prioritisation of projects.*

Recommendation 6: The OSCE chairmanship can be an opportunity to form a larger international coalition for the **electoral reform process** in Kosovo. Even though OSCE ODHIR cannot be institutionally involved because of the status issue, it may be possible to solicit its expertise. International expertise should be invited with regard to the electoral process, in order to establish both a common strategy and message to the government.

Response: *In light of the forthcoming municipal elections, including in the four municipalities in the north of Kosovo, as well as the currently ongoing election reform process, the HSD has undertaken an assessment mission in order to identify possible entry points for Swiss expertise and support to the electoral process.*

Recommendation 7: Media is understood by HSD as a means to advance DwP, but it requires a coherent strategy, as its effectiveness is ambiguous due to a lack of clarity of the desired outcomes.

Response: *HSD concurs with this recommendation and support to BIRN and Sense will be reassessed after the end of the respective projects.*

Comment: The programme in Bosnia-Herzegovina should be **scaled down**. The exclusive focus on DwP is unlikely to advance peacebuilding, given the absence of a certain level of political will at the various state levels for genuine reconciliation and an uncertain link between DwP and the potential for conflict at present. Entry points for policy developments in the field of DwP that require federal state commitments could not be identified.

Response: *While HSD shares the assessment that the impact of individual DwP projects in BiH needs to be reassessed in the light of the above, it is important to look at the programme in BiH more carefully. Exploring new possible entry points in BiH will be an integral part of the forthcoming midterm strategy. A scaling down remains an option.*

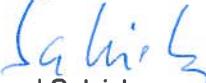
Comment: It is recommended to scale up **involvement in Serbia**, as it is the key country in the region and crucial for several initiatives underway. Enhanced engagement in **Macedonia** is also relevant because the situation in the country is fluid and can take different political trajectories. Still, much depends on the entry points that have to be identified and examined.

Response: *In the framework of the Swiss chairmanship of the OSCE, Swiss engagement in Serbia will be reflected in the midterm strategy 2014 – 2016. While it is true that at times inter-ethnic tensions flare up in Macedonia, an increased engagement by the HSD needs to be carefully considered within a clearly focused HSD programme in South-Eastern Europe. From mid-2014 on, Swiss engagement in Macedonia will consist mainly of technical assistance by the SDC. Furthermore, with the current set up the HSD does not dispose of sufficient human resources that enable a more significant engagement.*

Conclusion

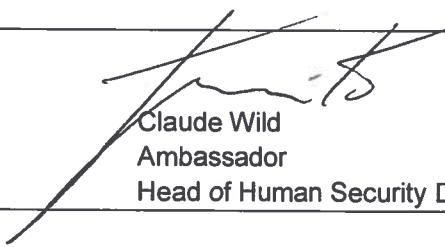
The evaluation acknowledged that the programme 2010 – 2012 was well adjusted to the needs in the region and put in evidence the added value of Switzerland. It also suggested some adjustments to be undertaken for individual projects. This will be the starting point for the discussions on the forthcoming strategy. Strategic goals, assumptions and pathways should be defined in order to establish an explicit theory of change. Specifically, the new dynamics in the relations between Serbia and Kosovo, the opportunities provided by the Swiss OSCE chairmanship and the necessity to review the Swiss DwP approach in Bosnia-Herzegovina will shape the next South-Eastern Europe Programme.

Bern, June 13, 2013


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