

## **Management response (main part)**

### Background

This is a management response to the final report (December 2018) on the TF Security Romania (Module 1), which is part of the External Review of the Swiss Contribution's Thematic Fund "Security" (TFS). This wider evaluation consists in 3 modules, one referring to Romania, one referring to Bulgaria and another covering a broad review of Swiss Contribution security and justice related projects.

The purpose of the evaluation exercise was to:

Assess the impact and results achieved by the TSF thus contributing to the accountability towards stakeholders both in Romania and in Switzerland;

Identify good/poor practices and innovative approaches, generate lessons to be retained and draw recommendations, both at country level and generally in the theme security for a possible extended Swiss support in reducing economic and social disparities in the Enlarged EU.

The final report is the result of a mandate commissioned by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to a team of 4 independent experts (two international and two national), who conducted the external evaluation in the period September 2018 – December 2018. The module 1 is based on a review of 10 case study projects selected by SDC. It has involved a review of TFS and individual project documentation, meetings with executing agencies and other stakeholders in Romania as well as meetings with Swiss project partners. Meetings with the Romanian stakeholders and site visits took place in Romania from 24 September to 05 October 2018.

The purpose of this management response is to present a consolidated appraisal of SDC (NMS Division) and Swiss Contribution Office (SCO) in Romania, Embassy of Switzerland on the findings and recommendations shared in the report. Its main addressees are: SDC (to build on lessons learnt for similar projects or for a possible next Swiss Contribution), the review team and Romanian and Swiss Institutions involved in the projects (to build on lessons learned and improve in the future the sustainability's perspective of the achieved results).

The TFS in Romania included 23 projects, out of which one was cancelled. The total budget of the 22 remaining projects was CHF 17,585,943. Ten of these projects, accounting for CHF 13,525,405 were ongoing as of mid-2018.

The main areas of TFS support were policing (which was allocated 33% of the TFS budget), judiciary (15%), and the fight against trafficking in human beings and protection of victims of trafficking (13%).

### General Appreciation of the Evaluation Report and Evaluation Process

SDC and the SCO in Bucharest acknowledge the receipt and approve the final report prepared by the Evaluation team. Overall, the report is good and correspond to the ToRs and main evaluation questions defined in the frame of the inception report. The level of comments and recommendations is strategic, what is compliant with SDC/SCO expectations. SDC and SCO acknowledge that the assessment is based on good knowledge of the projects and procedures and that the evaluation team managed, within the restricted time of the mandate, to comprehend the complexity of the Thematic Fund and the changing context in which this fund has been implemented.

## Position towards main findings

### Relevance

SCO/SDC shares the same conclusion that TFS projects were relevant to the Romanian needs, strategies and policies. TFS was aligned with the European agenda on security and it contributed to this agenda in certain areas (e.g. trafficking in human being, asylum and migration, and asset recovery). In addition, judiciary projects aiming at combating corruption were also highly relevant to EU priorities as this phenomenon is closely associated with organised crime. However, we object to the conclusion arrived at by the evaluation that the programme changed strategies; we are of the opinion that the considerable flexibility shown throughout the programme aimed at adapting the implementation to the changing context, maximising the chances to get a proper impact and sustainability, but keeping the chosen strategic line. We agree with the recommendation that project development should incorporate substantive risk analysis and risk mitigation strategy. This is of particular importance for projects contributing to reforms or introducing new models to be institutionalized that we intend to continue to support in the future.

### Effectiveness

SCO/SDC agrees with the conclusion that the lack of systematic outcome monitoring at project and at TFS levels made it sometimes difficult to identify specific changes resulting from the projects<sup>1</sup>. The recommendation of the evaluation in this respect is valuable. Despite this shortcoming, the evaluation could better have highlighted and considered more extensively the important outcomes achieved by the TFS. However, it is also possible that this expectation was not realistic, taken into account the short time for the field mission. Following important outcomes were achieved:

- The gendarmerie's policing doctrine has been fully revised and upgraded at the European level. Today, police mediators travel through demonstrations (and football matches) and violence, as a result, has fallen sharply, including police violent reactions.
- The doctrine of community policing has been established at the level of the entire Romanian National Police. Community policemen are trained using a manual developed by the project. The Roma Cultural Centre in Slatina became institutionalized with the full-time commitment of a Roma specialist.
- The principles of green policing have been institutionalized in the conservation strategy of the Danube Delta.
- The automatic exchange of AFIS data (fingerprints) was set up by the project and today European police have access to the identifications made in Romania, which contributes to fight against international crime.
- The NGO JDN has grown stronger and is now an institution prized by journalists around the world investigating organized crime internationally. The project has contributed to the development of the research tools on organized crime that is the reputation of this NGO, which has won numerous awards for the most important European journalism awards.
- Cooperation on THB between Swiss and Romanian policemen and prosecutors has been strengthened. This year, a network operating in both countries has been dismantled.

We agree with the evaluation conclusion that existing or new partnerships between Swiss and Romanian institutions revealed to be very valuable.

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<sup>1</sup> This shortcoming was in fact one reason for SDC/SECO to launch this evaluation. Indeed ToR of the review mentions the following question regarding the assessment: What impact or impact likely to be achieved (intended and unintended) of the TFS [...] may be identified?

## Efficiency

SCO/SDC shares the conclusion of the evaluation that the SIB has worked hard to help EAs developing their projects, finding Swiss partners, and overcoming many other challenges, thus playing a crucial role going far beyond mere programme management.

What regards retained activities, SCO would like to clarify that it was never alleged at the beginning of the TFS that projects as well as partnership were already mature. It must be admitted, however, that the level of support required has been largely underestimated.

We agree with the observation that payments, procurement and reimbursements have been complicated and slow, wasting time and causing delays. We consider that the delays were mainly due to: 1) the cumbersome and volatile Romanian rules and regulations (decision, procurement, financial flow, etc.) combined with the high turnover of project management staff at EAs level, 2) low financial planning with important over-budgeting; 3) unpredicted increase of exchange rate. All these elements resulted in a substantial amount of savings, giving the impression that the utilisation of funds was slow and thus the projects were not progressing. However, overall, projects results were achieved, whereas budgets were only partially absorbed. This situation resulted in an extension in time and scope of many projects with the opportunity to achieve more than initially planned.

The cumbersome administrative procedures and the limited period of projects implementation have led to EA over reliance on the SIB, which spent more time to monitor the implementation of the activity and coach the EAs.

SDC/SCO wants the crucial role of the SIB as an independent operator without the limitations of the Romanian administrative system to be duly recognized in the search for an optimal management mechanism in the future.

Despite the fact that there is a mutual desire after 10 years of cooperation to implement through the system, SCO/SDC considers for the moment that further clarifications are needed to decide if a program being managed by a state authority<sup>2</sup> is feasible in this challenging context. Those clarifications may lead to the conclusion that it is necessary to keep the benefits of the SIB model in developing an alternative model with a view to allow more ownership from the Partner State. In this respect, there are two options at this stage<sup>3</sup>:

1. NCU to give a mandate to a Romanian but external operator backstopped by Swiss/international expert which would be selected jointly by the Swiss and Romanian sides;
2. Same model of external local operator backstopped by Swiss/international expert but mandate is given by the Swiss side.

## Sustainability

We agree with the evaluation that the sustainability prospects are generally good on short term and that in the longer term the prospects for the maintenance and further development of projects benefits are less positive, due to changing of political priorities and high rates of staff turnover in state institutions and agencies. In this context, it is true that actions for the institutionalisation of projects benefits (vs. individual trainings) are crucial.

### Swiss added value and Benefits to Swiss partner institutions

We consider the conclusion of the evaluation about the Swiss added value and benefit to Swiss partner institutions as very relevant. SCO/SDC believes that this level of satisfaction is mainly due to the SIB constant support to the Swiss and Romanian parties.

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<sup>2</sup> This set-up corresponds to option 3 of *possible alternative approaches for future Swiss security/justice funding* as suggested by the review team in Module 3.

<sup>3</sup> This alternative model corresponds to option 4 in the *set-up modalities* suggested by the review team in Module 3.

