

# **Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme (SRCP)**



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN  
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

## **Thematic Funds (TF) for Civil Society Participation (CSP) and for Partnership Fund (PF)**

### **External Review**

**Phase November 2011 – October 2018**

## **EVALUATION REPORT**

Submitted to SDC

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Terminology / Abbreviations	
Grant	Grant: non-reimbursable financial contribution.
Block Grant	Block Grant: Fund set up within a Thematic Fund (TF) for a clearly defined purpose, dedicated to financing small activities.
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSS	Civil Society Strengthening
CSDF Romania	Civil Society Development Foundation Romania
EEA	European Economic Area includes all EU countries and also Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway
EU-27 enlargement	Romania and Bulgaria become member countries of the EU in January 2007 (sixth enlargement)
FA	Framework agreement
IB	Intermediary Body
PF	Partnership Fund.
TF	Thematic Fund: targets a specific theme (or beneficiary group)
TFA	Thematic Fund Agreement
TF CSP	TF for Civil Society Participation:
TF PF	TF Partnership Fund (PF):
RA	Retained Activities (Projects already identified for implementation in the FA)
REPF	Romanian Environmental Partnership Foundation
SIB	Swiss Intermediate Body: responsible for Management of TF
SCO	Swiss Contribution Office
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SRCP	Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme
NCU	National Coordination Unit :Romanian Ministry of Public Finance in charge of the coordination of the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
EA	Executing Agency : implements an activity / a project
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC (OECD)	Development Assistance Committee (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development)
DDLG	Democratization, Decentralization and local Governance (SDC network)

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## 0 Summary

This end of phase evaluation assesses the two Thematic Funds “Civil Society Participation” (TF CSP) and the Thematic Fund “Partnership Fund” implemented in the period November 2011 – October 2018 as part of the SRCP. The portfolio of both Thematic Funds, including 7 Retained Activities, amounts to a total of 141 projects and CHF 26.8 million. This represents around 15% of the total enlargement contribution of CHF 181 million for Romania. The evaluation conducted a Rapid Assessment of the portfolio and analysed more in-depth 10 case studies (12 projects carried out by 10 EAs).

**Relevance:** The evaluation regards the Funds in general and specifically the projects in the sample approached in the field visit as addressing highly relevant needs and priorities at country level. The context changes have not decreased relevance but have led to a shift in relevance, demanding Romania CSOs to build resilience and prove their critical importance in the social and environmental arenas. The relevance for Switzerland are the benefits from the NGOs’ activities as their work has a larger impact contributing to dialog for better cohesion among diverse interests at national level and has a global impact when it comes to environmental protection. The biggest benefit for Swiss partners involved was however evident at the individual level. The responsible persons directly involved in the implementation of the projects benefitted from the exchange for their individual and professional development, sometimes the benefit for the organisation is less evident, e.g. in cases without systematic knowledge management and knowledge transfer when people left.

**Results:** The evaluation considers the immediate results at output and intermediate outcome level as overall successful. However, the evaluation’s interest and mandate was to go beyond and focus on the changes that occurred in the wider context in form of outcomes that positively changed citizens’ life and strengthened Civil Society’s voice in addressing policy change. The evaluation identified several positive outcomes drawn from the field work as examples of changes occurred thanks to the activities, outputs or immediate outcomes of the case studies. Effective policy change is often hypothetique as the potential for real change highly depends on the will and openness of public authorities.

**Factors for success:** The multiple approach – Block grant CSP and PF and RA - combined with diverse themes triggered innovation despite limited funds ensured a wide scope of project profiles / NGO profiles and thus contributed to Civil Society Strengthening. The evaluation found that the Funds triggered a considerable mass of innovative yet solid and sustainable projects, which would be drivers for development if scaled up. The performance, know-how, and the coaching of the SIB together with the flexibility in the Swiss approach were also important factors for success.

**Recommendations:** Civil Society is an actor for development whatever the context is and the evaluation recommends SDC to further engage for a Thematic Fund for CSS in Romania while better planning for results as changes in the wider society, including realistically formulated theories of change behind the overall intervention in line with the support awarded and linked with realistic outcomes yielded at project level. The approach for institutional partnerships Romanian-Romanian and Swiss-Romanian is an asset to continue. The evaluation recommends investing more in preparation for good partnerships and to higher weighting the quality of the partners (commitment, thematic competence, management competence, cultural competence) and to explicitly plan a pre-investment phase for exploring the partnerships. Retained Activities were an adequate modality under the first enlargement fund mainly for Swiss internal policy reasons. For the Funds under the second enlargement fund the evaluation suggests to concentrate on Block Grant approach by strengthening the Romanian initiative in searching for good partners (Romanian, Swiss, and

International) and to abandon the approach with prefixed retained activities under Swiss lead. The institutional Set up with the three competences Swiss (KEK-CDC) - Social (CSDF) – Environment (REPF) proved its excellence under phase 1 with RA, TF PF and TF CSP but may not further be the most appropriate set-up if concentrating on Block grants approach. Detailed recommendations are presented in chapter 6.

## **1 Background information and scope of the evaluation**

### **1.1 Background**

Switzerland has a longstanding engagement in Romania and was present with a Transition Programme in the period of Pre-Accession of Romania to the EU. With the entry of Romania to the EU in January 2007 (EU-27, together with Bulgaria), Switzerland engaged in Romania in the frame of its contribution to the enlarged European Union (a credit of CHF 257 million was approved for Bulgaria and for Romania on 07/12/2009).

The SRCP negotiated with the Romanian Government is framed in the Framework Agreement and its Annexes. The National Coordination Unit (NCU) is in the Ministry of Finances and brings in the Romanian perspective. Seven Swiss financed thematic funds in total assist Romania in the areas of safety, civil society, partnerships, integration of Roma, healthcare, research and scholarships. Compared to the EU structural funds that are directly managed by the Romanian Government, the Swiss contribution to Romania is management by the Swiss Intermediate Body (SIB) who have been selected by public tender, and the responsibility remains with Switzerland. The SIB is composed of 3 management partners; the two Romanian Foundations, Romanian Civil Society Development Foundation (CSDF) and the Romanian Environmental Partnership Foundation (REPF). The two foundations were involved in the distribution of EU Pre-accession Funds and have longstanding experience in grant making. CSDF was established at the initiative of the European Commission for support given to other organizations for consolidating the Civil Society sector in Romania. The instruments for this support included grant management. REPF was established with the mission to support the improvement of the environment and the development of the communities in Romania by contributing to the formation of a sustainable society that enhances democratic values. The Swiss partner KEK-CDC consultant is a private company with longstanding experience in International Cooperation.

### **1.2 Scope of the evaluation**

The scope of the evaluation is to assess the two Thematic Funds “Civil Society Participation” (TF CSP) and the Thematic Fund “Partnership and Expert Fund” (TF PF; the Expert Fund was integrated into the Partnership Fund in 2012). Seven so called “Retained Activities” are part of the Portfolio of the 2 Funds. The 2 Funds were set up under the auspices of Switzerland’s first enlargement contribution. A first phase lasted from November 2011 until October 2014 and was then extended until end of October 2018.

This is an end of phase evaluation with the scope to assess the relevance of the TF in the Romanian context and in regard to the SCPR overall goal of reducing disparities and promoting bil. The evaluation assesses the major results (effectiveness) and lessons learnt in terms of benefits gained for the Romanian Civil Society and for Romanian public authorities in working with the Civil Society and how the Swiss Partners involved in the implementation of the Retained Activities and the Partner Fund have brought in added value and what were the benefits they have gained for their

own institution. The evaluation presents evidence where this is possible on the general outreach of the two Thematic Funds in the country in terms of impact and sustainability. A special focus is put on the potential and on effective results in improving public policy through enforcement of Civil Society voice and involvement in policy change in Romania.

The evaluation suggests recommendations for a possible next programme under a potential second Swiss financed EU enlargement fund regarding type of funding (Block Grant versus Retained Activities), approach (programme focus versus thematic diversity), building of partnerships, geographic coverage and institutional set up.

## 2 Context

### 2.1 Romanian Context

More than ten years after joining the EU, Romania is still struggling to close the gaps with other member countries, in terms of economic and social development. While the standard of living is improving slowly but steadily, it is still barely above half of the level registered in the European Union. In the same time, Romania has the second highest percentage of people in poverty and social exclusion (35.7% in 2017) after Bulgaria (38.9%) at a considerable distance from the EU average.

#### Indicators on standard of living and poverty and social exclusion

GDP per capita in Romania at PPS* relative to EU28 average (EU28=100)							
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
EU average**	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Romania	52	54	54	55	56	58	58
At risk of poverty or social exclusion rate***							
EU average****	24.3	24.8	24.6	24.4	23.8	23.5	22.5
Romania	40.9	43.2	41.9	40.3	37.4	38.8	35.7

Source: Eurostat;

\*PPS = power purchasing standard

\*\* current composition

\*\*\* At risk of poverty or social exclusion rate is the share of people who are either poor in relative terms (below the 60% threshold from the median equivalised disposable income), severely materially deprived (the enforced inability to pay for at least four of nine items /activities considered essential), or living in a household with a very low work intensity (where adults worked less than 20 % of their total potential during the previous 12 months)

\*\*\*\* EU27 until 2013, EU28 from 2014 onwards

Romania is ranking among the countries with the worst values on a multitude of indicators measuring performances in social sectors, such as education (highest share of 18.24 aged early school leavers: 18.1% compared with 10.6 in EU), or health (second highest mortality rate after Malta: 7.0 per 1,000 live births in RO compared with 3.6 in EU; low life expectancy at birth: 75.3 years compared with 81.0 in the EU). Furthermore, in the context of a low collection rate to public budget (total government expenditure is 34.0% of the GDP in RO compared with 46.3% in EU), public investment in social services is, once again, among the lowest among EU countries: 4.0% of the GDP for health in RO compared with 7.1% in EU; 3.7% of the GDP for education in RO compared with 4.7% in EU; 11.6% of the GDP for social protection in RO compared with 19.1% in EU.

In the environment sector, the themes that have been approached by the projects financed in the framework of the Swiss funding still suffer from major drawbacks: sustainable waste management is still severely underdeveloped; the management of the protected areas is still deficient.

### **Role of NGOs**

In this context with high level of various needs and low level of service provision, the contribution of the non-governmental sector is essential. In the data depository of non-governmental organisations of the Ministry of Justice 19'663 foundations, 9'1647 associations, 1421 federations and 759 unions were registered (Nov. 2018).

In an analyses carried out in 2016 for CSDF with EEA funding, the NGOs active in the social /charity sector represented 21% of the total number of CSOs, in education 13%, in cultural development 12%, agriculture 10%, in development and tourism 6%, while in environment /ecology 3% (to name the sectors most relevant for the themes financed under the previous arrangements). Most of the activity of the NGOs is concentrated in the most well-off development regions, i.e. Bucharest-Ilfov, Centre and North-West regions, where more than half (55%) of the active organisations and 62% of the incomes of the sector were concentrated in 2015 (Kivu, 2015). Three quarters of the NGOs were active in the urban area and most of them carried out their activities within the region where they resided. The sources of funding most frequently accessed were the 2% tax contribution from individuals, donations, private sponsorships, membership fees, EU grants, economic activities, public grants, financing from international CSOs, and financing from foreign governments (EEA, Swiss, World Bank etc.). Structural instruments were the most important income source for 22%, SEE, Swiss Funds (the Swiss enlargement contribution for Romania accounts for less than 1% of the EU resources available to Romania), World Bank and other non-EU international government funds for 12%, member contributions for 11%, the 2% tax contribution for 10%, individual donations for 9%, economic activities for 8%, private sponsorship for 7%. Grants from the public sector were the most important source only for 4% of the NGOs, while subventions and public contracting of services amounted for less than 1%.

For EU funds, which are the largest, important co-payments are required, often too expensive for the budgets of the NGOs, while reimbursement is a lengthy process, pushing many NGOs on the verge of bankruptcy.

The NGOs deliver a high share of the overall and sectorial services for the population. In the social sector, for instance, CSOs represented in 2016 49% of the non-residential licensed services for children, 48% of services for the elderly, 64% of the homecare services, and 69% of the day-care centers for people with disabilities.

The two laws that determine the framework for the participation of the civil society to policy making processes are the one regarding the free access to public information (544/2001) and the one regarding the transparency of the decision-making process within public administration structures (52/2003). The first one is partly implemented, with long delays for each request. The second one is even more problematic. Beyond legislative provisions, establishing a real culture of participation is dependent on the availability of inclusive and open public administration consultation structures which should be permanently active but are currently missing or barely functional. For instance, the public debates on strategies and interventions rarely take a meaningful and systematic form, more often being limited to uploads of the documents on official sites and compilations of the few feedbacks provided by the CSO actors that are aware of the new developments.

Trust in NGOs (some trust or very much trust): 31.9% in 2010, 51.2% in 2016. Last two years must have been detrimental, since the sector was recurrently contested by public officials, restricting their space for actions.

„The issue of financial sustainability continues to represent a challenge for active NGOs. Due to the withdrawal of non-EU donors, available independent (flexible and grantee-friendly) funding for NGOs has decreased significantly and is posing continuously a serious threat to the existence and development of the organisations. Many major NGOs have a project-based funding pattern and depend on a single or two sources” (source: Final management document – PF). The evaluation confirms the relevance of this issue.

## 2.2 Swiss context

Romania and Bulgaria were EU10 enlargement «latecomers» when joining the EU in 2007 (EU12). Switzerland had already long experience with contribution programmes with the EU10 member countries and brought this experience and lessons into the design of the programmes in the two countries. The special setting built on the transition programmes, bridging part of the partners and activities into the contribution programme. It continued the Swissness approach with bringing in added value from Swiss excellence and know-how in order to ensuring good management quality through Swiss partners. In the pre-accession phase this approach was already in place. The lessons were mainly positive and so the programme under this review is also defined by a broad set of partners that are active in highly diverse thematic areas (from organ building to sewage treatment plants to health services and to promoting hiking trails, to name just a few). Swissness and visibility was a clear will from the Swiss Government and a condition for the programmes in Romania and Bulgaria. The manifold partnerships between Swiss and Romanian institutions at project and programme level contribute to the strengthening of Swiss-Romania bilateral relations. It is not yet an intended objective of the Funds to leading the ground for Swiss companies interested in investments, but hypothetically the potential for attracting companies is higher when manifold bilateral relations are established.

Switzerland makes the difference with added value thanks to Swiss expertise, Swiss models and with flexibility and innovative approach rather than with its financial volume.

## 3 Evaluation Methodology

As a preliminary comment, the evaluation team highlights here the quality of data and the easy access to these data that facilitated the analyse for this review. The database provided by KEK and the direct access for the evaluators into Wiki-database with all relevant documentation was very helpful. The evaluation had also very good response from CSDF, REPF and KEK in getting information and access to additional data, documents and information on request.

The evaluation team worked with the following methods:

### **Gaining an overview on / mapping of the portfolio**

The evaluation team started with a Rapid Assessment of the portfolio in order to get the whole picture of the two Thematic Funds. We learned that the documentation and reporting at the level of the SIB was of good quality and that CSDF, REPF and KEK did excellent coaching and monitoring of the EAs. All projects are finalized End of October 2018 and have already been closed with operational and financial reports validated and accepted by the SIB.

**Conducting of in-depth-assessment of the sample of 10 case studies (12 projects)**

The evaluation team assessed in depth 10 case studies with 12 projects (two Agencies were included with 2 projects each). The projects have been selected jointly by the SCO and the SIB following the criteria of (i) thematic balance: Selected projects cover the 2 thematic sub areas of the TFs; (ii) institutional balance: Selected projects reflect different types of projects partners; (iii) success balance: selected projects cover the range from successfully implemented to projects that faced difficulties (as per assessment of SIB, SCO and SDC); (iv) type: Retained Activities and Block Grants. The evaluation found the selection allowed for good insights in the highly diverse projects and agencies.

The 10 case studies include the following 12 projects:

Number		Executing Agency	Title
1	CSS 09 PF 05	Hospice Casa Sperantei Foundation Kantonsspital St. Gallen	CSS 09: A quality life for people with incurable diseases: information, training, consultancy (pilot project). PF 05: Overcoming disparities in access to quality basic palliative care in the community
2	CSS 34	White Yellow Cross Foundation Romania	Red Button - Integrated medical social homecare. Services monitored through tele-assistance
3	CSS 02 CSS 56	Save the Children Association, Iasi branch	CSS 02: Small changes, big differences CSS 56: ZOOM in community
4	CSS 59	Federation of NGOs for Social Services - FONSS	The VOICE of NGO!
5	CSM 16	Miroritics Association	Sustainable development through ecotourism in Transylvanian Highlands
6	CSM 28	Association of Ecotourism in Romania	Tara Hategului-Retezat: the excellence ecotourism destination of Romania. A model of sustainable development through ecotourism
7	PF 14	ADEPT Foundation Naturfreunde Schweiz	Green infrastructure in Sighisoara-Tarnava Mare Natura 2000 site - Discover Tarnava Mare by bike
8	PF 15	Transylvanian Carpathian Tourist's Association Schweizer Wanderwege	Connecting Romania to the European long-distance footpaths network
9	RA	Conect-Ro Solidar CH	Tackling the Challenges of the new Labour and Social Dialogue laws in Romania
10	RA	WWF-DPC WWF Schweiz	Natura 2000 and Rural Development in Romania

The evaluation concentrated on outcomes in terms of changes in the life of the beneficiaries, changes at institutional level of the Executing Agencies and explored the impact in the wider society and if policy changes occurred that were directly or indirectly infused by the projects.

The methodology for the in-depth assessment was the following:

- Critical extended analyses of relevant documentation, incl. application and final narrative reports of the EAs;
- In situ visits and interviews with the Executing Agency teams.
- Interviews with the Swiss Partners;
- Interviews with SIB consortium leader KEK, and leaders and responsible persons at CSDF and REPF;

- Interviews with 2 representatives of public administration, including written feedback from the NCU.

Gathering data from the interviews, in situ observations, and analyze of documents as source for our own findings on the two TF's results allowed methodological triangulation.

### **Theory of change (ex-post)**

The inception work allowed formulating ex-post Theories of change for both Funds, which the evaluation was "testing" (see chapter 5.6).

### **Evaluation questions**

The evaluation assessed the relevance, the effectiveness, the efficiency, impact and sustainability using the OECD-DAC Evaluation terminology.

- The relevance and added value is assessed in the context of Romania (needs, demand, absorption capacity)
- Results and effectiveness are assessed at outcome level in Romania as well as the benefits for the Swiss partners
- Efficiency is assessed in terms of management, finances, networks
- Impact looks at changes in the larger Romanian society
- Sustainability asks about maintaining positive results and about further outreach and follow-up activities

The list with the evaluation questions and the general key questions from the TOR with the answers from the evaluation team is presented in Annex 5.

The evaluation team wore the Gender lens throughout the evaluation work. However, the gender issue was not established as a transversal theme across Funds /themes. In respect with gender balance in the management set up and at the level of EAs, this has been found to be there. As such, the evaluation returned no further findings on this issue and considered only the relevance of gender for specific types of projects, such as those concerned with marginalized communities, where sometimes traditional patriarchic values are influent.

### **Difficulties, limitations**

The evaluation team encountered no fundamental obstacles that limit the validity of the findings. It concentrated on the direct exchange with the SDC, the SCO, the SIB and the Executive Agencies of the projects in the sample for in-depth review. A weakness is however that the evaluation only met the direct beneficiaries in one project (Hospice for palliative care Brasov) and did not have the chance for direct exchange with local authorities. These limitations however do not basically question the findings and conclusions of the evaluation.

## **4 The portfolio**

The portfolio of both Thematic Funds, including Retained Activities, amounts to a total of 141 projects and CHF 26.8 million. This represents around 15% of the total enlargement contribution of CHF 181 million for Romania. These bilateral contributions have to be put into relation of the massive external funding from the EU with Euro 30.84 billion 2014-2020 (ESI, European Structural and Investment Fund) for Romania. It is clear that Switzerland does make the difference with innovative projects rather than with financial volume. This explains the relatively intensive procedure for identifying innovative projects and Executive Agencies in the selected thematic fields.

**Overview on portfolio under review: Financial volume and number of projects**

<b>Block Grant CSP</b>	
99 Projects (94 Projects + 5 Retained Activities)	Strengthen Romanian NGOs and enable their active participation in policy processes as the voice of civil society as well as service provider and to promote activities of the civil society organisations tackling environmental issues, contributing to the provision of social services and allowing for strengthening their organisational capacities.
The evaluation deepens 6 case studies: CSS 09, 34, 02, 56, 59, CSM 16, 28	
<b>Block Grant PF</b>	
42 Projects (40 Projects + 2 Retained Activities)	Promote and support existing and new partnerships between Romanian and Swiss associations and communities in implementing specific projects offering specific Swiss expertise for Romanian institutions according to concrete demands.
The evaluation deepens 2 case studies: PF14, PF 15, including Swiss Partners	
<b>Retained Activities</b>	
7 Projects in total ( 2 case studies)	Every project defined and pursued its own objective(s) In depth Assessment of 2 projects:
The evaluation deepens 2 RA case studies (Social dialog and Natura 2000)	

The Retained Activities (CHF 5.5 million) were pre-selected prior to the launching of the 2 TFs. The procedure for the RA is not comparable to the highly competitive calls for proposals procedure of the Block grants.

The originally planned financial envelope for the two Thematic Funds was upgraded with additional CHF 5.0 million that were transferred from the SECO to the SDC, for reasons of non-realisation of a big SECO forest project. The merging of the Expert Fund into the Partnership Fund was logic, as the differentiation between “Partner” and “Expert” was somewhat artificial.

The 134 projects were selected in a competition procedure and represent 7.7% of total 1'745 applications, 1'550 CSP (1'256 social and 294 environmental) and 195 PF. The evaluation process included 2 phases: The first round was an administrative assessment and those that met all criteria entered into the second phase of technical and financial evaluation.

CSDF managed 64 CSS and 32 PF and REPF managed 30 CSM and 8 PF projects. The criteria for splitting being the theme: social and environment. The selection for all the partnerships was done by CSDF. Under TF PF the call for proposals were administrated by CSDF and only from the phase of contracting selected projects were split according to themes.

The high number of applications and the perspective of rather low success are: (i) yet another indicator on the amplitude of the needs for additional support in the non-governmental sector; (ii) a result of the generic themes included in the calls for proposals.

**Characteristics of the portfolio (Non RA projects)** (source: CSDF database)

- *Rural reach*: 50 of the projects have a rural reach (rural population is 43.6 % in Romania). Many of the indicators on social problems at national level display disproportionately high levels in the rural area, as a result of limited access to public utility and social services infrastructure).

- *Territorial distribution: Concentration of EAs in the cities;* 101 out of 134 EAs are in large cities (see Table), with strong universities (economic development + educational capital);
- *Multiple projects:* A considerable number of EAs with two projects. Even greater duplication if we count the partners, which sometimes are organisations that applied as EAs as well
- *All levels:* 45 national, 37 regional, the rest local impact;
- *Size:* 61 large projects (CHF 75'001-CHF 250'000), 73 small ones (less than CHF 75'000).
- *Duration:* 22 months average duration;
- *Intensive monitoring:* For most of the projects 2 monitoring visits but there are also some with 3 or 4 monitoring visits;
- *Partners:* 158 Romanian partners, 48 Swiss partners. At least 50 of the RO partners were public institutions. For the PFs there is no separate counting of the type of partner public /NGO (this estimate does not also account for double counting, namely the same partner in several projects).

EAs	Number
Bucharest (more than 1/3)	57
Iași	12
Timisoara	9
Brasov	9
Cluj Napoca	9
Sibiu	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>

## 5 The evaluators' findings

The will of Romanian Government to really engage in Civil Society Strengthening was challenging for the programme implementation, especially for the projects financed under the 2nd Call, 2015-2018, since a series of Governmental legislative provisions started to be issued tightening the conditions in which NGOs operate.

Moreover, the public discourse within the Romanian political and decision making spheres in regards with the perception of NGOs activity changed considerably from tolerance to resistance. These macro-level changes explain some micro-level deficits in the capacity of the EAs aspiring to influence policy changes, but did not generally hamper the capacity to conclude projects thanks to excellent support from the SIB.

### 5.1 Relevance

#### In the Romanian Context

Many of the topics approached by the projects are addressed by sectorial strategies. Among the most relevant strategies, from the point of view of their convergence with thematic and topic portfolio of the Funds, are to be mentioned: the Sustainable National Strategy of Romania, The Strategy for National Inclusion and Poverty Reduction, The Strategy for the Promotion of Children's Rights, National Health Strategy, several strategies in the educational sector. Most of the themes and even project topics that were financed still suffer from serious drawbacks in terms of development needs, availability of services and sometimes even regulatory frameworks, despite the progress made under the previous financing phase. To offer only some examples:

- The needs for services in the social sector are still massive, with the public community assistance services chronically underdeveloped in the rural areas and even the small urban localities (in many cases the local structures lack professional social assistants, while the existing ones seldomly perform outreach work); most vulnerable groups still lack essential services and support; homecare is scarcely developed.
- In the environment sector, sustainable development based on eco-friendly solution is still not ensured; the conservation and management of natural resources is problematic (the status of protected areas is uncertain); bio-diversity protection is not addressed by dedicated

interventions; waste is still managed through obsolete systems and regeneration is not ensured.

- Policy dialogue in general, and specifically in the areas of social protection and environment, is still deficient and poorly structured, and is relying on the changing agendas of successive Governments.

All the interviewed representatives regard the Funds overall and the sample of projects discussed as relevant for the needs and priorities at country level.

The Swiss funding is considered relevant as it closes gaps in support that is otherwise not sufficiently available through Structural Instruments, in terms of timeframes, and also types of funding. The European Funds require important co-financing contributions, are burdened by administrative procedures that make spending difficult, reimbursements are delayed and smaller NGOs with modest savings are unable to ensure functional cash flows, are sometimes irrelevant for the themes approached by some CSOs, while the Funds are sometimes blocked and no calls for projects are issued.

The Romanian context (enabling environment) for civil society participation has changed since the Funds were launched, and this change has been synthetically described by some of the interviewees as derailing 'from distant cooperation, initially, to tolerance, afterwards, and, finally, resistance towards the NGOS sector in the recent couple of years'. Most of the negative developments occurred in 2017-2018.

This change has partly affected the sustainability of the projects carried out in the previous financing period, especially for those projects which required the cooperation of central and local authorities, the latter being either official partners in the projects or involved in other ways in the delivery of the projects. However, this conclusion is not valid for all the projects. In the sample approached by the evaluation, some EAs managing to secure the continuation of the cooperation with public authorities, especially with the ones at local level, as a result of recurrent collaboration relationships and mutual dependence between the NGO and the public sector in order to safeguard the already insufficient services that are provided. However, the tightened conditions for NGO participation to policy making and implementing processes might pose an important challenge for the effectiveness of the next generation of projects.

The evaluation collected evidence on a variety of policy areas where the conditions for policy dialogue and participation of civil society to decision making have deteriorated and four of the most important changes already operated or under way are mentioned here:

- New legislation regarding the NGOs, with the declared aim of 'increasing the transparency' of budgetary allocations, is under discussion in the Parliament; the new legislative provisions enforce the obligation of NGOs to publish quarterly budgetary reports, in which every person contributing to or benefiting from the budget of an NGO has to be mentioned, otherwise the NGOs are liable to be closed.
- The NGO membership of the Economic and Social Council (NGOs represent a third of this consultative structure, along with trade unions and employers organisations), the highest level structure currently available for policy dialogue with the Government, has been changed without consistent arguments and more 'loyal' organisations have been recruited in the renewed membership.
- The social dialogue law has been ameliorated (this was one of the objectives of the RA 'Tackling the Challenges of the New Labour and Social Dialogue laws in Romania') but the provisions preventing the establishment of trade unions in small enterprises, with less than

15 employees (which make up for most of the labour force and enterprises in Romania) have been maintained.

- The legislation regarding the management of Natura 2000 protected areas (several projects, both RAs and block grants, envisaged activities in protected areas) has changed through an emergency ordinance, and the management of these areas has been assumed entirely by the state, which leads to the loss of the already accumulated capacity in the NGO sector (previously they managed around half of the areas), while the capacity to manage is not currently available in the public sector.

There are other, more 'specific' changes, such as the elimination of a legislative provision requiring the commercial entities above a certain number which do not employ persons with disabilities to pay a contribution to the state or buy products from social economy enterprises employing persons with disabilities (The 2nd option was taken away, leading to unemployment of the people with disabilities).

The evaluation found that in several cases the authorities were not responsive /only partly responsive to the initiatives of the EAs. Many of these instances have occurred even before the negative recent developments (2017-2018) at policy level. Several cases of NGOs building exemplary resilience and determination to carry out their planned activities were documented as well. In some cases, their strategy was to strengthen the relationship with local authorities.

The evaluators' estimation is that the Funds are as important and relevant now, if not even more, as they have been in more favourable conditions for the NGO sector in the previous phase. The objective to strengthen Civil Society is still important, while currently its meaning has shifted from supporting the development for a stronger sector to building the resilience of the sector in the sometimes adverse enabling environment.

### **Relevance for Switzerland**

"Cooperating with organisations in the partner countries allows Swiss organisations to expand their networks and their specialist knowledge. What is more, Switzerland itself benefits from the NGOs' work, as it frequently has an international or even global impact, for example in the areas of migration or environmental protection." These arguments for relevance for Switzerland, developed in the Swiss Enlargement Contribution Interim report<sup>1</sup>, are still valid. The biggest benefit was however evident at the individual level. The persons directly involved in the implementation of the two Funds benefitted from the exchange for their individual and professional development.

### **Relevance at level of the projects**

A pre-assessment of relevant themes in the form of a large survey guaranteed that the projects were all in the frame of the most relevant themes. The selection procedure was highly competitive and the chosen 134 projects (without RA) were the best performers (out of 1'754).

### **Conclusions and lessons on relevance**

- The projects that were financed are highly relevant for the needs and priorities in the Romanian context. In last years of implementation (second round) many of the topics addressed suffered from deterioration in regulatory frameworks; that circumstance increased the relevance of the

<sup>1</sup> The Swiss Enlargement Contribution Interim report for the end of the commitment period in Bulgaria and Romania 2009–2014, p. 30 (SDC and SECO, January 2015)

projects. The evaluation found no significant difference in relevance in the projects implemented between the RAs and block grants.

- The relevance of the two Swiss Thematic Funds under review, considered as being high in the first phase, as they closed gaps in support that otherwise was not sufficiently available through Structural Instruments, in terms of timeframes, and also types of funding, will certainly remain high or even increase in the next years in light of the developments in the context.

## 5.2 Effectiveness: Results at outcome level

The two funds had a clear thematic focus on environment and on social in realizing the projects via activities and in producing outputs such as social services for specific citizens' groups in need (youth, elderly, illness) or as environmental infrastructure (bike trails, hiking tracks, monitoring tools). The results at this level are well documented and the evaluation considers these immediate results as overall successful, based on documents review and the interviews and visits.

However, the evaluations' interest and mandate was to go beyond and focus on the changes that occurred in the wider context in form of outcomes that positively changed citizens' life and Civil Society's voice in addressing policy change. The evaluation presents hereafter outcomes that were drawn from the field work as examples of changes occurring thanks to the activities, outputs or immediate outcomes of the case studies. Effective policy change is often hypothetique as the potential for real change highly depends on the will and openness of public authorities.

Outcomes (drawn from field-work)	Wider impact / Linkage with policy influence
Integrated social and healthcare services with proven records in improving quality of life for the patients in terms of security and support is a best practice show case with potential for systemic change	Red Button → Systemic change with potential for policy change (a structural change in addressing the needs for palliative care with the support of the primary healthcare services). Red Button is an example how change in a system produces "show case" for positive change with longterm benefit for the citizens in need with impact for the society. In favorable context policy change should than be the logic consequence.
Holistic palliative care approach already translated into legislation and improving of primary healthcare	Hospice (mutual benefiting PF - CSP approach) → Direct influence on improved legislation
Reconnecting children with their environment improves their individual development and prepares the children for being active citizens (change in behavior).	Mioritics Pro-active combination of education, trail construction, environment → Education for active citizenship as potential / condition for policy change
Green economy components actively stimulate regeneration of the marginalized areas	ADEPT → Show case for "green infused success" stimulates citizens to engage and invest in green business. → Potential for policy change?
(Re)integration of Romania in the European footpath network by catalyzing voluntary energies of the local communities stimulates (slow) tourism.	Transylvanian Carpathians Tourist Association → Volunteers' engagement has a positive impact on social networking for better social cohesion. – Potential for policy change?

Coalition building of the NGOs and joining their forces improved legitimacy, weight and profile for advocacy at local and regional level.	FONSS → Joining forces prepares NGOs for raising their voice → Policy change?
More happy people in protected healthy nature and environment profit from improved Ecotourism system. The special merit is that the programme brings in the concept for green infrastructure to Romania.	WWF → Involving local stakeholders in managing protected sites shows that the population can directly benefit (generate income) from protected areas while protecting them through sustainable resource management and has high potential for Environmental policy change
Repositioning the social dialogue as a theme into the agenda at the national level inspired the drafting of the new law.	Connect /Solidar → Policy change? There are still drawbacks hindering social dialogue in the law
Illustration that protected areas are economically viable led the seeds for sustainable development at the concrete local level. Providing a sustainable development model for the protected areas through ecotourism with potential for sustainable development policy.	AER (multitasking and multi-implication of EAs as partners in :RA + PF + <u>CSM</u>  → Potential for policy change?
Catalyze integrated community interventions for children victims of violence and abuse with the renewed involvement of the local public social assistance services, schools, school mediators, families in some of the areas with the highest incidence of these phenomena.	Save the Children  Policy change is a long term process, especially when it requires a cultural change, change in attitude and behavior regarding abuse of violence.

### 5.2.1 Thematic Fund Civil Society Participation

The objective of the TF SCP is to promote the active participation of Romanian civil society organisations and to strengthen their role as actor in the development process. In total 94 projects were selected in two rounds of call for proposals: 64 in the social thematic field, 30 in the environment theme. The evaluation visited seven projects (CSS 02, CSS 09, CSS 34, CSS 56 and CSS 59, CSM 16 and CSM 28). The NGOs are the key players in implementing the projects of the CSP Block grant.

#### Overview CSP Block grants

Calls	Applications social	Financed Projects Social (in-depth review)	Applications environment	Financed Projects Environment
1 <sup>st</sup> call	670	16 small (CSS 09 ) 14 big (CSS 02 )	109	15 (all small)
2 <sup>nd</sup> call	586	20 small (CSS 56) 14 big (CSS 34 and CSS 59)	185	15 (all small) (CSM 16 and CSM 28)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1'256</b>	<b>64 financed projects in total</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>30 financed projects in total</b>

Small= 10'000-75'000 CHF per project CSS and CSM

Big= 75'001-250'000 CHF (only for the social component)

## Characteristics of the overall Block grant portfolio

The projects in the environment sector managed by REPF primarily tackled as a sub-theme:

- 13 projects on ‘sustainable rural development’
- 4 ‘Public participation in environmental decision making processes’
- 3 projects concerned with ‘climate change’ (one also tackling ‘Public participation in environmental decision making processes’ as a secondary theme)
- 3 environmental awareness projects
- 3 projects concerned with ‘the quality of urban environment’
- 2 projects concerned with ‘sustainable consumption’ (one also tackling ‘public participation in environmental decision making processes’)
- 2 projects concerned with ‘waste management’

The projects in the social sector managed by CSDF are by sub-theme:

- 35 projects on socio-medical services
- 17 projects on ‘policy making, networking, lobby & advocacy’
- 7 projects on ‘education, life skills development’
- 5 projects on social economy & community development

### **CSS 09: Palliative care, Hospice in Brasov (complementary / linked with PF 05)**

The general objective of the project was the coordinated development of a national system of palliative care through the gradual implementation of a palliative care national strategy and through the involvement of all stakeholders (beneficiaries, service providers, decision makers, general public) in a participatory process. The main results were (i) a qualitative participative research conducted for local authorities documenting the needs of the patients and caretakers and putting forward a series of recommendations and proposals; and (ii) developing a non-stop helpline service at local level for the people suffering from incurable diseases and their caretakers, with nurse specialized in palliative care, and (iii) Increased awareness and training on palliative care issues, revealed through an exploratory approach, for people suffering from life-threatening diseases, their families as well as for the general public from the county of Brasov.

### **CSS 34: Red Button**

The project implemented an innovative (and unique in the Romanian context) telemonitoring system for elderly in Romania and to test it at in Bucuresti-Ilfov, Constanta, Buzau and Giurgiu. The system catered to the needs of 236 beneficiaries in Bucharest, 59 in Buzau and 57 beneficiaries in Constanta. 3 functional centres were created in Bucharest, Buzau, and Constanta. The project was implemented in an integrated manner (tele-assistance, home assistance as well as the intervention of the social worker) and proactive (each beneficiary was contacted by the EA at least once a week).

### **CSS 02 and CSS 56: Child abuse prevention and rehabilitation**

The main results of CSS 02 concerned the development of parenting behaviours and abilities for life for 1500 beneficiaries in the rural and urban area from the North-East region of Romania. The communities reached were among the most vulnerable ones in the target area. 68 school counsellors and 20 professors were trained and then became trainers themselves, reaching 1355 parents, while the evaluations questionnaires for these parents distributed at the end of the work-

shops indicated a rate of 75% success in learning the relevant skills. The schools kept on requesting the guidelines elaborated through the project after its completion. The collaboration of 87 schools was secured in the project.

The CSS 56 complemented the CCS02 project with the development of specialized services in rehabilitation of children exposed to violence (domestic and school violence) from urban and rural regions of North-East of Romania, in order to ensure protection and maintain an optimal level of health, safety and wellbeing. 53 children from 10 communities exposed to violence within their family or community have received specialized counselling and psychotherapy services in a total of 210 therapy sessions. The county local authorities that were partners in the projects were active and guided the selection of the communities and intermediated the link with city councils, especially with the most resistant ones. The project also activated the so-called 'Community Advisory Committees' in the 10 selected rural communities, with the support of the General Directions for Social Assistance and Child Protection. An information and sensitisation campaign was conducted in the rural communities in order to raise awareness about the effects of exposure of children through violence throughout Itinerant Caravan Theatre and 25 Forum Theatre representations. Parenting courses were delivered through this project as well. Social assistants from city halls, who have low capacity of reaction in the cases of children who are neglected or victims of violence were also reached.

### **CSS 59: Raising the voice of NGO**

Through the project, the intervention area of the Federation for Nongovernmental Organisations for Social Services (FONSS) was extended from the N-E region to national level, and the number of members increased from 21 to 32. Two legislative proposals were submitted to the Government, aiming at changing the Law 248/2013 on the Economic and Social Council and the Social Dialogue Law. FONSS acted as a lobby and advocacy actor for the member NGOs and intermediated several projects for these NGOs at local level, negotiating with the local authorities, for instance, for the allocation of resources, such as headquarters. As such, the influence of the NGOs joining the network on local policy making processes enhanced. Moreover, FONSS carried out capacity building courses with the member NGOs in order to improve their capacity to engage in policy dialogue and be more convincing in advocating for their specific causes.

Within the project, the team conducted a national research about social services in 2015 and organised an international conference about the contracting procedures for the public procurement of social services, a key issue in the sector.

### **CSM 28: Ecotourism promotion**

The project aimed at developing a sustainable development model through ecotourism in the protected area of Retezat. A survey of the tourists of the guesthouses in the area was conducted in order to offer an evidence base for the development of ecotourism. A manual for monitoring the visitors based on the experience gained through this project was written, addressed to other destination managers from Romania and including useful information for planning and carrying out a successful tourism monitoring process. 8 guesthouses from Tara Hategului - Retezat destination were evaluated in order to be awarded a green certificate.

### **CSM16: Sustainable development through ecotourism in Transylvania hills**

The project goal was to contribute to the implementation of the action plan proposed by the Visiting strategy of the „Hartibaciu-Tarnava Mare-Olt” Natura 2000 site, for the sustainable development of the rural communities from the area. In term of objectives, this project aimed at a sustainable rural development of these communities, inside the Natura 2000 site, through the development of

ecotourism and the encouragement of local participation and implication (with focus on vulnerable groups). 320 km of new tourist trail segments have been completely inventoried and marked, accessible for bike rides. 14 mountain bikes have been purchased. Tourism packages were developed for exploring the nature, culinary of the destination. Educative activities were developed in 20 primary and secondary schools, regarding the surrounding natural resources.

### **Conclusions and lessons CSP Block Grant:**

- Large projects in the sample were implemented for quite diverse purposes, ranging from ‘heavy-duty’ implementation of services such as in the case of CSS 34, ambitious projects aimed at changing parenting culture as in the case of CSS 02 and projects concerned more with aggregating the voice of civil society organisations and lobby and advocacy such in the case of CSS 59.
- The larger budgets are often used for activating networks, carrying out large training sessions and in general mobilizing the human resources and stimulating integrated work.
- Small project in the sample were used for piloting models and testing intervention logics, with an embedded research function.
- Although the small rate of success in benefiting from the support of the Funds among applicants (potentially eligible beneficiaries) would recommend banning an NGO from implementing more than one project (during the whole period or during a single call for projects), there are cases where large and small projects carried out by the same EA complement each other well (as in the Save the Children case). This complementarity, in turn, seems to be important for the success overall of the organisation to reach the specified objectives in both /all the projects financed by the Swiss funds.
- Sometimes complementary is ensured also via access to different types of funding, such as block grants, partnerships, and even RAs.

### **5.2.2 Thematic Fund Partnership Fund**

The objective of the TF PF is the promotion of existing and new partnerships between Romanian and Swiss associations and communities in implementing specific projects offering specific Swiss expertise for Romanian institutions according to concrete demands. The initiative and lead for the implementation is with the Romanian partner. In the Partnership Block Grant it is important to mention that there was not a split between social and environmental areas as in case of CSP Block Grant, and this split was rather an administrative one: REPF monitored the environmental projects and CSDF all the others. In total 40 projects were selected in two rounds of call for proposals. The evaluation visited three projects (PF05, PF 14, and PF15) that were in the sample for in-depth analyse.

On the Partnership Block Grant, there was not a thematic focus as in case of NGO Block Grant. The projects financed can however be attributed to following topics:

- 21 Partnerships in social access and community development
- 1 Partnership in culture
- 1 Partnership in democracy
- 9 Partnerships in education and research
- 8 Partnerships in environment

## Overview Partnership Fund

Applications		Projects financed	Managed by CSDF	Managed by REPF	In-depth analyse
1st round	116	3 small 11 big	11	3	<b>PF05 (big):</b> Quality basic palliative CH Partner: Kantonsspital SG <b>PF 14 (big)</b> Green infrastructure CH Partner: Naturfreunde Schweiz
2nd round	79	4 small 22 big	21	5	<b>PF 15 (big)</b> Connecting Romania to the European long-distance footpaths network CH Partner: Schweizer Wanderwege
<b>Total</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>8</b>	

\*Small = up to 100'000 CHF / \*\*Big= 100'001-250'000 CHF

### PF05: Model of palliative care

Executive Romanian Agency: Hospice Casa Sperantei Brasov.

Swiss Partner: Kantonsspital St.Gallen

Total expenses: CHF 249'868.

The general objective of the project is to design a new model of care for reducing gaps in access to palliative community care for cancer patients, based on Swiss-Romanian cooperation and expertise exchange. The overall success of PF05 is to have elaborated a National model of palliative care for Romania and to have trained professionals in palliative care. The project succeeded in involving all relevant actors, including family doctors, into the palliative care system. A systemic change occurred in transferring the experience to the policy level as the project directly influenced the drafting of the new Minister Ordinance 253 /2018 concerning palliative care.

The project proposed intervention at regional level in 4 pilot counties (Brasov, Bucharest, Cluj, Iasi), as well as at national level, aiming at strengthening the policy makers' capacity to enact a change in response to the specific challenge of cancer patients' access to appropriate basic palliative care.

Know-how exchange visits of the key project team members and Romanian representatives of stakeholders to Switzerland were highly appreciated. The *Swiss partner perspective* on the project is positive. The intervention in palliative care is modelled for Romanian and palliative care professionals are trained according to actual academic clinical standards. The main difficulty for the Swiss partner was managing such a demanding project from distance. Not being present meant that it is difficult to understand the problems and regular face-to-face meetings would have helped resolve them as they arise. The conclusion of the Swiss partner is that the project managed to overcome the difficulties and was all in all successful. Mainly thanks to high commitment and investment of the Romanian partner. The Swiss partner benefitted a lot, more at the individual level than at the institutional level. The person involved was encouraged to further engage in international partnerships benefitting from the "Romanian lessons" (Romania model as example for other countries with similar challenges); the institutional benefits were less explicit or less prominent.

(See also **CSS 09** quality life for people with incurable diseases implemented by the same RO partner in the Hospice in Brasov):

### PF14: Green infrastructure (bike trail)

Executive Romanian Agency: Adept Transylvania Foundation

Swiss Partner: Naturfreunde Schweiz

Total expenses: CHF 280'158

The result in terms of infrastructure is an 80-km mountain bike trail with a team of 20 unemployed workers trained and paid for the construction. The wider outcome is the creation of a network linking 5 communes, 8 villages to each other and to the UNESCO World Heritage Site city Sighisoara. The project could build on a project financed by Norway grant that allowed investing the left over fund into the construction of an 8 km bike trail as a testing pilot. The project managed to involve local actors in order to generate community ownership and support. The final report was submitted with delay after several requests by SIB and REPF had to strongly engage in capacity building and coaching. The project implementation period was extended with 7 months because some of the activities, like the finalization of brochure, map and mobile application were in delay. Instead of two conferences which were planned initially in the project proposal, bike competitions were organized. They became a highlight event in the region with great mobilization and increasing participation every year. Citizens and green businesses profit from the event (accommodations, promotion of local products, eco-tourism service providers). The partnership between the EA and Swiss partner stopped after the key persons from the Swiss partner left the organization without knowledge transfer. This created a major challenge for the partnership. Instead of planned two visits in Switzerland from the EA side only one took place. The financial documents from the Swiss part were submitted very late after the intervention of SIB (KEK-CDC). The Swiss Partner (Naturfreunde Schweiz) does not have bike trail building in its core competence. The partnership was built on an individual contact base and did not evolve into an institutional strengthening and did not bring an institutional benefit. It was a last-minute partnership that did not bring the expected outcomes in terms of strengthening bilateral partnerships. It is however to be noticed that Adept benefitted from its visit to Switzerland visiting bike trails and that the Swiss partner sent some bike experts to Romania that was considered helpful for ADEPT.

### **PF15 Long-distance footpath (hiking track)**

Executive Romanian Agency: Transylvanian Carpathian Tourists' Association

Swiss Partner: Schweizer Wanderwege

Total expenses: CHF 268'451

The project was designed by the Transylvanian Carpathian Tourists' Association that approached Schweizer Wanderwege (SWW) that engaged as partner with the interest to test if the Swiss concept for promoting footpaths trails is transferable to Romania. The responsible Swiss person had never been to Romania and discovered the country and the potential for promoting hiking through creating / reconstructing hiking trails. The role of SWW was mainly training of Romanian people (e.g. 5 people 5-day training in Switzerland) and through visits. The SKV membership base were mainly German Romanians that became few people. Key issues for SKV are the financing for quality hiking trails on one side. The evaluation identified also weaknesses in management, including reporting, as a key issue of the SKV that required intensive coaching by REPF. The results of the project however are very concrete and highly visible: hiking trails E3 and E8 are reconnected to the transborder European long-distance network. SKV gained in profile and reputation. Its financial base is still weak and further activities are depending from funding. The benefit for the SWW was mainly at the individual level as the responsible person learned the beauty of Romanian nature as key asset for tourist promotion and get enriched in learning about cultural exchange. Based on the experience made, SWW would be more pro-active in getting involved in the planning of the project from the very beginning.

**Conclusions and lessons TF PF:**

- In the case of successful partnerships, the Swiss partners learned soft management skills and adaptive strategies of coping in adverse circumstances.
- The Swiss partners heavily involved in the delivery of projects ended up in redefining /adjusting their own strategies and working methods as a result of transferring their experience into less familiar contexts.
- The Swiss comparative advantage is at the level of expertise and models, but also innovative approaches (under-financed in Romania).
- Lessons include (1) to plan less ambitious objectives; (2) to care more about governance issues (transparency); commitment and integrity of the team; (3) coaching and capacity building are crucial for success; (4) the cultural differences, behavior and functioning matter and must be addressed with pragmatism without giving up the high Swiss discipline and standards; (5) trust matters; (6) ethics matters; (7) best practice stand alone does not bring change in the wider system, if it is not linked to politics (“politicians must be given a platform”).
- Overall conclusion for PF approach is to invest enough time and effort in building the partnership.

**5.2.3 Retained Activities**

The approach of the RA is the promotion of Swiss-Romanian partnerships with two objectives: *Social*: To promote and/or enhance institutional partnerships between Romanian and Swiss partners to contribute to: the solution of specific development challenges; strengthen capacities and structures of the Romanian institutional partners; make it possible to mobilize Swiss added value; contribute to the strengthening of the partnerships.

*Environment*: To promote civil society as an actor in reforms with a thematic focus on nature protection and biodiversity as well as social services.

The initiative and responsibility is with the Swiss partner. The motivation for the RA was to profit from competence and experience of important Swiss actors in central development issues for Romania. In Annexe 1 and Annexe 4 to the FA activities in the environmental and social themes and potential Romanian and Swiss partners for projects were already identified. Some of the Swiss partners on this list were ongoing partnerships or organisations with longstanding relations with Romania (SAB, WWF, Solidar), few were new (AGRIDEA, Naturfreunde Schweiz, Schweizer Wanderwege). The RA approach absorbed CHF 5.5 million from the SRCP (20.5%), Including the partner contributions the expenses amount to CHF 6.2 million in total.

**Overview on all Retained Activities / Expenses including partner contributions**

<b>Approach: Thematic Fund for Retained Activities</b>		
<b>Activities identified</b>	<b>Swiss / international Lead Agencies <i>Romanian Partners</i></b>	<b>Total expenses CHF</b>
Strengthening the capacities of Forest Owners Associations for sustainable forest management (CSP)	SAB ROMONTANA Open Fields (Former Fundatia Heifer) Universitatea «Stefan cel Mare» din Suceava Federatia Proprietarilor de Paduri si Pasuni din Romania “NOSTRA SILVA	459 250
Natura 2000 and Rural Development in Romania	WWF International DCP / Vienna Milvus Group, NGO Ecotur, ProParkFoundation WWF-CH,	1 093 484

HNVF – Rural Development and High Nature Value Farmlands in Romania (CSP)	AGRIDEA <i>ADEPT Foundation; WWF-Romania ProPark</i>	1 231 925
South-western Carpathian Wilderness and Sustainable Development Initiatives (CSP)	WWF-DCP International DCP /Vienna <i>Ecotur, AER, ProPark, WWF-CH</i>	1 106 071
Sustainable Agricultural Models in the Romanian Mountain Area (CSP)	SAB <i>Federatia Agricultorilor de Munte "Dorna"</i> <i>Open Fields (Former Heifer Romania Asociația AGROM-RO, "ROMONTANA</i>	1 450 672
Development of Geographical Indications in Romania (PF)	AGRIDEA <i>Fundatia ADEPT Transilvania</i> <i>Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Romania</i>	283 581
Tackling the Challenges of the New Labour and Social Dialogue Laws in Romania (PF)	Solidar Suisse <i>CONNECT Association for Dialogue, Employment and Migration</i>	584 189
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b>6 209 172</b>

Source: KEK wiki-database

The identification through public procurement rules, the set-up and monitoring of seven RA was challenging for KEK-CDC that was managing the RA, as KEK did not have longstanding experience in managing grant making and the evaluation was told that in the first phase the production and continuous adaptation of templates was a special challenge for the lead agencies. The initial phase absorbed more resources of the SIBs than expected from them.

The key challenge in the RA is that the Swiss partner (or international partner in the case of WWF DCP Vienna) is in the driver seat and acts as the overall responsible Agency. It showed that Swiss partners did also need support to guaranteeing quality and performance in order to satisfy the requirements. This coaching was assured by KEK-CDC. Two out of the seven Retained Activities were analyzed in depth:

### Natura 2000 and rural development

The lead agency executing the RA Natura 2000 and rural development was WWF International Danube-Carpathian Programme with its Headquarter in Vienna. WWF-CH was the Swiss partner together with three Romanian partners. The objective was to improve the Natura 2000 network of specially protected sites involving local stakeholders in two areas of Romania: Maramures and Hartibacului in Transylvania. A special focus of the project is put on promoting local development models that show how the population can benefit (generate income) from protected areas while protecting them (sustainable resource management). It covered a broad portfolio of activities and the project strategy is not very clearly recognizable for the evaluation. The outcomes are eco-business (6 initiatives), FSC certification of forests, greater transparency and more environment sensitivity in infrastructure planning in or nearby Natura 2000 sites. An example of success is the stop of a hydropower plant that would have had massive negative impact on Natura 2000 protected area. County officials and institutions were involved in the process of managing Natura 2000 areas and protection of areas was integrated into county level development plans. At national level WWF's recommendations related to biodiversity conservation and management of Natura 2000 areas found

their way into the framework into policy (Framework of the Large Infrastructure Operational Programme 2014-2020). The main challenge was that relevant state authorities (Ministry of Environment) showed low interest in the project activities. The national organisations involved had good thematic expertise, but they lacked experience and performance in project management and administration.

*Swiss added value* (WWF CH) consisted in exchange of experience on green energy and natura parcs, in strategy and policy support, in quality-check, in training sessions (workshops).

### **Social Dialog**

The objective to promoting decent working conditions for employees in selected sectors in Romania was successfully achieved when we consider mobilization and growth in Trade Union membership as the indicators. When we are more ambitious and when considering improvements in the Social Dialog substance and results, the success is less evident. The evaluation however estimates that the achieved results in the given context and with the given means are the utmost achievable. Several hindering factors affected the implementation. The setting as an RA, with a Swiss Partner (SOLIDAR) in the driver seat of a highly political project was somehow a limitation in the set up. Solidar is known for Trade Unions support and promotion worldwide by means of political campaigns, strong messages, confronting employers and the State with clear revendications for improving working conditions. The person who had set up the ProDoc and the planning left Solidar without detailed transition of the project to the successor, who had to adapt the ProDoc to the highly dynamics in the Romanian context, which slowed down the projects start. The Romanian partner Connect is a spin-off of SAH, the former name for Solidar. They employ 2 people who did an excellent work in the limitations of the context and the means. The evaluation questions the institutional sustainability of the structure knowing that the RA Social Dialog was the main source of income with no guarantee for a follow up. Another weak point was the non-interest / non-response of the employers. In Romania they were systematically invited to the dialogs and events, but without response. In Switzerland, various employers were invited to participate in an exchange visit to Romania, but there was no interest and the planned trip had to be cancelled. This contrasts with the high interest from Romanian employees for a study visit in Switzerland (to UNIA and COOP). The campaign in Romania encountered several difficulties, including hesitance in the SCO on the design and on the messages. Social Dialog with a strong explicit socio-political component was an unusual RA and the evaluation questions the set-up and acceptance rather than the relevance of the theme. The evaluation takes two lesson for the future: (1) Commitment is the key factor success and (2) adapt the objective formulation to the reality. "The project strengthens TU for Social Dialog" would have reflected what is possible in Romania, without aiming the Social Dialog strengthening per se, as the RA had no influence on the employers. Invest in training of TU members, in capacity building of the EA Conect. The evaluation has some doubts on the sustainability as the EA Conect does not have the financial base for ensuring follow-up activities as this was planned. Also the low interest of employers organisations and of the Ministry of Labour is a challenge for sustainability.

*The Swiss added value* consisted in sharing the Swiss social dialogue model as an example for Romania. However this ambition contrasted with the very difficult situation of the social dialogue that was degrading in the period under review and with social partners that are weak and lack the capacity to promote collective agreements in framework conditions without having legislation on social dialogue in place. In a next programme it would be advised to share the potential for cooperation with Norway that has in the actual Frame work Agreement that "1% of the total amount shall be set aside for a fund for the Promotion of Decent Work and Tripartite Dialogue". (Source: Framework Agreement Norway – Romania 2014-2021).

**Conclusions and lessons on RA:**

- Mobilization of complementary Swiss competencies and specific knowledge of Swiss partners was the key strategic aim of the RAs. While this was clearly the case in one of the RAs of the sample (WWF) it was less the case in the second example, where Solidar encountered problems to mobilize e.g. the interest of Swiss entrepreneurs to share their experience in social dialogue.
- The initial phase in setting up the RA absorbed more resources than expected as the modalities were not clear and the instruments (templates) were not in place. They were developed and several times adjusted.
- Good results were achieved and quality of reporting at the end was good.
- Mutual learning
- The RA approach has to be revised, if it should remain in the future. Basically the RA-approach consumed too much energy compared to its success. Clarity on objectives, instruments, rules and procedures (incl. audits) should be clarified at the very beginning.
- Having the Swiss partner KEK was helpful for its role as go-between the SDC and the implementers.

Overall the results of the two Funds in all approaches are good for reasons of high commitment of the executing agencies, of excellent coaching by SIB all along the process of implementation and its rapid response to problem solving requests.

**Overall conclusions and lessons on effectiveness**

- Flexibility and pragmatism at all levels are guarantees for reaching results in hostile dynamic contexts.
- Multiple approaches combined with diverse themes triggered innovation despite limited funds and ensured a wide scope of project profiles / NGO profiles.
- Concentration on a limited number of EAs: low acceptance rate among eligible beneficiaries (the programme addressed the «best performers» and nevertheless huge coaching was necessary. This raises the question on the needs of the “lower performers” that were not given a chance to implement a project. In a future phase the potential of “less performers” in administrative terms but with thematic expertise should be explored via specific call procedures and higher accent on the value added and innovation potential in the 1st phase of the evaluation
- Low budgets can produce impressive results.
- Splitting of tasks in SIB in selecting (CSDF) and coaching (all three SIBs) the EAs for the implementation of the projects was highly effective, with the Romanian IBs also punctually supporting the implementation of RAs, and KEK contributing to the coaching of non-RAs when this was needed.
- Reciprocal learning in functional CH-RO partnerships benefitted all stakeholders involved.
- Indirect approach on strengthening the voice of NGOs in the current context was most appropriate (enhances legitimacy to raise the voice).
- Prominent role of RAs in terms of absorption of financial funds (23% of total).
- Policy change: Response/non-response from public authorities (all level) affects the success.
- Too ambitious expectations in policy influencing of the Funds?

### 5.3 Efficiency

The use of funds was efficient: The Swiss party share from the grant amount was settled for maximum 49%, but, by the end of all projects, a share of 25 % from the total grant represented the Swiss share. (Co-financing: 15% in CSS and 13% in PF). This is due to the engagement of the Swiss partners on pro-bono basis, additional fund raising of the partners and on lower budgets than maximum allowed. (Source: End of phase report)

The SIB management triangle is unanimously seen as functional and effective. The three partners in the SIB are appreciated for their performance, flexibility; prompt reactivity when questions and problems asked for prompt answers; and their pragmatism in coaching the EAs beyond contractual provisions. This attitude of the SIB allowed for adjustments at the level of projects in order to reach results without changing the rules during the game.

While in the initial contacts for setting up the SIB the Romanian partners CSFD and REPF did not really see the necessity for having a Swiss sparring partner in the IB, this triangle approach including the Swiss partner KEK-CDC proved to be highly effective and resulted in high mutual appreciation of all three partners involved in the SIB. The spirit of convergence between the SIBs resulted in a mutual enrichment. KEK-CDC had the overall lead and managed the RA and assumed the role of the go-between with the SDC in Berne. KEK-CDC had also a leading role in developing adequate professional instruments such as the results framework matrix with result-orientation set-up for all projects. They allowed a systematic monitoring of the implementation at the EAs level.

CSFD selected all PFs and was managing the social themes of the Block grants and of the PF. REPF was managing the environmental themes of the Block grant and of the PF. All three invested extra efforts in coaching the EAs and for their capacity building. The projects had the opportunity to include up to 20% costs for capacity building activities but as this was not mandatory, the share was much lower in most of the projects.

The Social-Environment-Swiss triangle performed well in the period under review with the two thematic foci on environment and social. The question is raised on how the set up should look like when other themes should be in the focus.

This institutional set up allowed SDC to concentrate on the strategic steering. Furthermore it is to be noticed that the SCO Bucharest did not have the required resources for directly managing the two funds. The Steering Committee under the lead of the SCO did good strategic work. It had a very constructive support from the NCU representative from the Ministry of Finances; the representatives of the Ministry for Environment and the Ministry for Social Dialog were systematically invited, but they did not engage.

The SIB-approach further meant that the responsibility for the implementation of the Funds was with the SDC. This set-up guaranteed independency from Government. The support from SDC Berne was appreciated by the SIB as excellent throughout the whole process.

The required high standards in the audit procedures, meant as a measure for securing good and transparent use of the funds, is basically a legitimate requirement when dealing with public funds. It was however reported back to the evaluation, that different standards (SDC, Romanian) were a challenge for the SIB management and all in all excessively time consuming.

The Executing Agencies mentioned two specific issues that are making the implementation of the projects difficult. The procurement rules created a lot of administrative work for the Executing Agencies in the NGO Block Grant. Another issue was the demanding promotion and visibility Guidelines of the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme. To follow them was very time-consuming and complicated for the Executing Agencies.

#### **Lessons on efficiency:**

- High quality management is key for the success of the programme. The question if in future the Swiss part in the (S)IB is still needed remains open. If partnerships are promoted with equal prominence, Swiss know how should remain important.
- Capacity building needs for EAs absorbed more resources than planned. In a next phase extra-investments for capacity building measures and for coaching of EAs, especially if a chance will be given to organisations with low performances in the administrative field but with good thematic knowledge and know-how.
- Addressing the issue of aiming for policy change should be clarified in the calls.
- Participation and interest of the central decision-making bodies in the public administration was low. At the local level the interest and response was better, but not in all the projects. The role and involvement of the central decision-making bodies in the future set up must be carefully addressed in the planning phase, through more support awarded by the Steering Committee and the SIBs in this respect.
- Clarity on audit standards from the very beginning is necessary in order to prepare SIB and the EAs for efficient audits.

#### **5.4. Impact**

As stressed in the End of Phase Reports, it is difficult to have aggregated measures of outcome and impact of the Funds, as a result of heterogeneity and diversity of themes and types of projects funded. They stretch from general to specific and span across a wide spectrum of social and environmental services. Territorially, they have been implemented at different levels, national, regional, county, local, community. SIB labelled 12 CCS, 10 PF and 11 CSM projects as having national impact. The SIB tried to extract as much evidence as possible on outcomes and outputs and some of this evidence is presented in the End of Phase report and, very selectively, mentioned here as well. The issue of impact adds another additional difficulty, i.e. the well-known issue of attribution: how much of the changes triggered can be really ascribed to the interventions funded through the Funds?

The overall estimation of the evaluators is that the projects that they directly contacted (the case studies), as well as other similar projects from the overall portfolio that they learned about indirectly (though desk-review or contact with SIBs and the EAs within the case studies, sometimes involved in other projects as well as partners) created an impressive pool of innovative and high quality interventions in most of the relevant policy areas in the social and environment sectors. Since investment in innovation in Romania is so low in general (R&D expenditure in Romania was 67.1 PPS (Purchasing Power Standard – a conventional unit rendering the ability to buy the same amount of goods and services in each country) per inhabitant in Romania compared with 523.8 (in the EU in average), and in the CSO in particular (R&D expenditure in the non-profit sector in Romania was 0.1 PPS per inhabitant in Romania compared with 4.2 PPS in the EU in average). The relatively high number of 141 Swiss financed projects bringing fresh and more efficient

approaches could be highly relevant and important engine for development in Romania, although the rate of success in actually adopting and scaling up these initiatives cannot be quantified. For example 34 projects reported innovative approaches in providing social services for vulnerable groups or several projects reported specific innovative spirit in environment (CSM 11, CSM 09, CSM 19). It would be excellent, if the impact could be monitored. In order to measure impact in the next phase, baselines should be set up.

This can be done, for instance, via low cost preliminary external research on the indicators available at national and territorial level and their potential use and would have the additional benefit of grounding on data and guiding a more prominent accent on territorial equity.

Currently, the overall impact should be tentatively measured (or described via qualitative findings and case studies, when there are no available measures) against the following references:

- In respect with the Funds contribution to SRCP, the End of Phase Reports enumerate a series of areas where the projects financed brought valuable contributions.
- In terms of reinforcing the civil society, the Funds create an important buffer in the dependency of the CSO sector on funding either coming from the public budget or managed by the public authorities, although they are directed toward NGOs or public-private partnership (as in the case of the Structural Instruments). They also allow more bold idea who focuses on the substance of the social and environmental pressing issues (as one interviewer put it, the 'beneficial ideas' are supported).

It is difficult to report on the coverage /reach of the projects, and further think on the possible impact in the wellbeing of the beneficiaries. The End of Phase Reports offer some estimates, which are impressive taking into account the budget of the Funds:

- TF CSS: 269'367 people as direct beneficiaries and more than 2 million as indirect beneficiaries of the social projects; 45'881 people as direct beneficiaries and more than 2 million as indirect beneficiaries of the environmental projects.
- TF PF: 73'232 persons benefited of different levels: participants at trainings and workshops, participants to wider audience events/community events, beneficiaries/users of manuals, and visitors at the House of experiments.

However, this data offer only proxy evidence on the reach of the projects / Funds, as the beneficiaries are not monitored strictly (and double counting for instance can occur) in order to maintain the flexibility of financing and avoid ending up with the huge burdening of bureaucratic monitoring as in the case of the Structural Instruments.

The evaluation can safely assume that the Funds contributed to a decreasing of the international disparities (between Romania and the other EU countries) since in the absence of the Funds many interventions would not have been implemented at all or would have drawn from the internal sources of the more affluent EAs.

Regarding the intra-national reduction 'of economic and social disparities between the dynamic urban centres and the structurally weak peripheral regions within Romania', the funds report (outcome indicator in the logical framework):

- TF CSS: 16 social projects and 15 environment projects (half of the total financed under the environmental component) developed activities in the rural area, allocating 60% from their budgets for these activities

- TF PF: 14 grant projects developed activities in rural areas for increasing the access of rural population to the needed information and services, allocating approx. 80% from their total budgets.

This means more than a third of total projects. One of the challenges in having a higher share of projects /budgets /activities carried out in the rural area is the low level of activism in the rural environment (the same NGOs located in the urban area basically carry out these activities in many cases).

As far as the partnerships are concerned, a survey was carried out in December 2017 at the end of the implementation with generally very good perceptions of the entities involved (for instance, 90% of the survey respondents have stated to be in contact with the SRCP project partners after implementation, 38% very frequently). However, the evaluation found less positive evidence on these partnership, some of which had an ad-hoc nature in order to allow the access to funds. Beyond individual partnerships, the Romanian-Swiss cooperation in the CSO sector is considerably enriched as a result of the Funds, and many of the Romanian NGOs, especially those who are not branches of international organisations, profited greatly from accessing the Swiss expertise. (A total of 83 Romanian and 53 Swiss entities were actively involved in partnerships – End of Phase Report).

#### **Conclusions and lessons on impact:**

- Positive impact in terms of increased social and environmental “quality of life” seems resulting in most of the social and environmental projects. However the impact often remains at people’s life level (direct beneficiaries of social services) and can hardly be aggregated to a crystal clear impact statement such as “Swiss funded Thematic Funds enhanced Civil Society voice that resulted in better governance in Romania” which remains being the final overall aim of Civil Society Strengthening.
- Overarching objectives seem over-ambitious considering the amount of financing and number /reach of projects.
- However, considering the limitation discussed above, the long-term and fundamental changes brought about by some projects are evident, and our case studies, as well as the End of Phase Reports are plentiful in documenting cases of impacts at peoples’ life level and in profiling the inputs from the CS for designing policies.
- At the level of the Funds, the evaluation found that they triggered a considerable mass of innovative yet solid and sustainable projects, which would be drivers for development if scaled up.
- In order to have more reliable data on impact, a special study should be carried out, or a series of studies, offering baseline (unavailable in the previous phase)-mid-term and end-of-phase evidence.

#### **5.5 Sustainability**

Many of the EAs reached by the qualitative field-work were not totally dependent on funding through TF CSP and TF PF, while for some of them this was not even the predominant source of funds during the implementation period. In the case of the Retained Activity on Social Dialogue however the national partners’ activity and functioning was mainly depending on the project and there is a risk of institutional sustainability if no additional financing can be found.

All the interviewed persons intend to follow-up on the projects as far as the resources allow for it: (i) keep implementing the activities, when the nature of the interventions supported through the projects is permanent (e.g. palliative care, homecare teleassistance, strengthen the cohesiveness and representatives of the NGO sector in policy dialogue); (ii) extend the interventions in other localities and areas (certification of eco-friendly tourist accommodations); (iii) put sustained efforts into scaling up activities at national level (e.g. palliative care, social dialogue); (iv) invest into the implementation of national legislation drawing from the models created through projects (social dialogue law, homecare assistance law); (v) continue to ensure maintenance for the products and infrastructure newly developed (biking or walking trails).

The qualitative evaluation found that all the projects in the case study sample were continuing to carry out the main activities of the projects after projects' completion, some more intensively, others less intensively according to resources available (e.g. Social Dialog). The sustainability was ensured mainly from internal funds, and other grants. Some EAs have already started to market the products/services developed in the projects in order to ensure their self-funding (Adept), others are preparing to do it (Red Button), while some services are still delivered free of charge since they address vulnerable groups (Hospice - palliative care) and the funding is secured with internal resources, with attempts to potentially access other grants or other types of funding.

In some cases, public authorities took ownership of some of the activities developed through projects, via new laws for instance or changes at the level of service delivery. However, legislative provisions are important but they do not guarantee sustainability (the laws are not always thoroughly implemented).

We have found evidence on some sub-components of the projects being taken under local ownership and leadership, but this is not a widespread situation. In some case, the NGOs are reluctant in passing over the management of the services as they fear that it is too soon and inevitably there would be a drop in the quality of the services.

Several EAs and partners in the projects within the qualitative sample have plans to take the services developed in the framework of the Swiss funding a step further, and develop new ramifications. Most of these plans to build new services upon the foundation of existing ones are, once again, usually related with applications for other grants, but also other types of funding, such as private ones.

Evidence on replicability has also been found, some city halls manifesting their interest in implementing similar projects with the ones developed with Swiss Funds.

*For social services:* Sustainability is ensured mostly at the local level, where many of the projects were implemented and the EAs are active. As a result of unfavourable developments in national policy making, the strategic approach of many EAs seemed (according with interviews) to have focused on securing the collaboration of local authorities, drawing on the advantage of social services being largely decentralized. The EAs aimed and partly succeeded in securing the collaboration of local authorities which are relying on CSO to deliver good quality services for needs that are not otherwise served (the public sector does not have the capacity to cover these needs).

The design of the funds does not require follow-up monitoring after the projects have been concluded and this would be difficult to ensure.

Few EAs self-support their activities with economic activities. However, the structure of their budgets is very diverse: They access a variety of grants. Other complementary funds are

crowdfunding, consultancy for capacity building and advocacy, research consultancy, retail stores, others. The EAs are versatile in their capacity to access the scarce funds available.

The case study sample included two projects concerned with biking tracks but very different approaches: one project, namely the one carried out by ADEPT, was mainly focused on the technical side and the economic profitability of the track while the other, namely the one carried out by Mioritics, included many other layers, such as education activities and outreach of vulnerable groups. This comparison was very instructive as it showed that sometimes there is a trade-off at the level of planning between sustainability, more clearly ensured in the former case, and focus on vulnerable groups, more prominent in the latter case. However, the trade-off does not mean that the two sides are contradictory, as the project more focused on marketing the service became a vital resource for the economic and social development in the area.

Direct evidence from one of the PF funds included in the sample for qualitative assessment and indirect evidence about other projects developed by the interviewed EAs and their partners suggest that there are significant continuations of these collaborations in terms of new projects prepared for the next phase.

Some evidence about systemic change is available as well: changes in the way primary health services are delivered in some locations, changes in the way big infrastructure projects include “green” economy considerations.

#### Conclusions and lessons on sustainability:

- Generally, EAs apply with projects developing capacities, services, and goods that they intend to further use and, in this sense, the projects are regarded as pilot-phases, which also in some cases allow for setting up the infrastructure for the foreseen activities.
- Sometimes, there is trade-off in the planning phase between projects focused more on sustainability in economic terms and projects focused more on supporting extremely vulnerable groups. However, the trade-off does not mean that the two sides are contradictory /incompatible in the delivery /implementation phase, since the benefits of more sustainable projects can indirectly reach vulnerable groups as well.
- Despite several positive findings at the level of the projects approached during the evaluation, there is a structural problem in respect with sustainability on the long run if public authorities do not fully ensure their cooperation and take ownership.

#### 5.6. Implicit Theories of change

Theories of change	Realized?
<b>Thematic Fund CSP</b> Romanian NGOs are strengthened and enabled as recognised legitimate and active voice of civil society in policy processes through exemplar CSP projects that strengthen their profile and organisational capacities for tackling environmental issues and contributing to the provision of social services.	The Theory of change is only partly realized as the context changed so drastically for the NGOs that part of them switched to a survival modus and to resist against the worsening conditions in caring about own resilience.
<b>Thematic Fund PF</b> Institutional partnerships between Romanian and	The Theory of change is basically realized.

Swiss partners are enhanced and contribute to the solution of specific development challenges through exemplar PF projects that strengthen the competence and capacity of the Romanian institutional partners thanks to the support of Swiss partners that also benefit from mutual learning. Romanian and Swiss partners share the mutual interest of Civil Society Development through empowering of CSO.	The Swiss support was clearly an added value for the Romanian partners that addressed demands of citizens in need of support (social domain) or challenges in environment (nature protection). The institutional benefit for the Swiss partners seems less prominent, but at individual level the people involved feel enriched and motivated to further engaging in international cooperation.
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## 5.7 Strengths / Weaknesses / Lessons

Finally and in summary, the evaluation fixes following strengths and weaknesses for the programme:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Management quality of SIB and triangle competence Swiss (KEK-CDC) –Social (CSDF) - Environment (REPF)</p> <p>CSDF and REPF longstanding experience in grants management / re-granting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Steering Committee involvement and engagement in assuming the responsibility for the programme.</li> <li>- Quality of exchange and SDC-SCO-SIB and back.</li> <li>- Strengthening of citizens' voice as partner for dialog with the State through services (legitimacy, substance)</li> <li>- Environment and social are unproblematic themes that allow for success</li> <li>- Single projects showed excellent results with good power or potential for influencing policy.</li> <li>- Large thematic was appropriate for wide outreach in the first phase.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interest of Romanian Government concentrated on the absorption of the funds (the support of the Ministry of Finance was essential and a strong point but this was only one the aspects where the involvement of the public authorities was required)</li> <li>- Link Civil Society and State authorities did not really work.</li> <li>- Overall goal of CSS contrasts somehow with the manifold projects ("projectitis") : Where is the impact into the larger society and into the policy processes?</li> <li>- The portfolio of projects is too large and diverse for consistent overall impact in a specific sector (weak link to policy)</li> <li>- Focus on content / substance not always satisfying.</li> <li>- Service delivery through external financing makes local fundraising secondary and hinders local constituency</li> <li>- Bilateral relations often remained at very individual level much more than real institutional relations.</li> <li>- Link with public authorities could often not be established.</li> <li>- Parallel projects / similar projects without inter-links</li> </ul>
Lessons	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Networking effect among organisations that work in the same thematic area</li> <li>- In order to get legitimacy and strong voice, the way via service delivery is a good way. In future more explicitly link the service delivery with policy.</li> <li>- The variety of projects offers the opportunity to open doors for the economy</li> </ul>	

- Civil Society Strengthening addresses broad issues for improving quality of democracy process and quality of citizens' life.
- Think about having more sharp thematic clusters (e.g. Handicaps Cluster, Youth Cluster, ...)
- Need to more directly address governance issues and its consequences? Is there another way / alternative than "projectitis" for CSS?
- SDC to invest more in linking the NGOs with policy through supporting building of coalitions / consortiums.
- Build on and invest more where favorable politics and will are in place.
- More focus on content.
- Actively invest in bridging and linking to go one step more than the service.

### Summary on overall lessons:

- 1 High relevance of the two Swiss Thematic Funds as they closed gaps in responding to citizens' needs.
- 2 Block grants were a good modality for both Funds in selecting good performers. In the future the less performers (but thematic competent applicants) merit appropriate mechanism.
- 3 Addressing the issue of aiming for policy change should be clarified in the calls.
- 4 Controversial view on Retained Activities (Swiss in driver seat).
- 5 Flexibility and pragmatism at all levels are guarantees for reaching results in challenging contexts.
- 6 Multiple approaches combined with diverse themes triggered innovation despite limited funds and ensured a wide scope of project profiles / NGO profiles.
- 7 Performance of SIB was an important factor for success.
- 8 Limitation in aggregating outcomes for impact on the wider systems (society, sectors, and policy). Think about adequateness of the ambition and formulate accordingly the expectation.
- 9 In order to get legitimacy and strong voice, the indirect way via service delivery is a good way. In future think about more explicitly linking the service delivery with policy.
- 10 There is a structural problem in respect with sustainability on the long run if public authorities do not fully ensure their cooperation and take ownership.

## 6 Recommendations

Based on the lessons and conclusions of the critical review of the two Thematic Funds, the evaluators suggest SDC to consider the following recommendations (R) for a possible next programme under a second Swiss financed EU enlargement fund:

### Theme: Relevance of the theme Strengthening the Civil Society in Romania

- R1** Civil Society is an actor for development whatever the context is and we recommend SDC to further engage a Thematic Fund for CSS in Romania. Flexibility, reactivity, creativity and performance in managing projects are crucial assets in uncertain times. However we suggest SDC to select less and more precise subthemes (e.g. environment is too large) and to sharpen the formulation of expected results as changes in the wider context that the project should envisage.

### Planning for results

- R2** Plan better in sharpening the formulation of planned results and make the ambition for having a larger impact a selection criterion.
- R3** A clear mapping of needs and services should be available before releasing the next

financing.

- R4** Plan more organically and realistically the theory of change behind the overall intervention, with overarching goals more in line with the support awarded and linked with the outcomes yielded at project level. This should be done in such a way as to not encourage unrealistic planning at the level of projects, aiming for spectacular outcomes with rather modest means and activities.
- R5** Stress the synergies among the TFs CSP and PF and the other Swiss cooperation intervention. The needs for capacity building, for instance, are similar (or even greater) in the public sector, which is reached via other programmes.

### **Partnerships**

- R6** The approach for institutional partnerships Romanian-Romanian and Swiss-Romanian is an asset to continue. Continue the Partnership Fund, but investing more in preparation for good partnerships (be it SWISS-RO or RO-SWISS) in order to ensure shared mutual understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities.
- R7** In order to strengthen the Swiss added value through Swiss partners a pre-investment in searching for the best possible partnering is however needed, mainly when building new relations. Guarantee that the theme of the project is a core competence of the Swiss partner. Track record on experience in international cooperation should be a criterion.
- R8** Promote partnerships between experienced service provider NGOs with local administration to be replicated in regions with less capacities.

### **Block Grant versus Retained Activities**

- R9** Retained Activities were an adequate modality under the first enlargement fund mainly for Swiss internal policy reasons. For the Funds under the second enlargement fund we however suggest to concentrate on Block Grant approach by strengthening the Romanian initiative in partnering and to abandon the approach with prefixed retained activities under Swiss lead.
- R10** We strongly recommend to higher weighting the quality of the partners (commitment, thematic competence, management competence, cultural competence) and to explicitly plan a pre-investment phase for exploring the partnerships.
- R11** We recommend SDC to stay with the niche approach addressing important needs that are not yet covered. There is however potential for sharpening or focusing (e.g. health care for children, elderly; in remote areas, for left behind), without switching to a Programme Approach. The thematic areas should be established in such a way as to close gaps at the level of needs and areas that are not covered through other interventions (national policies + other financing programmes).

### **Address territorial inequities**

- R12** An additional preselection criteria system should focus on correcting the territorial inequities, insufficiently addressed in the previous phase as most of the NGO capacity was concentrated in large cities with prestigious academic institutions. Thus, a regional or urban/ rural quota would be beneficial but would have to be accompanied by a rethinking of evaluation criteria to give small and / or emerging NGOs a chance. We suggest SDC to identify and strengthen NGOs, Associations, Citizens movements that engage in Civil Society initiatives in geographic isolated areas of Romania and encourage grass-route aggregation of NGOS in the regions where the number of local NGOs is assessed as insufficient to address the relevant thematic topics.

**R13** Make an explicit effort to better reflect small urban centers.

### **Special focus on capacity building and training**

**R14** Capacity building has proven being key for most of the EAs in Romania and should be given more emphasis. Even successful and already performed Romanian partners (EAs) absorbed more resources for capacity building and for improving their management and thematic expertise than expected. We suggest SDC to add a capacity building component (incl. training) in the Partnership Fund approach explicitly addressing the concrete needs and according necessary resources for addressing them (15% - 25%)

**R15** Add an explicit capacity building component and budget line for the SIB that has to assume the capacity building of the EAs.

### **Special support for selective low performers**

**R16** Identify and strengthen selected NGOs that are low performers in administrative and management issues, but specifically motivated and innovative in their engagement for improving citizens' rights and citizens' life through a special call or as special setting in the ordinary calls. (E.g. experienced NGOs are mentoring less experienced NGOs. )

### **Institutional Set up SIB / IB**

The evaluators suggest SDC two options for the institutional set up in the next phase:

**R17** **Option SIB:** The institutional Set up with the three competences Swiss (KEK-CDC) - Social (CSDF) – Environmental (REPF) proved its excellence under phase 1 and opting for the same set-up stands for continuation and for putting into value the experience from phase 1 into phase 2. The evaluators think that this is a valid option in light of the Romanian political context evolution, with still challenging governance issues, and acknowledge it is supported by most of the stakeholders interviewed, including the IB.

**Option IB:** We however suggest SDC to also think on a next step to go in the institutional set up and to explore IB as a strategical option for the next phase and to willingly strengthening the Romanian bodies and enhancing their responsibility. We consider that Swiss expertise and support remains important, but not any longer in the form of leading the SIB, but in coaching and supporting the Romanian IB-bodies. This option would however enhance the involvement and workload for the SCO in Bucharest.

## Annex 1: TOR

## SRCP

## TF CSP &amp; PF External Evaluation

## Terms of Reference

**14.08.2018*****SDC, New EU Member States Division***

Abbreviations:	
FA	Framework agreement
TF	Thematic Fund
TFA	Thematic Fund Agreement
TF CSP	TF for Civil Society Participation
TF PF	TF Partnership Fund & Expert Fund (PF)
RA	Retained Activity
SIB	Swiss Intermediate Body
SCO	Swiss Contribution Office
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SRCP	Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme
NCU	National Coordination Unit
NGO	Nongovernmental Organisation
EA	Executing Agency
CSO	Civil Society Organization
PCM	Project Cycle Management
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
PCN	Project Completion Note
CHR	Conflicts and human Rights (SDC network)
DDLG	Democratisation, Decentralisation and local Governance (SDC network)

## Background information and context

In 2010, Switzerland committed to support the European Integration process in Romania through implementing several Thematic Funds under the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme (SRCP). In 2011, two bilateral Agreements were signed, one for the Thematic Fund “Civil Society Participation” (TF CSP) and one for the Thematic Fund “Partnership and Expert Fund” (TF PF). Both Funds have been implemented by the SIB consisting of KEK-CDC, the Civil Society Development Foundation (CSDF) and the Romanian Environmental Partnership Foundation (REPF). A first phase lasted from 1st of November 2011 until 31st of October 2014 and was then extended until end of October 2018.

The Funds are dedicated to both CSOs and public institutions, giving the opportunity of benefitting from Swiss expertise in various domains, from social and community involvement to education and culture.

### Main objective TF CSP

The general objective of the TF CSP is to promote the contribution of civil society organizations in Romania. It has been to strengthen Romanian NGOs and to enable their active participation in policy processes both as the voice of civil society and as a service provider and to promote activities of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) primarily tackling environmental issues, contributing to the provision of social services as well as allowing for strengthening their organizational capacities.

### Main objective TF PF

The objectives of the Partnership Fund (the Expert Fund was merged with the Partnership Fund in 2012) has been to promote and/or enhance institutional partnerships between Romanian and Swiss partners in order to contribute to the solution of specific development challenges, to strengthen the capacities and structures of the Romanian institutional partners, to benefit from Swiss added value and to contribute to the strengthening of the partnerships.

### Context

2017 was a challenging year for Romania even though the elections from December 2016 should have determined a calm political environment. Due to the proposals of the newly established government in the juridical area generated massive civic manifestations and street protests all over the country from January 2017 onwards. During 2017, Romania faced the change of two governments (2 prime-ministers and 2 governmental teams) and the tensions between the state powers – parliament, government and judicial system – determined a poor relation and low level of trusts between them. Moreover, due to these proposed changes, there is a real risk for the rule of law in Romania that is likely to influence the independence of the juridical system and its institutions.

As regards to the CSO sector, according to the information from the USAID Index for 2016<sup>2</sup>, both advocacy (from a score of 3.6 to 3.5) and public image (from a score of 3.8 to 3.7) improved in Romania, as cooperation with central government expanded, leading to a number of advocacy and lobby successes. Also, CSOs garnered a more active media presence and greater appreciation from the government. In 2016, civil society in Romania was focused primarily in the reformist agenda of the acting technocratic government, which had a mandate through the end of 2016 and included many former CSO experts and activists.

### Programme Investment

Since 2011, under the TF CSP 99 projects were financed with an overall allocation of CHF 14.6 mio. and under the TF PF & EF 42 projects were financed with an overall allocation of CHF 8.6 mio. (excluding management fees). The final absorption rate is estimated at around 98 % for the grants and Retained Activities together.

### Purpose of the evaluation

The activities of the TFs CSP and PF, as set by the respective TFAs, will be completed operationally by 30.10.2018 and formally by 06.12.2019. In November 2017, the Swiss Federal Council has expressed its willingness to renew the Swiss contribution to reducing economic and social disparities in certain EU member states and first exploratory discussions with Romania took

<sup>2</sup> Source: [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/CSOSI\\_Report\\_7-28-17.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/CSOSI_Report_7-28-17.pdf)

place in October 2017. The political process for renewing the Swiss contribution is on-going in Switzerland.

In preparing the potential second Swiss contribution, Switzerland intends to duly consider the results, the lessons learnt and the experiences made so far in the field of both civil society participation and partnership and the priorities in this domain.

In this context, a comprehensive independent evaluation is a must to better understand the relevance and impact as well as the effectiveness and sustainability of the interventions undertaken so far in the field of civil society participation and Swiss - Romanian partnership development.

More specifically, the purpose of the evaluation exercise is to:

**Assess the impact and results achieved by both TFs** thus contribute to the accountability towards stakeholders both in Romania and in Switzerland. This assessment shall stretch vertically across project level (case study projects), thematic funds at country level and overall Swiss Contribution. Moreover the evaluation should assess the disparities reduction through the Swiss Contribution projects.

**Assess the Swiss added value** - Apart from reflecting on attainment of initially set objective, the evaluation shall valorise (from an external point of view) on existing praxis (lessons learned) concerning aspects like policy dialog and enforcement, awareness rising and involvement, novelty of chosen approaches and last but not least added value of exchange/partnership and communication between Romanian and Swiss counterparts.

**Evaluate implementation set up and modalities of steering comprehensive portfolio** and propose, where feasible, justified adjustments.

**Suggest recommendations**, e.g. on whether interventions should be extended thematically and geographically, if a more focused programmatic approach is in general needed, which of the approaches Retained activities<sup>3</sup> or Block Grants are more effective.

**Learning purpose:** Identify good/poor practices and innovative approaches, generate lessons to be retained and draw recommendations in view of an eventual second contribution.

The stakeholders of the evaluation are the partner country constituencies (NCU, NGOs and authorities), the respective Executing Agencies and end beneficiaries, as well as the SIB, the Swiss partner organisations and the Swiss Embassies/SCOs and SDC.

#### **Scope and focus of the evaluation, key questions**

	<b>Level</b>	<b>Objective</b>
1	FA	Reduce Economic and Social Disparities between the Enlarged EU
2	TF CSP	Promote civil society's contribution as an important actor of development and participation in the areas of social services and environmental challenges; and to strengthen Romania's NGO sector and as the voice of civil society in policy processes
3	TF PF	Promote and/or enhance institutional partnerships between Romanian and Swiss partners in order to contribute to the solution of specific development challenges, strengthen capacities and structures of the Romanian institutional partners, benefit from Swiss added value, and contribute to the strengthening of the partnerships
4	Block Grant CSP	Strengthen Romanian NGOs and enable their active participation in policy processes as the voice of civil society as well as service provider and to promote activities of the civil society organisations tackling environmental issues, contributing to the provision of social services and allowing for strengthening their organisational capacities.
5	Block Grant PF	Promote and support existing and new partnerships between Romanian and Swiss associations and communities in planning implementing specific projects; offer specific Swiss expertise for Romanian institutions according to concrete demands.
6	Retained Activities	Every project defined and pursued its own objective(s)

<sup>3</sup> Five projects were already defined in the framework agreement

This evaluation focuses primarily on levels 4, 5 and 6. At the end, in aggregate form, the evaluation is expected to pronounce itself to which extent the RAs and Block Grants contributed to level 2 and 3. It is not expected that the evaluation provides a response to level 1 as this evaluation will not compare Romanian data to comparable ones of other EU countries.

The evaluation has to be conducted in adherence to the OECD-DAC (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee) evaluation criteria. It should clearly demonstrate the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, progress towards impact and sustainability of the TFs and the selected (case study) projects utilizing standard methodological approaches for conducting research and analysis (see below 5. Evaluation profile and methodology).

The evaluation should focus on the following criteria/ key questions:

**Relevance and added value:**

What is the general relevance of the TFs CSP and PF in the domestic context of Romania (national development plans and policies) and to the overall objectives of the Swiss contribution (Swiss EU Enlargement contribution, SRCP)?

What is the Romanian context (enabling environment) for civil society participation (regulatory environment, national policies, formal mechanisms/spaces for CS participation in policy processes, etc)? How does this influence the prospects of effective TFs?

To what extent the objectives of the TFs correspond to the priorities, the needs and the practical requirements of the country?

What are the synergies of the TFs CSP and PF with the support that the country receives in this field through EU or other funding sources (EEA/Norway for example)?

Is there a difference in the relevance between the RAs (predefined) in the Framework Agreement/Annex 4 and the Block Grants?

To what extent do partners and EAs regard the implemented projects as relevant?

Are the objectives of the TFs still valid in consideration with the actual country specific context?

**Results and effectiveness:**

To what extent have the objectives of the TFs been achieved in accordance with the target system of the two funds and at outcome level?

To what extent the (case study) projects implemented through the TFs contribute to policy dialogue and reform processes in the respective domains/subsectors (social services, environment)?

Which internal and external factors enhanced or hindered the performance of the TFs and results' achievement?

Which implementation instruments/approaches (Block grant versus Retained activities) (and their respective implementing agencies and partners) prove to be particularly effective?

Whether the Block Grant resources put at the disposal of Romanian entities did achieve the related defined outcomes?

Whether a mechanism of fund allocation to competing entities like these Block Grants was/is an effective tool for strengthening civil society in the past and current context or whether an alternative fund allocation mechanism, e.g. to preselected entities and networks for institutional strengthening or specific programmes, may produce more effective and durable results in terms of strengthening Romanian civil society.

How many new partnerships have been created between Swiss stakeholders and their counterparts from the country (Romania)? To what extent did these partnerships improve operational cooperation between counterpart organisations and their overall performance beyond the Swiss contribution and just project implementation? What are the most successful partnerships and main ingredients for this success? How sustainable are these partnerships?

What are the benefits of the partnerships for the Swiss partners regarding the cooperation with Romanian organisations?

**Efficiency:**

How efficient is the execution of the TFs in terms of operational implementation procedures and coordination?

How efficient is the portfolio management by the SIB (e.g. organizational set-up, financial and human resources allocation, local capacity etc.) and what are its contributions to an optimal achievement of results (at outcome and output level)?

How far is the SIB well-connected into the Swiss civil society?

What can be said regarding SIB's added value in bringing additional thematic expertise and facilitating synergies among projects of the TFs?

Is the relationship between input of resources and results achieved appropriate and justifiable?

What is the cost-benefit ratio?

Are there any alternatives for achieving the same results with less inputs/funds?

Would it be possible in the future to implement such TFs through the country system or Romanian organizations and without Swiss or international intermediate bodies?

#### **Impact:**

What is the impact (intended and unintended) of the TFs in the country in terms of social services improvement and environment awareness?

How far have the social disparities been reduced throughout the TFs and how can it be strengthened for an eventual next program?

#### **Sustainability:**

To what extent are the EAs (financially, personnel-wise and in terms of organisation) capable and prepared to maintain the positive results of the projects of the TFs without external support in the long term?

To what extent did the projects of the TFs strengthen local ownership and leadership? To what extent did the TFs contribute to strengthen the capacity of Romanian Civil Society to participate effectively in policy processes?

Which actions have been taken by the EAs to enhance the sustainability of their results?

To what extent were the interventions or approaches stimulated by the TFs exemplary or innovative and had a broad effect/impact in terms of leverage (e.g. replication among target groups and organisations) or policy influencing (e.g. systemic changes)?

How many follow-up activities have resulted from the new partnerships with Swiss entities? Do these partnerships continue to function after the implementation period of the TFs/projects?

The evaluation team shall complement their findings that are also based on the case study projects', and fill in the SDC's "Assessment grid for evaluation of project/programmes", Annex to this TORs.

At a general level, the evaluation should address the following **key questions**:

What were the major results and lessons learnt in the frame of the first Swiss Contribution?

In which sub-themes is the Swiss Contribution bringing added value: niche/complementarity with other EU/bilateral financial mechanisms, Swiss expertise, Swiss models and innovative approach?

What are the benefits for the Romanian government to continue working within the civil society sector?

Where is the Swiss comparative advantage (bringing expertise, models, innovative approaches and networks etc.) by supporting these both TFs?

What could be the mechanisms and set-up (implementation) modalities to increase a programmatic approach in the sector?

How could we better reach the remote areas (outreach)? How can the institutional support to the NGOs be better reinforced in order to become effective advocates in influencing decision-making actors?

#### **Evaluation Team**

The evaluation will be conducted by a mixed team of an external international (acting also as team leader) and a national experts. If needed the profile of the team leader can be reinforced by sharing his mandate between two experts at the condition that the time allocation is respected. On one hand, the external evaluators (1 international and 1 national) will bring in the review process an external perspective. On the other hand, the SDC network "Democratisation, Decentralisation and local Governance" advisors will bring institutional and thematic knowledge being fruitful for the review process and for further learning/dissemination/advisory for decision making within SDC for the topics of civil society participation, political dialogue and transparency. The SDC network will also link the evaluation to the broader discussion ongoing within SDC (and facilitated by the networks DDLG and CHR) on the closing space for civil society. Through the SDC network,

continuity and coherence beyond the strict process of evaluation has also better prospects, in particular in the frame of the preparation of a potential second Swiss contribution.

### **Competency profile of the evaluators**

The international expert has to have expertise in PCM and evaluation with experience in the CSO sector, with lead expertise in CSO (Swiss context) and knowledge on PCM and evaluation. For the Romanian context, he will be assisted by a local consultant. This expert will have complementary expertise in CSO field and the CSO context in Romania.

The **lead international expert** of the evaluation team, shall have the following qualifications and experience:

Excellent understanding of programmes and project management in the framework of international and bilateral cooperation, in particular in Eastern Europe;  
Excellent evaluation methodological skills and professional experience at the national/international level in CSO assessment/evaluation. Practical experience in community-based research is an asset.  
Excellent understanding of civil society organizations, civil society participation in policy processes;  
University degree in Political or Social Sciences, Development studies or a related field;  
Experience in evaluation process as team leader of a multidisciplinary and intercultural team;  
Excellent report writing skills (in English);

As head of the evaluation team and he/she will assume tasks of coordination, supervision of the quality of the process and timely submission and final redaction of the reports.

The **local/ national consultant** will have the following qualifications and experience:

Excellent understanding of the local context of Romanian (including what is related with the legal issues) and civil society.

University degree in Political or Social Sciences, Law, or a related field;

Professional experience in assessment/evaluation. Practical experience in community-based research is an asset;

Fluent in English with good report writing skills (in English).

The process of evaluation will be managed by the SDC new EU Member States Division and the Swiss contribution office in Romania. Consultants will be selected by SDC, based on the current TORs and upon invitation to present offers. The evaluation team will be contracted by the SIB.

### **Evaluation profile and methodology**

The External Evaluation shall use qualitative methods and draw both on primary key informants (for example through interviews with stakeholders including staff at the NCUs, the SCOs and the SIB and with the EAs, field visits, focus group discussions with project beneficiaries ) and secondary data collection methods (strategic documents, reports, policy briefs etc.).

At this stage, the Review methodology includes:

a desk study review and analysis of the TFs documentation covering the overall portfolio, complemented by the in-depth assessment of the selected case study projects and other review documentation (number of selected projects to determinate)

the submission of an inception report

a mission in Romania and the visit of selected case study projects

a series of key informant interviews and focus groups

interviews with a selection of Swiss partners,

the submission of a final/review report. Detailed content of the report and its annexes shall be presented and agreed upon during the inception phase and be part of the inception report.

While referring to the main (DAC) criteria at case study projects level the evaluation shall analyze project documentations like ProDocs, but also project reports.

It is expected also that the evaluation team will further elaborate on the evaluation methodology and instruments in the frame of the inception report.

This research and analysis approach will enable the evaluators to gather and cross-reference information and observations provided from Romanian policies, project partners, beneficiary users and other stakeholders, both in Romania and in Switzerland.

The criteria for and the subsequent selection of the sample of **projects in Romania** and for in-depth assessment was undertaken based on the following criteria:

Thematic balance: Selected projects need to cover the 2 thematic sub areas of the TFs; Institutional

balance: Selected projects need to reflect different types of projects partners;

Success balance: Selected projects must cover the range from successfully implemented to projects that faced difficulties (as per assessment of SIB, SCO and SDC).

The projects will be selected jointly by the SCO and the SIB following the criteria described above at a later stage.

### Deliverables

The following deliverables will be expected:

**Inception report** (to be submitted 3 weeks prior to missions in Romania) with the following content (in English, max 10 pages without annexes) is expected from the review team:

Their understanding of and comments on the scope of the evaluation (Terms of Reference);

How the review methodology shall be further complemented and which tools will be used to analyse causal relationships in answering the key review questions (complements and optimisation);

How the review process will be shared within the review team (respective roles, responsibilities and tasks);

Draft content of the final report with elaborate 2 TFs

Draft mission programme in Romania;

Initial findings based on desk review;

Consolidated feedback on this inception report will be given by SDC, SCO and SIB prior to the review missions.

**Final report:** Detailed content of the report and its annexes shall be presented and agreed upon during the inception phase and be part of the inception report.

### Schedule and timeframe

The assignment consists of 20 working days in total for the international expert.

The tentative time allocation for the evaluation is as follows:

Task	Time allocation in days	Place
Document review	4	Origin
Develop evaluation methodology and tools	1	Origin
Field visit, meetings, interviews	7	Romania
Interviews with Swiss stakeholders and partners	3	Switzerland
Elaboration and presentation of draft report	3	Origin
Elaboration of final report	2	Origin
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	

The timeframe and the milestones are planned as follows:

Setting up the mandate : September 2018

Document review: September – October 2018

Develop evaluation methodology and tools: September – October 2018

Field visit, meetings, interviews: October - November 2018

Elaboration and presentation of draft report: November 2018

Elaboration of final report: December 2018

Management response: January 2019

### Documentation

Main resources:

FAs, TFAs for TFs in RO

Credit proposals & projects documents;

Where available Project completion reports & PCN,

Project Reports of case study projects, etc.

## Annex 2: Documents consulted

### Switzerland – Romania

Framework Agreement between the Swiss Federal Council and the Government of Romania concerning the Implementation of the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme to reduce economic and social disparities within the enlarged European Union. September 2010.

Annexes 1-5 to the FA

### SDC

Framework Agreement + Annexes

The Swiss Enlargement Contribution Interim report for the end of the commitment period in Bulgaria and Romania 2009–2014 (SDC and SECO)

### SIB

End of Phase reports (final reports) on Block Grant TF CSP, TF PF, Retained Activities

Annual Reports

Project documentation from wiki-kek database

### Executive Agencies

Final Reports from all EA in the sample

### Norway / EEA

Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 for ROMANIA

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NORWEGIAN FINANCIAL MECHANISM 2014-2021 between THE KINGDOM OF NORWAY, and THE GOVERNMENT OF ROMANIA.

EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2012 for Romania: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EEA FINANCIAL MECHANISM 2014-2021 between ICELAND, THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN, THE KINGDOM OF NORWAY, and THE GOVERNMENT OF ROMANIA.

**Annex 3: List of people interviewed**

<b>Swiss Administration</b>		
Dafflon Maryline	SDC, Desk Romania, responsible for the evaluation.	Briefing 04 October 2018 15.00-16.30 SDC Bern Inception Report Discussion 29 October 2018, 15.30-17.30 SDC Bern Debriefing 20 December 2018 14.00-16.00 SDC Bern
Papageorgiou Trippolini Melina	SDC, Coordinator Network DDLG	
Thomas Stauffer	Head of SCO RO 2010-2016 SteeCom CSP member	Interview 17 October 2018 13.30-15.00
Ueli Stürzinger	Head of Division, New EU Member States (SDC) 2012-2016	Interview 29. October 2018 10.30-12h00, Berne
Thomas Krajnik	Desk Romania 2013-2017	Interview 2 November 2018, 10h00-11h30, SDC Berne
<b>SIB</b>		
Dieter Zürcher	SIB Lead, KEK consultants "Dieter Zürcher" zuercher@kek.ch	Interview 24 October 2018 10.15-11.30, KEK Zürich
Ionut Sibian, Director Irina Bejan Marian Bojinca Anca Nicovescu	CSDf, Bucureşti, Romania	Briefing session at SCO, 19 November 2018 Followed by bilateral interviews 19 November 2018 Debriefing session at SCO, 26. November 2018
Laszlo Potozky, Director Kovács Katalin Csilla Daniel	REPF, Miercurea Ciuc, Romania	Interviews 23 November 2018 12.00-16.00
<b>Swiss Project Partners Retained Activities and PF</b>		
Cyrrill Rogger (RA Social Dialog)	Solidar Suisse, Desk Southeast Europe, Zürich	Interview 8 November 2018 10.30-12.00, Solidar, Zürich
Andrea Beckmann WWF DCP, Valerie Passardie WWF CH RA Natura 2000 and Rural Development	WWF DCP (Danube Carpathia Programme)  WWF Switzerland was a partner.	Skype Interview A. Beckmann 11.00-12.00 Wednesday, 5 December 2018 Telefon Interview Valerie Passardi Wednesday, 5 December 2018. 17.00-18.00
Ramon Casanovas PF 14	Naturfreunde Schweiz, Bern Mitglied Geschäftsleitung	29. November 2018, 10.30-11.00 Telefoninterview
Pietro Cattaneo PF 15	Swiss Hiking Trail Federation (Schweizer Wanderwege), Bern	Telefoninterview 16 November 2018 14.00-15.00
Dr.med. Florian Strasser PF 05	Kantonsspital St.Gallen	Telefoninterview 29 November 2018 18.00-19.30
<b>SCO</b>		
Roland Python	Head of SCO RO since 2016	Debriefing 26 November 2018 Additional bilateral exchange
Marie-Louise Stoicescu	National Programme Officer, SCO	Briefing 19 November 2018 Bilateral Interview Debriefing 26 November 2018
<b>Executing Agencies Romania (Case studies)</b>		
Daniela Mosoiu PF 05 Oana Predoiu CSS 09 and	Hospice Casa Sperantei Foundation Brasov	See Programme of Visits
Mariana Lacramioara Oancea Mariouara Ivan Emil Barsan CSS 34	White Yellow Cross Foundation Romania, Bucharest	See Programme of Visits

Corina Mighiu CSS 02 and CSS 56	Save the Children Association, Iasi	Skype interview 3 December 2018, 10.00-11.30
Diana Chiriacescu, Coordinator CSS 59	The VOICE of NGO! Bucharest	See Programme of Visits
Mihai Dragomir, Coordinator Florentina Florescu Cristina Iliescu CSM 16	Miroritics Association, Brasov	See Programme of Visits
Bogdan Papuc, Project Manager CSM 28 Andrei Blumer, Director AER Erika Stanciu, Propark	Association of Ecotourism in Romania (AER), Brasov	See Programme of Visits
Cristi Gherghiceanu, Coordinator Ben Mehedin, President ADEPT PF 14	ADEPT Foundation, Mures	See Programme of Visits
Marcel Sofariu, President / Coordinator Ioan Butnar, Vicepresident PF 15	Transylvanian Carpathian Tourist's Association, Brasov	See Programme of Visits
Rodica Novac, Programm Manager Catalin Claudiu Hoinarescu, Vice- President Connect RA	Conect-Romania, Bucharest	See Programme of Visits
Carmen Padurean, Project Manager Laura Istrate, Propark Doru Banaduc, Ecotour RA	WWF-DPC, Brasov	See Programme of Visits
<b>Public Administration</b>		
Raluca.Girnită	Ministry of Finance, member of NCU	Written feedback
Angelica Saviescu, Advisor	Ministry of Labour and Social Justice, Bucharest	See Programme of Visits
Otilia Pop, Advisor	General Secretariat of Government	See Programme of Visits

## Annex 4: Programme of the mission

Monday, Nov. 19th (Bucharest)	Tuesday, Nov. 20th (Bucharest in the morning and leaving for Brasov)	Wednesday, Nov. 21st (Brasov)	Thursday, Nov. 22nd (Brasov and leaving for Saschiz)	Friday, Nov. 23rd (Miercurea Ciuc, & Bucharest)
9.00-14.00 <b>Briefing at SCO</b> Marie-Louise Soicescu, NPO Ionut Sibian, FDCS (Director) Irina Bejan, FDCS Anca Nicovescu, FDCS Marian Bojinca, FDCS  <b>FDCS</b> Bilateral interview Marie Louise Stoicescu, NPO  Bilateral interview Ionut Sibian, Director CSDF	9.00-11.00 Fundatia Crucea Alb-Galbena Romania/ White Yellow Cross Foundation Romania <b>(CSS 34 Red Button)</b> Mariana Lacramioara Oancea Marioara Ivan.Emil Bârsan	9.00-11.00 WWF-DPC <b>(RA Natura 2000 &amp; Rural Devl)</b> Carmen Padurean (project manager) Laura Istrate (Propark) Doru Bănăduc (Ecotour)	Team Discussion/ Team Work	Travelling to Miercurea Ciuc
	11.30-13.30 Conect-Ro & Solidar CH <b>(RA Social Dialogue)</b> Rodica Novac, Project Manager Cătălin Claudiu Hoinărescu, Vice-president Connect	11.00-13.00 Miroritics Association <b>(CSM 16 Ecotourisme)</b> Mihai Dragomir Florentina Florescu Cristina Iliescu	11.00-13.30 Fundatia Hospice Casa Sperantei <b>(CSS 09 and PF 05)</b> Daniela Mosoiu Oana Predoiu (Visit of the Hospice)	12.00 – 16.00 <b>REPF</b> Potozky László, Director Csilla Daniel Kovács Katalin
	13.45-15.00 Otilia Pop SGG (at FDCS)	13:30 – 15.30 Association of Ecotourism in Romania AER <b>(CSM 28)</b> Bogdan Papuc (project manager) Andrei Blumer - AER Erika Stanciu - Propark	Travelling to Saschiz	
FDCS Bilateral interview Irina Bejan, Coordinator	15.00-15.45 Marian Bojinca, Programm Manager FDCS	16.00-18.00 Transylvanian Carpathian Tourist's Association (PF 15) Marcel Sofariu (Project Manager) Ioan Butnar (vicepresident)	15:30 – 18.00 ADEPT Foundation <b>(PF 14)</b> Cristi Gherghiceanu, Project manager Ben Mehedin	Travelling back to Bucharest
15:30 Ministry of Labour and Social Justice Angelica Săviescu Advisor	15.45-17.30 Federation of NGOs for Social Services – FONSS <b>(CSS 59 Voice of NGO!)</b> Diana Chiriacescu, Coordinator  <i>Travel to Brasov (3 hours)</i>			
Bucharest Hotel Double Tree	Brasov Residence Hirscher	Brasov Residence Hirscher	Saschiz Cloasterf House	Bucharest Hotel Double Tree

## Annex 5: Evaluation questions and answers

\*<http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

Evaluation questions from TOR	OECD DAC definition* / Answers of the evaluators
<b>Relevance and added value: The relevance and added value in the context of Romania (needs, demand, absorption capacity),</b>	
1) What is the general relevance of the TFs CSP and PF in the domestic context of Romania (national development plans and policies) and to the overall objectives of the Swiss contribution (Swiss EU Enlargement contribution, SRCP)?	<p>Several national strategies 2014/2015-2020 (e.g. Social Inclusion Strategy, sectorial strategies in health, education) stress the importance of participation of civil society through specific objectives. A series of changes in the policy context led to toughened perspectives for policy dialogue engaging CSOs and this is reflected in a shift in relevance: strengthening civil society should be understood more in terms of building resilience (relevance not diminished but changed).</p> <p>Swiss Funds are one of the main sources of funds for NGOs and preferred over other more bureaucratic options (Structural Instruments).</p> <p>Funds contribute directly or indirectly to several overall objectives of the Swiss contribution (Swiss EU Enlargement contribution, SRCP) directly or indirectly, but quantitative measures are not available (see report, section on impact, for a more detailed account on the contribution).</p>
2) What is the Romanian context (enabling environment) for civil society participation (regulatory environment, national policies, formal mechanisms/spaces for CS participation in policy processes, etc)? How does this influence the prospects of effective TFs?	<p>The context is threatening to pose challenges to the implementation and already affected some of the more recent projects; however, there is evidence for successful coping strategies of the CSOs, such as focus on cooperation with local authorities and on service delivery, as a means for policy dialogue (indirect approaches).</p> <p>The regulatory changes reflected in shrinking opportunities for the NGOs to get financing at national level are a serious challenge. The representatives of SIBs (which are more capable of comparative assessments than many EAs) and representatives of regional NGOs assess the situation in Romania as more favorable than in some other countries in the larger region and estimate that the prospects for success are not fundamentally damaged as long as the management stays with the NGO sector</p>
3) To what extent the objectives of the TFs correspond to the priorities, the needs and the practical requirements of the country?	<p>The needs in terms of social exclusion, environmental problems and gaps in service provision are still large at country level and most projects address them with substantial interventions;</p> <p>In the aforementioned strategies, many of the themes and sub-themes) are set as priorities.</p> <p>Also, one of the few funds encouraging social innovation, quasi-absent as a theme and drastically sub-financed at national level</p>
4) What are the synergies of the TFs CSP and PF with the support that the country receives in this field through EU or other funding sources (EEA/Norway for example)?	<p>Swiss Funds fill gaps left by larger funding (Structural Instruments and national) in terms of financing timeframes and themes /types of projects financed: larger funds are aimed mainly at developing the hard infrastructure not the soft one.</p> <p>Several EAs manage already EU or / and EEA Funds. Comparative assessments in favour of Swiss funds, considered more reactive, flexible and grantee-friendly, all in the framework of emphasis placed on results and outcomes rather than procedures and outputs.</p> <p>Some EA manage already EU or / and EEA Funds. Explicit synergies mainly where "big players" like the WWF are executing the projects.</p>
5) Is there a difference in the relevance between the RAs (predefined) in the	No, they address both highly relevant themes. The difference is mainly in terms of funding budgets and approach

Framework Agreement /Annex 4 and the Block Grants?	
6) To what extent do partners and EAs regard the implemented projects as relevant?	Without any exception as highly relevant
7) Are the objectives of the TFs still valid in consideration with the actual country specific context?	Yes
<b>Results and effectiveness: will be assessed at outcome level in Romania as well as the benefits for the Swiss partners, and explore potential alternatives in approach and set up (if needed)</b>	
8) To what extent have the objectives of the TFs been achieved in accordance with the target system of the two funds and at outcome level?	Activities and outputs are well documented. Changes at outcome level are less well documented at project level, but nonetheless achieved (see table outcomes in chap. 5.2); in order to see that, post-hoc formulation of outcomes were possible. At TF level, there are difficulties in aggregating results, especially outcomes. However, there is a widespread consensus among stakeholders that TFs contribute decisively to the enhanced capacity of CSO sector for responsiveness to (i) social and environmental problems, (ii) policy developments; A wide pool of innovative and independently shaped solutions and interventions available as potential engine for development
9) To what extent the (case study) projects implemented through the TFs contribute to policy dialogue and reform processes in the respective domains/subsectors (social services, environment)?	Outcomes are not improved policy dialogue, but the strengthening of the civil society's voice through services and coalitions is the condition for influencing policy change. There are concrete successes of project in contributing to the formulation of new ordinances, new laws, influencing policy-making, as there are also evidences on failures at project level in reaching policy dialogue objectives (as well as relapses in some domains /sub-sectors, although usually not related directly with project objectives).
10) Which internal and external factors enhanced or hindered the performance of the TFs and results' achievement?	The internal factors, i.e. management set up and the compenence of the SIB triangle, as well as approach of the TFs, are generally regarded as highly functional and interviewees recommend only incremental approach on management of potential next phases. This allowed also SDC to concentrate on steering. An internal challenge was the limited capacity for reporting of the EAs even in the more grantee-friendly framework of the TFs (compared with other funds); this was settled through constant coaching from SIBs. Hindering external factors: limited availability of national (TFs steering level and at level of projects concerned with national interventions) and local level cooperation from decision-makers; however, in both cases several examples showed that cooperation is possible and beneficial.
11) Which implementation instruments/approaches (Block grant versus Retained activities) (and their respective implementing agencies and partners) prove to be particularly effective?	The evaluation found no significant difference in effectiveness between RAs and BGs, although the objectives and financial support were available at scale. However, there are examples of projects supported by small funds achieving remarkable results, as well as larger funding not being a guarantee for success. The evaluators estimate that TFs distribution and equity would be improved if the next potential funding would be delivered exclusively via block-grants (with the potential to access larger amounts for systemic changes but on competition basis).
12) Whether the Block Grant resources put at the disposal of Romanian entities did	All the projects reviewed via rapid assessment were assessed as achieving their results by SIBs; the case studies achieved their results at the level of outputs (and even surpassed the set targets).The results

achieve the related defined outcomes?	in terms of outcomes are less systematically documented but the evaluation established for each project of the sample specific outcomes (ex-post formulation).
13) Whether a mechanism of fund allocation to competing entities like these Block Grants was/is an effective tool for strengthening civil society in the past and current context or whether an alternative fund allocation mechanism, e.g. to preselected entities and networks for institutional strengthening or specific programmes, may produce more effective and durable results in terms of strengthening Romanian civil society	<p>The competition was effective and resulted in the Swiss Funding attracting best performing NGOs as EAs (however, some of them still have capacity deficits); as such, it maximized impact in the context of limited funding.</p> <p>However, pre-selection criteria should be pondered more in terms of strengthening the territorial equity: rural /urban and regional (not in picking certain intervention areas /certain NGOs, which comes with the inherent disadvantage of causing some frustration among eligible NGOs who did not have the chance to be selected).</p>
14) How many new partnerships have been created between Swiss stakeholders and their counterparts from the country (Romania)? To what extent did these partnerships improve operational cooperation between counterpart organisations and their overall performance beyond the Swiss contribution and just project implementation?	<p>In total 80 Romanian entities (638 Romanian people) and 51 Swiss entities (Swiss people) were actively involved in developing partnership relations in the frame of the TF PF.</p> <p>Most of the partnerships were newly established, since only residual partnerships still exist as a result of historical cooperation programmes.</p> <p>The evidence on the functionality is mixed: some partnerships were functional and yielded results beyond project level while others were more ad-hoc and conjunctural</p>
15) What are the most successful partnerships and main ingredients for this success? How sustainable are these partnerships?	<p>The most successful partnerships have been established through the projects where significant resources were invested via the projects in collaborative actions /not just complementary. In these cases, the partners sat together, designed and ensured the implementation of the projects jointly.</p> <p>Genuine interests of the Swiss entities and solid roles in the projects have to be secured.</p> <p>A more thorough preparation of partnership should ensure a greater rate of success.</p>
16) What are the benefits of the partnerships for the Swiss partners regarding the cooperation with Romanian organisations?	<p>In the case of successful partnerships, the Swiss partners learned soft management skills and adaptive strategies of coping in adverse circumstances.</p> <p>The Swiss partners heavily involved in the delivery of projects ended up in redefining /adjusting their own strategies and working methods as a result of transferring their experience into less familiar contexts.</p>
<b>Efficiency: Assess the use of the resources (management, finances, networks) and the input-output-ratio</b>	
17) How efficient is the execution of the TFs in terms of operational implementation procedures and coordination?	<p>The two Funds were implemented in a more flexible manner than the European Instruments or other national programmes, with more scope for the applicants to define the objectives and target groups by themselves and also allowing for mid-term readjustments of the projects. In this way, creative projects that didn't fit into the framework of pre-existing or alternative funding managed to source their funding through this unique type of support provided by the two TFs.</p> <p>A part of the EAs didn't resort to other available funding, while the</p>

	<p>projects seem to have mobilized most of their human resources (no other alternatives were preferred).</p> <p>The absorption rates of both Funds are high (and will reach 100% after the additional capitalization/communication of the Funds).</p>
18) How efficient is the portfolio management by the SIB (e.g. organizational set-up, financial and human resources allocation, local capacity etc.) and what are its contributions to an optimal achievement of results (at outcome and output level)?	Highly efficient. They invested more resources than planned for coaching and monitoring of the EAs.
19) How far is the SIB well-connected into the Swiss civil society?	KEK-CDC is part of the Swiss civil society network exchanges.
20) What can be said regarding SIB's added value in bringing additional thematic expertise and facilitating synergies among projects of the TFs?	<p>Spirit of convergence among the three entities.</p> <p>The practice of internal/external management set up is planned to be infused into EEA funds (managed in RO by the same entities)</p> <p>SIB was composed of the best performing Romanian Foundations in the respective themes; KEK-CDC added value in project planning, management and reporting.</p>
21) Is the relationship between input of resources and results achieved appropriate and justifiable? What is the cost-benefit ratio?	The evaluation did not calculate the cost-benefit ration, but was told and has testimony that much more Human Resources were invested for coaching of the EAs in order to assuring that the projects come to a good end and produced the expected results.
22) Are there any alternatives for achieving the same results with less inputs/funds?	For achieving the same results, even more Human Resources are to be planned and also an additional budget line for capacity building.
23) Would it be possible in the future to implement such TFs through the country system or Romanian organizations and without Swiss or international intermediate bodies?	The evaluation is of the opinion that yes, this is possible. We however advise to bring in Swiss expertise and know-how. The formula can be on contractual base for coaching, training, and consultancy.
<b>Impact in the larger Romanian society</b>	
24) What is the impact (intended and unintended) of the TFs in the country in terms of social services improvement and environment awareness?	<p>The impact in terms of increased social and environmental security seems evident and positive as documented by qualitative research but there are very few quantitative indicators highlighting the impact.</p> <p>Overarching objectives seem over-ambitious considering the amount of financing and number /reach of projects.</p> <p>However, considering the limitation discussed above, the long-term and fundamental changes brought about by some projects are evident, and our case studies, as well as the End of Phase Reports are plentiful in documenting these impacts.</p> <p>At the level of the Funds, the evaluation found that they triggered a considerable mass of innovative yet solid and sustainable projects, which would be drivers for development if scaled up.</p> <p>In order to have more reliable data on impact, a special study should be carried out, or a series of studies, offering baseline (unavailable in the previous phase)-mid-term and end-of-phase evidence.</p>

<p>25) How far have the social disparities been reduced throughout the TFs and how can it be strengthened for an eventual next program?</p>	<p>It can be safely assumed (although scarcely documented with data) that the Funds contributed to a decreasing of the international disparities (between Romania and the other EU countries) since in the absence of the Funds many interventions would not have been implemented at all or would have drawn from the internal sources of the few more affluent CSOs. In respect with the intra-national reduction 'of economic and social disparities between the dynamic urban centres and the structurally weak peripheral regions within Romania', the funds report (outcome indicator in the logical framework):</p> <p>TF CSS: 16 social projects and 15 environment projects (half of the total financed under the environmental component) developed activities in the rural area, allocating 60% from their budgets for these activities</p> <p>TF PF: 14 grant projects developed activities in rural areas for increasing the access of rural population to the needed information and services, allocating approx. 80% from their total budgets. This means around a third of total projects. One of the challenges in having a higher share of projects /budgets /activities carried out in the rural area is the low level of activism in the rural environment (the same NGOs located in the urban area basically carry out activities in the rural environment as well).</p>
<p><b>Sustainability in maintaining the positive results and further outreach and follow-up activities.</b></p>	
<p>26) To what extent are the EAs (financially, personnel-wise and in terms of organisation) capable and prepared to maintain the positive results of the projects of the TFs without external support in the long term?</p>	<p>All the interviewed representatives of EAs (case studies) intend to follow-up on the projects:</p> <p>(i) keep implement the activities, when the nature of the interventions supported through the projects is permanent (e.g. palliative care, homecare teleassistance, strengthen the cohesiveness and representatives of the NGO sector in policy dialogue);</p> <p>(ii) extend the interventions in other localities and areas (certification of eco-friendly tourist accommodations);</p>
<p>27) To what extent did the projects of the TFs strengthen local ownership and leadership? To what extent did the TFs contribute to strengthen the capacity of Romanian Civil Society to participate effectively in policy processes?</p>	<p>(iii) put sustained efforts into scaling up activities at national level (e.g. palliative care, social dialogue);</p> <p>(iv) invest into the implementation of national legislation drawing from the models created through projects (social dialogue law, homecare assistance law);</p> <p>(v) continue to ensure maintenance for the products and infrastructure newly developed (biking or walking trails).</p>
<p>28) Which actions have been taken by the EAs to enhance the sustainability of their results?</p>	<p>Some projects market results in order to self-fund them evidence on some sub-components of the projects being taken under local ownership and leadership, but this is not a widespread.</p>
<p>29) To what extent were the interventions or approaches stimulated by the TFs exemplary or innovative and had a broad effect/impact in terms of leverage (e.g. replication among target groups and organisations) or policy influencing (e.g. systemic changes)?</p>	<p>EAs are versatile in their capacity to access the scarce funds available in order to support activities central for their mandate (and the Swiss funded projects are in this category)</p>

30) How many follow-up activities have resulted from the new partnerships with Swiss entities? Do these partnerships continue to function after the implementation period of the TFs/projects?	
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**Additional questions:**

What are the benefits for the Romanian government to continue working within the civil society sector?	A large part of the service provision is ensured by SC sector (sectoral examples given in the report); they are in many cases at a high quality (although usually in limited areas). The mission of CSO as policy dialogue partner is still very well understood in some parts of the decision making arena. Better understanding the needs through the NGOs that really give a voice to civil society. Several strategies and legislative provisions profited from CSOs expertise.
Where is the Swiss comparative advantage (bringing expertise, models, innovative approaches and networks etc.) by supporting these both TFs?	The Swiss comparative advantage is at the level of expertise and models, but also innovative approaches (under-financed in Romania).
What could be the mechanisms and set-up (implementation) modalities to increase a programmatic approach in the sector?	A clearer theory of change and baseline values measuring expected results Currently, there is a gap between overarching goals of the programme, on one side, and volume of funding overall /for each eligible project, and the outputs achieved at the level of projects, on the other side. A more organic theory of change should ensure the link between these levels. Increase the emphasis on outcomes, as means for accountability and learning, and also promotion of the projects /TFs
How to better reach the remote areas (outreach)?	Quotas could be imposed as a preselection criteria, on area of residence and /or regional level, but they have to be accompanied with more funding made available for grassroots establishment and consolidation of CSOs, since in some regions solid and independent NGOs are barely available.
How can the institutional support to the NGOs be better reinforced in order to become effective advocates in influencing decision-making actors?	Invest in raising the capacity for advocacy of the NGOs. Continue to support federations and alliances of the CSOs in order to have major players and more structured input at national level (some representatives of the central Government voiced this need) . Better services means higher legitimacy and advocacy leverage, hence service improvement is an indirect way of enhancing perspectives for policy dialogue. Build on the success of the projects that successfully reached local and county layers of the decision making arena.

## Annexe 6: Swiss partners in the TF PF

## Swiss Partners in projects of Partnership Fund

First Call		Applicant RO	Swiss Partner	Small/ big
PF 01	Partnership for a better home care service in Brasov	Pro Vita Association	Luzerner Rumanienhilfe	
PF 02	Transfer of professional expertise in the field of "kinaesthetics in the care"	Association Caritas Alba Iulia - Homecare	Stiftung Lebensqualität	
PF 03	A model of partnership and mobile services for poor rural communities	Community Support Foundation	Espoi Roumanie	
PF 04	Look at abilities, forget incapacity - Implementation of the International Clasification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) in social inclusion services for Romanian wheelchair users	Motivation Romania Foundation	Swiss Paraplegic Research	
PF 05	Overcoming disparities in access to quality basic palliative care in the community	"Hospice Casa Sperantei" Foundation	Cantonal Hospital St Gallen	big
PF 06	Support to voluntary firemen in Romania within the network of the OVR Association	National Association of Romanian Committees and Villages OVR	Operation Villages Roumains - Swiss coordination (OVR-CH)	
Pf 07	Technology transfer through visibility and mentorship	Romanian Institute of Science and Technology	Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne, Technology Transfer Office	
PF 08	Diversis workshop - social economy entity	Foundation for Abandoned Children	Verein zur Unterstutzung verlassener Kinder in Rumanien Stiftung Wendepunkt	
PF 09	Adapted physical activities for social inclusion	Special Olympics Foundation Romania	Special Olympics Switzerland University of Lausanne	

PF 10	Bacau and Lugano - teaching informatics for a sustainable society	Vasile Alecsandri University Bacau	Universita della Svizzera italiana	
PF 11	Sighisoara Music Academy	Music Academy "Gheorghe Dima" Cluj-Napoca	Association Cultura Viva Sighisoara	
PF 12	Educative and Participative Tools for Sustainable Development	Better Association	Equiterre, Partner for Sustainable Development	
PF 13	Sustainable Agriculture in Remote Areas of Romania: Conservation and adding value to fruit varieties	Mihai Eminescu Trust Foundation	SAVE Foundation - Safeguard for Agricultural Varieties in Europe	
PF 14	Green infrastructure in Sighisoara - Tarnava Mare Natura 2000 site - Discover Tarnava Mare by bike	Adept Transylvania Foundation	Naturfreunde Schweiz (NFS)	big
<b>Second Call</b>				
PF 15	Connecting Romania to the European long-distance footpaths network	Carpatina Ardeleana Association of Tourists SKV	Swiss Hiking Trail Federation	big
PF 16	Partnership for eco-innovation (EcoPartner)	National Center for Sustainable Production and Consumption (CNPCD)	Genevan Association for the Development of the Circular Economy (AGEDEVE); Romanian Cluster Association (CLUSTERO)	
PF 17	Green cities - green regions (GC - GR)	Terra Mileniul III Foundation	R20-Regions of Climate Action	
PF 18	Green jobs in green destinations - increasing the quality of ecotourism products and destinations for higher performance in sustainable development in Romania	Propark Foundation for Protected Areas	International Commission for the Protection of the Alps in Switzerland (CIPRA Schweiz)	
PF 19	Implementation of aquaponic technology in Romania to benefit health and sustainable livelihood in deprived areas	Institute for Research and Development for Capitalization and Marketing of the Horticultural Products (HORTING)	School of Life Sciences and Facility Management (ZHAW)	
PF 20	House of experiments	Association for Training	Swiss Science Center	
PF 21	Harmonization in professional development standards in psycho-trauma intervention through Swiss - Romanian cooperation	ICAR Foundation	Association Pluriels: Psychotherapy and cross-cultural studies for expatriates and migrants	

PF 22	Community centers for lifelong learning - an integrated approach to overcome economic, social and educational disparities in rural areas from the West Region of Romania	Romanian Institute for Adult Education (IREA)	Swiss Federation for Adult Learning	
PF 23	Enhancing social entrepreneurship, building bridges	NESst Foundation Romania	Social Entrepreneurship Initiative & Foundation (SEIF)	
PF 24	An hour of democracy	The Movement for European Action and Initiative Association (MAIE)	Swiss Romanian Association for Support in Integration (RSI)	
PF 25	University change through student engagement and exchange	Romanian Academic Society (SAR)	The national Union of Students of Switzerland (VSS-UNES-USU)	
PF 26	Learning from the best Swiss-Romanian cooperation project	Semper Musica Association	ABQ Schulprojekt Bern	
PF 27	Promoting the national strategy for parenting education	Copiii Nostri Foundation	Formation Des Parents CH	
PF 28	Solidarity for economic development in Hartibaciu Valley (SOLID.E.D.)	Hosman Durabil Association	Pro Longo Mai Association	
PF 29	Establishing the mountain rescuers training center in Bihor county, with the support of the Swiss experience and know-how from St.Gallen	Bihor County Council	State of Chancellery of St Gallen Canton	
PF 30	Partnership for sustainable apiculture - a national competence center for innovative organic beekeeping, applied knowledge transfer and participatory education	Melikoleg Association	Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FIBL)	
PF 31	From the Swiss Alps to the Romanian Carpathians - Partnership for sustainable development	CARPATERRA Association	Asociation Parc Ela	
PF 32	All-inclusive universities: a project for enhancing the accessibility services of universities for students with disabilities	Euroregional Center for Democracy	School of Management Fribourg	
PF 33	Films for teens	Macondo Cultural Association	The Magic lantern Association	

			(ASLM)	
PF 34	Skills for a better and safe life - SBS	"Gheorghe Asachi" Technical University of Iasi	Swiss Textile School	
PF 35	Growing cities' communities	Resource Centre for Public Participation (CeRe)	City of Lausanne - Development and Communication Service (DEVCOM)	
PF 36	Professional education of organ builders and carpenters	Foundation for Professional Training Romania (FPPR)	Swiss Foundation for Organs in Romania (SSOR)	
PF 37	Cultural bridges for the sustainable development of micro-region Tinutul Padurenilor - Tara Hategului	Center for Rural Assistance Foundation	Kaos Pilots Switzerland	
PF 38	CCER-SEC partnership in developing Romanian-Swiss business relations	Chamber of Commerce Switzerland-Romania (CCE-R)	Chamber of Commerce Switzerland - Central Europe	
PF 39	Social integration of disadvantaged people in rural areas through sustainable collection and processing of medicinal and aromatic plants	Civitas Foundation for Civil Society	Association for Biodynamic Agriculture	
PF 40	Young placemakers initiative	Urban 2020 Association	Institute for Spatial Development (IRAP)	

PF 05 (social), PF 14 and PF 15 (environment) are in the sample for in-depth analyse