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Evaluation of pilot project Swiss VET Initiative India Results and consequences

1 Background information and scope of evaluation

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Swiss-Indian bilateral friendship treaty the **Swiss VET Initiative India (SVETII) was launched as a pilot project**. This initiative furthers Switzerland's international strategy in the area of education, research and innovation. Initiated by the representatives of the Swiss economy with support by the confederation (Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology, since January 1 2013 State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation, OPET/SERI) and other VET partners the pilot phase of this project (2009-2011) was implemented under the management of the Swiss-Indian Chamber of Commerce (SICC). Since 2012 the pilot project is transferred to a self-sustaining business model. In parallel the completion of the training for the cohort of trainees recruited up to the end of 2011 is managed by the Swiss Engineering, Electrical and Metalworking Industry Association (Swissmem). Other project actors include the Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET) SkillSonics Private Ltd. India and SkillSonics AG Switzerland and (Swiss) companies in India.

Elements of Switzerland's dual-track approach to VET (e.g. methods and concepts as well as working techniques and processes) were transferred to India with the aim of complementing the local VET system. The **pilot project adopts a systemic focus and is intended to achieve a win-win situation for both countries through bilateral cooperation**: first of all, the initiative supports the competitiveness of Swiss companies, which have requested assistance in the training of skilled workers at their production sites in India. Secondly, Indian workers are given the chance to complete a VET programme that is highly correlated with the needs of the labour market and based on an employment contract with a host company. In addition, the initiative raises the **profile of Swiss dual-track VET programmes in a country without a corresponding tradition of VET**. This project can also be used as a possible template for other international VET projects with other partner countries.

2 Evaluation mandate

The State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) commissioned econcept AG to conduct an evaluation of the pilot phase of the Swiss VET Initiative India, focussing on the period between 2009 and the spring of 2013. **The aim of the evaluation was to identify aspects that may prove useful to the companies as well as further institutions and organisations involved (Confederation, cantons, professional organisations of labour, SFIVET and SkillSonics) in transferring elements of Swiss dual-track VET programmes in other countries and coordinating linked activities**. In this regard, the focus was placed on the results of the pilot project. In addition, evaluation was to include assessment of the sustainability of the initiative. Based on an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT), specific recommendations were formulated for specific target groups. An advisory group comprised of representatives of the various institutions and organisations involved in the pilot project (SERI, SFIVET, Swissmem, SkillSonics AG Switzerland, SkillSonics Private Ltd. India), representatives of both employers and employees, and representatives of the cantons (special committee of the Federal Commission for Vocational and Professional Education and Training (EBBK) lent support to the evaluation.

3 Evaluation results

Despite the brief duration of the pilot project, the Swiss VET Initiative India showed **that the transfer of elements of the Swiss dual-track approach to VET to other countries without a corresponding VET tradition is indeed possible**. Most of the objectives set for the pilot project were reached. For companies and SVETII trainees alike, the measures taken during the pilot project had a positive impact. The companies involved in the project support the initiative and benefitted from the SVETII training programme. Based on feedback from these companies, the competences acquired by SVETII trainees improved significantly. In addition, **the initiative helped to reinforce bilateral relations between Switzerland and India**. Switzerland's reputation for quality and reliability was also consolidated in its role as a VET partner in India. Nevertheless, the visibility of the initiative and hence the Swiss dual-track approach to VET in India remains rather low.

Several challenges to continued pursuit of the initiative were identified:

- Maintaining the quality of training programmes over time
- Reaching a critical mass of companies and workers
- Establishing a Public-Private Partnership between relevant stakeholders in the partner country
- Raising the profile of the Swiss dual-track approach to VET in India

Based on the foregoing, the evaluators recommend that for future projects aimed at transferring elements of the Swiss dual-track approach to VET to other countries, all project steps should be handled in accordance with the specific context and existing needs. Here, a long-term commitment is needed from both the private sector and the public sector in the partner country. Over the long term, successful implementation requires strong local partners, professional management and robust project designs. Finally, special emphasis should be placed on the language skills of all of the stakeholders involved.

4 Subsequent action

The evaluators recommend that companies as well as further institutions and organisations involved in the pilot project (SERI, SFIVET, Swissmen, SkillSonics AG Schweiz, SkillSonics Private Ltd. India) set specific priorities or take measures to further build on the current success of the Swiss VET Initiative India. SERI supports these recommendations. For its part, the Confederation is addressed in the fields of quality improvement and maintaining bilateral exchanges in the VET. The results of the evaluation were taken into account by SERI for further strategic planning of international cooperation activities in the area of VET. SERI therefore intends to take the following measures to support the sustainability of the Swiss VET Initiative India:

- **Strengthen bilateral relations with India.**
- Consider the **possibility of creating a quality label** for implementation of elements of the Swiss dual-track approach to VET in countries without a corresponding VET tradition.
- Explore **ways to encourage a Public-Private Partnership between relevant VET stakeholders in India.**