



BULGARIAN-SWISS COOPERATION PROGRAMME  
БЪЛГАРО-ШВЕЙЦАРСКА ПРОГРАМА ЗА СЪТРУДНИЧЕСТВО

# Annual Report for 2013

National Coordination Unit  
Council of Ministers  
Bulgaria

Swiss Contribution Office  
Embassy of Switzerland in Sofia

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## Glossary and Acronyms

Audit Authority	AA
Balkan Institute for Labour and Social Policy	BILSP, Bulgaria
Bulgarian Science Directorate at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science	SD/MYES
Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation to reduce economic and social disparities within enlarged European Union	Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Programme
Bulgarian-Swiss Research Programme	BSRP
Bulgarian Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion Agency	BSMEPA
Bulgarian Red Cross	BRC
Swiss Francs (Swiss currency)	CHF
Enterprise for management of the environmental protection activities	EMEPA
Executive Agency	EA
European Union	EU
Framework Agreement	FA
Final Project Proposal	FPP
Intermediate Body	IB
Joint Research Projects	JRPs
Ministry of Environment and Water	MoEW/MEW
Ministry of Interior	Mol
Ministry of Labour and Social Policy	MLSP
Monitoring Committee	MC
National Coordination Union (“Monitoring of EU Funds” Directorate within the Administration of Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria)	NCU
National Institute for Conciliation and Arbitration	NICA
Paying Authority	PA
Programme Preparation Facility	PPF
Partnership and Expert Fund	PEF
Project Preparation Facility	PPF
Project Management System	PMS
Project Standard Agreement	PSA
Programme Document	PRODOC
Reform Fund for Civil Society Participation	CSP
Rectors’ Conference of the Swiss Universities	CRUS
State Secretariat for Economic Affairs	SECO
Schengen Information System	SIS
Steering Committee	SC
Supplementary Information Request at the National Entry	SIRENE
Swiss Intermediate Bodies	SIB
Swiss Contribution Office	SCO
Swiss National Science Foundation	SNSF
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	SDC
Swiss Intermediate Body	SIB
Technical Assistance Fund	TAF
Terms of reference	TOR
Thematic Fund	TF
Value Added Tax	VAT

## INTRODUCTION

This Annual Report overviews the progress of the Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Programme implementation in 2013.

The Document follows the provisions of Article 8.2 and Annex 2 of the Framework Agreement (FA) between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Swiss Federal Council, regarding the implementation of the Bulgarian- Swiss Cooperation Programme.

The key activities in 2013 were aimed at achieving the full commitment of the Programme funds.

On 14, March 2013 the Second Annual Meeting was held. The Annual Meeting outlined the good progress in the Programme's implementation in 2012, the fruitful cooperation, established between both countries and the importance of the Swiss financial contribution for the improvement and development of several key areas in Bulgaria.

In general, all the issues discussed during the Annual Meeting were tackled in 2013 and/or are currently in a process of implementation.

By the end of 2013 the total commitment of Swiss contribution funds stands to 59 %, pre-commitment (thematic area 2 and 3 – first loop) is 37% and in total commitment and pre commitment is 96 %. The total amount disbursed is 13 987 631 CHF, or 18 % from the total programme budget and reported co-financing stands at 315 072 CHF.

The main activities in thematic areas "Environment and Infrastructure" and "Private Sector" included the elaboration of the Final Project Proposals (FPP) of the approved Project Outlines. The Project Preparation Facility (PPF) was used to buy expertise in preparing feasibility studies and consultancy needed for the preparation of bankable FPPs.

Discussions on the allocation of the Program reserve and savings were held and additional project ideas were identified.

One amendment of the Framework Agreement was finalised according to respective procedures of both Parties and the second amendment is transmitted for ratification by Bulgarian Parliament.

Discussions on the texts of the Standard Project Agreement (SPA) were finalized.

As regards the implementation of the Thematic Funds (TF), the partnership and cooperation between the Swiss and Bulgarian institutions has further developed and resulted in significant progress in contracting and implementation of projects:

- In the year 2013 practically the signing of Activity Agreements (AA) with the successful applicants under both the Block Grant scheme of the TF Reform Fund linked to Civil Society Participation was finished.
- All the projects under the Partnership's fund block grant scheme first batch are in process of implementation.
- Most of the projects under TF "Security" retained in the Framework Agreement have entered the implementation stage. A considerable effort to identify and structure potential projects for stage 2 of the Thematic Fund Security has been undertaken.

- The thematic fund agreement for the reform fund linked to the inclusion of Roma and other vulnerable groups concerning the Programme for the promotion of social inclusion of Roma and other vulnerable groups was signed and the PMU started its activities.
- The implementation of the Sciex Programme (TF Scholarship) in Bulgaria as well as Bulgarian-Swiss Research Programme (TF Research) are running smoothly and satisfactory.

## **I. UPGRADES OF THE MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK**

### **1. Legal Base**

The Framework Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Swiss Federal Council concerning the implementation of the Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Programme to reduce economic and social disparities within the enlarged European Union was signed on 7th of September 2010 in Bern. The Agreement was ratified by the Parliament of the Republic of Bulgaria and officially published in State Gazette №82 in 19th of October 2010.

In addition to the FA the Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Programme is regulated by the following legal acts of the Council of Ministers (CoM) of the Republic of Bulgaria:

- CoM Decision № 12/10.01.2009 for determining the National Coordination Unit;
- CoM Decision № 779/01.11.2010 for determining the Head of the National Coordination Unit ;
- CoM Decision № 319/19.05.2011 for determining the Bulgarian Intermediate Bodies and Executive Agencies;
- CoM Decision №480/14.06.2012 for determining the Public Procurement Agency as Executive Agency under Priority axis 3 “Private Sector”;
- Agreements for tasks delegation between National Coordination Unit (NCU) and the Intermediate Bodies.

#### **1.1. Amendments in 2013**

##### **1.1.1. Framework Agreement**

During the reported period two amendments were initiated concerning the following annexes to the Framework Agreement:

- Amendment of Annexes 1, 2, 3 and 5 to the Framework Agreement - finalised

With a note from the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, received on 30<sup>th</sup> of December 2013, the Swiss Embassy in Sofia was informed, that the Amendment of Annexes 1, 2, 3 and 5 to the Framework Agreement enters into force, according to the Bulgarian legislation.

- Amendment of Annex 4 to the Framework Agreement – in the process of ratification.

The Swiss side proposed an amendment of the Annex 4, p. B.6 “Partnership and Expert Fund” of the Framework Agreement stipulating the merging the financial allocation for the “short-term expert inputs” with the allocation for supporting partnership projects. The main reason for this amendment is the high interest on the opportunities for partnerships among Swiss and Bulgarian entities.

Following the bilateral technical discussions and after considering the official proposal of SECO/SDC, received on 3<sup>rd</sup> of July 2013, the Council of Ministers by its decision № 5/8.1.2014 approved the respective reply letter for the Amendment of Annex 4 to the Framework Agreement. The procedure of ratification by the National Assembly is ongoing and the NCU is taking further steps in order to complete it.

### **1.1.2. Secondary legislation**

By a Council of Ministers Decision № 385/04.07.2013 the Director of the “Monitoring of the EU Funds” Directorate at the Council of Ministers Administration was determined as Head of the National Coordination Unit.

Regarding to amendments in the internal Bulgarian legislation with influence on the implementation of the Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Programme there were no such, made in 2013.

## **2. Organizational and procedural changes**

One organisational change regarding the Head of NCU was done.

## **3. Monitoring and Steering Committees**

### **3.1. Meetings of the Monitoring Committee**

The main focus of the efforts of both the Bulgarian and Swiss counterparts throughout entire 2013 was the elaboration of the FPPs. Their first versions were ready at the end of the year. A session of Monitoring Committee was held in early January 2014. The Monitoring Committee approved the proposed amendments in the Internal Rules for its work and endorsed two of FPPs – “Green Public Procurement” (promotion of the private sector) and “Modernised Trams for the City of Sofia”. Information about the progress of the implementation of the Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Programme was also presented and discussed.

### **3.2. Meetings of Steering Committees**

On the grounds of annex 4, p.7 of the Framework Agreement a Steering Committee (SC) for each Thematic Fund (TF) has been established. During the year of 2013 nine meetings of Steering Committees (SC) under the five Thematic Funds were held as follows:

- One SC meetings of Schengen Project (Part of TF “Security”) in November;
- Two SC meetings of TF “Security” held on 21<sup>st</sup> may 17<sup>th</sup> of December;
- Two SC meetings of TF “Reform fund, linked to civil society participation” held on 24<sup>th</sup> of April and 10<sup>th</sup> of December;
- Two SC meetings of TF “Partnership and expert fund” held on 11<sup>th</sup> of September and 11<sup>th</sup> of December;

- Two SC meetings of TF “Scholarship Fund”, held on 14<sup>th</sup> of March and 15<sup>th</sup> of August, Out of the 14 eligible proposals submitted for the 3<sup>rd</sup> call, the Sciex Steering Committee has approved 8 Bulgarian-Swiss projects for funding;
- Originally, it was planned that the Steering Committee on TF „Research Fund” should meet at least once a year. However, the SNSF suggested to organise a broader meeting in 2014 (mid-term meeting), where the Steering Committee Meeting could be extended by a social event, including the attendance of the Bulgarian PI’s.

## II. IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

### 1. Second Annual Meeting on the implementation of the Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Programme. Overview and Outputs.

According to Article 8 of the Framework Agreement both parties agree to hold Annual Meetings in order to ensure effective implementation of the Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Programme.

Following these provisions, the second annual meeting of the Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Programme to reduce economic and social disparities within the enlarged European Union was held on March 14, 2013 in “Pirin Park” Hotel, Sandanski. The meeting was opened and led by Ms Mariana Kordova, Director of "Monitoring of EU Funds" directorate - National Coordination Unit (NCU).

The event was attended by H.E Regina Escher, Ambassador of Switzerland in Bulgaria, Mr Ulrich Stürzinger, Head of Division in the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Ms Franziska Keller, Deputy Head of Division in the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), representatives of Swiss Contribution Office at the Embassy in Sofia, Heads of the Paying and Audit Authority, representatives of the two Intermediate Bodies and Implementing Agencies for thematic areas “Environment and Infrastructure” and “Public Sector”, as well as representatives of the NCU.

The Annual report on implementation of the Bulgarian - Swiss Cooperation Programme for 2012 was presented by the National Coordination Unit. The parties had the opportunity to discuss specific issues related to the progress of the Programme.

Mr Mattia Poretti, Head of the Swiss Contribution Office at the Swiss Embassy in Sofia presented the progress regarding the Thematic Funds. He expressed the SDC satisfaction for the good cooperation with the Bulgarian institutions involved in the implementation of Thematic Fund “Partnership” and Thematic Fund “Security”.

A discussion was held on the unallocated funds of CHF 1.22 mln from the thematic area “Private Sector” and CHF 3.5mln from the Reserve of the Programme. One additional Project idea was proposed to be financed from the unallocated funds - donation of modernised trams from the Basel Municipality to Sofia Municipality. The Swiss side proposed for further discussions the opportunity to support a project in the field of dual vocational education, where Switzerland has an experience that could be of use to Bulgaria.

Additional concrete steps were discussed and agreed to be taken. The elaborated 2013 Programme Work Plan was also adopted.

#### **The activities planned for 2013 included:**

- Implementation of the PPF contracts and elaboration of the two FPP in the area of Environment. Submission of the first drafts to the end of 2013.

- 1-st Loop approval of the two Project Outlines in the area of Private sector. Development of the FPP and their submission to the end of 2013.
- Next Annual meeting - second week of March 2014, between 10 -14<sup>th</sup>.

## 2. Progress in thematic area “Environment and Infrastructure”

Executive Agency in this thematic area is the Enterprise for Management of the Environmental Protection Activities (EMEPA). European and International Projects Directorate at the Ministry of Environment and Waters is the Intermediate Body.

There are two projects identified for funding in this thematic area as follows:

- *“Environmentally sound disposal of obsolete pesticides and other crop protection products” with CHF 19,900,000 Swiss Grant contribution;*
- *“Study and development of pilot models for eco-friendly collection and temporary storage of hazardous household waste” (HHW) with CHF 7,500,000 Swiss Grant contribution.*

### 2012 and 2013 Performance

Project	Total Budget (CHF)	Swiss Contribution (CHF)	IB/EA	Status
Environmentally sound disposal of obsolete pesticides and other crop protection products	23 411 765	19 900 000	MEW/EMEPA	Project Outline -1 <sup>st</sup> Loop approved 21.05.2012
PPF	352 941	300 000		A PPF Agreement signed b/w NCU/EA/IB.
Contract	334 971		Consultant UOZ 2013 company	Signed contract after public procurement. Performed
Study and development of pilot models for eco-friendly collection and temporary storage of hazardous household waste	8 823 530	7 500 000	MEW/EMEPA	Project Outline -1 <sup>st</sup> Loop approval 28.06.2012
PPF	176 440	150 000		A PPF Agreement signed b/w NCU/EA/IB.
Contract	150 090		Consultant BalBok Engineering company	Signed contract after public procurement. Performed

### Progress achieved in 2013

The two Project Outlines were approved by the Monitoring Committee and SECO in 2012, followed by the signature of PPF Agreements for the preparation of the Final Project Proposals between NCU, IB and EA in 2013.

The 2013 started with the formal approval (non-objection) of the elaborated by EMEPA Public Procurement Documents under the PPF Agreements. In the period of approval EMEPA reflected



repeatedly the comments from the IB, NCU and SECO made on the draft Terms of References (ToR). After the receiving of non-objection by SECO the two public procurement procedures were announced:

- On 18<sup>th</sup> of January 2013, the "Assistance in the preparation of the Final Project Proposal "Environmentally sound disposal of obsolete pesticides and other crop protection products" with deadline for applications 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2013.
- In February 2013, the "Assistance in the preparation of the Final Project Proposal "Study and development of pilot models for eco-friendly collection and temporary storage of hazardous household waste " with a deadline for applications 4<sup>th</sup> of July 2013.

#### **PPF Agreements:**

##### **PPF Agreement for development of the Final Project Proposal of "Environmentally sound disposal of obsolete pesticides and other crop protection products":**

###### Activities:

Current and comprehensive classification of the types of pesticides, to be subjected to environmentally friendly rendering harmless; Inventory listing and mapping of the quantities of stored pesticides in warehousing facilities;. Identification and mapping of the quantities of pesticides, stored in "B-B" container cubes; Assessment of the alternatives for rendering harmless the available within the territory of the country pesticides with expired term of suitability for use; Create and apply a risk assessment method, by means of which to make assessments in real time of the risks on humans and on nature in a complex dependency of: the type and quantity of the pesticides with expired term of suitability for use; the type and state of the packing of the pesticides with expired term of suitability for use; type and degree of contamination of the locations, at which the pesticides are being stored; location of the warehouse, in which the pesticides are stored (in the vicinity of a settlement, a water body, a protected area, an earthquake area; a flooded area); existence of access to the location (warehouse), where the pesticides are stored - warehouse with security or without security;. Determination of the most suitable procedure/s for repacking and transport of the pesticides with expired term of suitability for use; Determination of the most suitable method for consequent cleaning/sanitation of the locations of storage (restoration/reclamation), depending on the type of contamination, respectively, the type and quantity of the removed for destruction pesticide with expired term of suitability for use; Confirmation of the need or absence of necessity for performance of an assessment of the impact on the environment (Strategic ecological assessment and/or assessment of the impact on the environment); Legal-economic analysis of the possibilities for financing the rendering harmless of the pesticides, including the ones located in cooperative and private warehouses; Elaboration of a log frame, including the design purposes and adequate indicators of the level of impact, results and products, as well as the studied above risks; Elaboration of precisely defined and motivated budget forecasts by compilation of a detailed bill of quantities for the required activities for repacking, temporary storage, transport, rendering harmless / final destruction of the unsuitable for use pesticides and other plant protection formulations and any further activities for the restoration (cleaning and sanitation) of the freed areas; Elaboration of a plan for starting and performing public procurements for the term of the main project for the appointment of the activities for the repacking, temporary storage, transport, rendering harmless / final destruction of the unsuitable for use pesticides and other plant protection formulations and any further activities for the restoration (cleaning and sanitation) of the freed areas.

**PPF Agreement for development of the Final Project Proposal” Study and development of pilot models for eco-friendly collection and temporary storage of hazardous household waste”**

Activities:

Preliminary study and selection of appropriate model for Bulgaria and preparation of the pilot municipalities for its implementation, including classification of facilities to facilitate the replication of pilots; justification of budget estimates; detailed risk assessment and proposal for appropriate measures where needed; development of Logical Framework and final project proposal; capacity building activities with municipalities and representatives of the waste management authorities at MoEW

The main challenge in this thematic area in 2013 was the successful procurement and completion of the activities of the PPF Agreements as well as the submission of the first drafts of the FPPs. The Executive Agency carried out successfully the two public procurement procedures under the PPF Agreements. One of the applying companies appealed in front of the Court. On 12<sup>th</sup> of July 2013 the Supreme Administrative Court of Bulgaria issued Decision №10602 regarding the EMEPA public procurement procedure on PPF project for disposal of obsolete pesticides, with which confirmed that the appeal lodged is unfounded. Due to this appeal the two PPF Agreements were annexed with a new deadline date – 25<sup>th</sup> of February 2014.

The contracts with the selected companies were signed:

- on 2<sup>nd</sup> of August 2013 for the pesticides project (duration 4 months);
- on 30<sup>th</sup> of August 2013 for the waste project (duration 2 months).

In order to ensure the effective and timely implementation the NCU together with the IB and EA developed a Road map for each project which had to be followed. Monthly meetings with all interested parties were introduced and held for close monitoring of the progress of the FPPs’elaboration.

The first drafts of the Final Project Proposals in Bulgarian language were received in November and December 2013. The English versions were sent to the NCU in January 2014. A two days’ Workshop for discussion of the first versions of the FPPs with SECO was organised by the NCU on 23-24<sup>th</sup> of January 2014 in Sofia with the participation of all stakeholders and interested parties - SECO, SCO, IB and EA.

Two Reimbursement Requests for both projects under PPF were submitted for verification by EMEPA to the IB, and the verification was concluded.

The IB performed the formal assessment of the final project proposals, including the comments of the backstoppers following the January workshop. The findings were submitted to NCU and the EA to facilitate the work of the evaluators.

**Planned activities for 2014**

The deadline of the Programme commitment period expires in December 2014 hence submission of FPPs for both projects to SECO is scheduled for March 2014. This will allow SECO to review and to approve them (second loop) in due time.

The deadline for submission of the Final Project Proposals to NCU by the IB was set to 25<sup>th</sup> of February 2014. It is to be followed by an official evaluation procedure organised by NCU and with

participation of representatives of IB and the Waste Management Directorate at the Ministry of Environment and Water.

According to NCU's Management and Control system the approval of the FPP will be followed, by signing Standard Project Agreements between SECO, NCU and IB and Implementation Agreements between IB and EA.

### **3. Progress in thematic area "Private Sector"**

There were two projects identified for funding in this thematic area for a total amount of CHF 1,738,250 Swiss contribution and 15% national co-financing. Each of these projects were planned to be implemented in a separate focus area by different Executive Agencies as follows:

- *Project: "Development of instruments for the support of export-oriented companies" with a budget of CHF 1,500,000 out of which CHF 1,275,000 Swiss contribution. Executive Agency: "Development of the internationalization of the SME" (DISME) Directorate at BSMEPA;*
- *Project: "Methodological support for the development of green public procurement in Bulgaria" with a budget of CHF 545,000 out of which CHF 463,250 Swiss contribution. Executive Agency: Public Procurement Agency (PPA).*

#### **Progress achieved in 2013**

After careful considerations the project *"Development of instruments for the support of export-oriented companies"* was withdrawn by the EA in mid-2013. Hence the budget provisioned for the project remains part of Programs unallocated funds to be committed before the end of 2014. The BSMEPA and the MEE declared a position of support to the project idea for dual education and their willingness for active participation in the project implementation.

SECO was informed by NCU accordingly.

The Public Procurement Agency as an Executive Agency under thematic area "Private Sector" prepared the Final Project Proposal without using PPF support and presented it to the IB on 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2013. The formal evaluation for eligibility of the FPP was done by the IB and the evaluation report was submitted to NCU on 25<sup>th</sup> of November 2013.

The overall goal of the project is to create preconditions for the implementation of a consistent policy in the area of "green" public procurement and thus stimulate the development of the private sector and the efficient spending of public funds for public procurement with an environmental component and assist companies operating in the field of innovative technologies and solutions. The objective is to provide practical opportunities for "green" public procurement contracts in line with the measures provided in the National Action Plan for promotion of "green" public procurement contracts for the period 2012 – 2014.

The Draft Final Project Proposal was presented at the Monitoring Committee meeting, held on 10<sup>th</sup> of January 2014 and was endorsed by the MC and submitted to the Swiss side for comments.

#### **Planned activities for 2014**

In 2014, the approval of Final project proposal for **Methodological support for the development of "green" public procurement in Bulgaria**" by SECO is expected.

- Reflection of SECO comments in the FPP by the EA;

- Evaluation of the FPP by NCU – independent evaluator;
- Approval of the FPPs by SECO;
- Signing Standard Project Agreement between SECO, NCU and IB;
- Signing Implementation Agreements between IB and EA.

#### 4. Progress in implementation of the Thematic Funds

This part of the present Annual Report is provided by SDC and covers the progress towards the implementation of the Thematic Funds of the Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Programme in the course of 2013.

Operation, management set up and financial framework for Thematic Funds are stipulated in FA's Annex 4, which also defines the rules and procedures for Thematic Funds implementation as well as the responsibilities and tasks of the actors involved.

A Thematic Fund (TF) is a grant-provision instrument for financing Activities (or projects) addressing specific thematic areas or targeting specific beneficiary groups. An Activity is a specific assistance for, *inter alia*, projects, scholarships, partnerships and knowledge transfer provided within a Thematic Fund. TFs are generally managed by a Swiss Intermediate Body (SIB) and an Activity is implemented by an Executing Agency. While concrete peculiarities of TFs on bilateral level, including commitments, are stipulated in the so called Thematic Fund Agreements, management responsibilities of the SIBs are detailed in the so called Mandate agreements signed between SDC and the respective SIBs. Implementation of particular project or activity is articulated by Activity Agreement signed between the SIB and respective Executing Agency.

7 out of 8 TFAs and SIBs Mandate agreements were signed in 2010<sup>1</sup> and 2011 and only one - Thematic Fund "Inclusion Roma and Other Vulnerable Groups" - was negotiated at the end of 2012 and the Agreement was signed on 21.01.2013.

Thematic Funds are financed by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and cover the following themes as defined in FA's Annex 1 (section 6) and detailed in Annex 4:

B.1	Security Fund	CHF	9'850'000.-
B.2	Reform Fund linked to Civil Society Participation	CHF	8'000'000.-
B.3	Reform Fund linked to the Inclusion of Roma and other vulnerable groups incl. Home Care Services Activity	CHF	8'900'000.-
B.4	Scholarship Fund	CHF	2'000'000.-
B.5	Research Fund	CHF	4'000'000.-
B.6	Partnership and Expert Fund	CHF	4'000'000.-
	TOTAL Thematic Funds	CHF	36'750'000.-

A co-financing of Activities by Bulgarian sources is requested at the amount of at least 10% for NGOs and 15% for public institutions.

<sup>1</sup> Schengen Project is implemented based on exchange of letters from September 2010.

In 2013 the implementation of all Thematic Funds of the Swiss Contribution to Bulgaria at Activity level was constituted. Main aspects for each TF are described below while concrete results are further detailed in section 4.1.

B.1 Security Fund:	
Schengen Project	Due to ongoing stagnation in the political admission of Bulgaria and Romania to Schengen treaty, no activities were conducted under this project in 2013. After discussions between Swiss Federal Police Office (fedpol), which is SIB for this initiative, and Bulgarian partner from SIRENE Bureau of the Ministry of Interior, it was agreed to extend the project with yet 18 months (January 2014 – June 2015). The purpose is to implement a range of activities related to exchange of operational expertise, equipment and capacity building for SIRENE officers.
Security Fund	<p>Implementation of this instrument commenced back in July 2011 when Thematic Fund Agreement was signed and a consortium comprising of TC Team Consult SA (Leader), Coginta and DCAF was mandated with its management. 6 out of 8 projects retained in the FA have been elaborated and are under implementation. In mid-2013 one project (Migration) was withdrawn by Bulgarian Ministry of Interior. The project of Prosecutor`s Office of the Republic of Bulgaria could see substantial developments in line with ongoing reforms of the institution. Its formal approval by SDC and launching is expected in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2014. TF`s Steering Committee endorsed a decision to dedicate the unallocated amount of CHF 2`387`000 to an integrated programme related on combating trafficking in human beings in Bulgaria with the involvement of National Commission on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings, IOM office in Bulgaria and Animus Association. A project on corruption related issues will also be supported under this facility. It is expected that both initiatives will be launched before the summer of 2014.</p> <p>Due to political changes and reshuffle within Bulgarian authorities (EAs), some of the projects could see their formal start rather late while for the others changes within the state administration in the course of 2013 lead to delay in implementation. Co-financing is an issue for some of them whereas SIB could manage to maintain good level of communication with respective decision-making levels. Several public events were organised under this TF but with rather limited outreach.</p> <p>Setting up project implementation modalities for the last to be committed retained and new projects before commitment deadline will be ultimate priority for 2014 under this TF. Conducting transparent public procurement procedures as provisioned in most of the projects, as well as establishing and maintaining a systematic reporting and publicity, are the key aspects of TF`s management and monitoring to be performed. Coordination of activities/interventions with similar initiatives or projects, particularly the one under second phase of EEA/Norway contribution to Bulgaria, will be maintained with the support of the NCU also in 2014.</p>
B.2 Reform Fund linked to Civil Society Participation, and B.6 Partnership and Expert Fund	
	One SIB, a consortium headed by Innova Bridge Foundation involving the Balkan Institute for Labour and Social Policy, is mandated for managing both TFs. While two of the retained projects (“Social Dialog” with MoLSP and “Linking Nature”)

	<p>could see their formal launching at the end of 2012, selection and award procedures under Block Grants schemes took more time and first projects were launched in the summer of 2013. 35 projects (23 “Social” and 12 “Environmental” one) are contracted under TF “Civil Society”<sup>2</sup> Grant scheme after some delays related to selection procedure and negotiations with Executive Agencies. In 2013 “Linking Nature” project could deploy implementation on all 3 planned components and first concrete results could materialise despite of difficult political context. Two visits in Switzerland (of officials from Bulgarian Food Safety Agency and small farmers and food processors) could, for example, contribute to the elaboration and adoption of “On farms sales” ordinance. Despite of good results, co-financing from Ministry of Agriculture and Food to one the project components could not be resolved throughout 2013 and efforts of project partners, NCU and Swiss Embassy in Sofia will extend in 2014.</p> <p>10 out of 15 partnership projects were contracted in 2013 under TF “Partnership and Expert Fund” Grant Scheme first batch and are under implementation. Following a decision of second Programme Annual Meeting on the transfer of the Swiss contribution to the “Expert Fund” (CHF 600’000) to the “Partnership” one, a 19 second batch projects were approved for financing. Three large projects (over CHF 100’000) will be signed only after FA’s second amendment (Annex 4) is ratified by Bulgarian Parliament.</p> <p>Monitoring of Activities implementation, proper reporting of achievements and visibility of projects supported under CSP and PEF funds will focus efforts in 2014. SIB has already initiated an internal reorganisation of resource base to cope with this in a conducive manner.</p>
<b>B.3 Reform Fund linked to the Inclusion of Roma and other vulnerable groups</b>	
Home Care Services Project	<p>“Home Care Services” project is supporting, with references to the model enforced in Switzerland, the introduction in Bulgaria of a complex provision of medical care and social services at home as a form of long-term assistance to aging population in the country. The project, implemented by the Bulgarian Red Cross /EA/ and the Swiss Red Cross (SIB) in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Labour and Social Policy endeavours to address the issues at National (policy), regional (Vratsa) and local level while also incorporating horizontal aspects like integration of Roma minority. Although still in its second year of implementation, the project demonstrates already impact (focus) oriented management which is rather difficult in the dynamic political context in Bulgaria. Throughout 2013 project team managed to attain high visibility and presence in public audience both in Bulgaria and Switzerland.</p> <p>4 Municipal Home Care Centres are already operational and their long-term activities are to be integrated in the prevailing local (municipal) and National (line ministries) regulatory framework. Integrated home care services are extended to more than 100 people in need in the region of Vratsa. Tailor-made study on Roma needs and coverage by social and health services illustrates also the demand in designing services towards including minorities’ relevant considerations at early stage of policy formation. A short documentary, presenting main aspects of the project, was produced and adapted also for publicity in Switzerland.</p>

<sup>2</sup> Last project under „Environment“ portfolio is contracted at the beginning of 2014.

	<p>Due to dynamic political context in Bulgaria throughout entire 2013, project team faced certain difficulties in maintaining “home care” policy considerations high in the political agenda and hence legislative changes proposed could not materialise which entailed the need of extending the lifespan of this activity until the end of 2016. This will also lead to respective amendment of the Thematic Fund agreement.</p>
<p>Program on Inclusion of Roma and other vulnerable groups</p>	<p>Thematic Fund Agreement on this instrument was signed in January 2013 and the process of selecting Project Management Unit (PMU) commenced in short after. Despite dynamic political context in the country PMU, hosted at the premises of Bulgarian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, and supported by fully fledged Swiss Contribution office, could elaborate and push through an ambitious and tailor-made program approach for this instrument. Selection of municipalities to implement integrated inclusion projects will be accomplished in the first quarter of 2014 and projects are expected to be launched in the second half of the year.</p>
<p><b>B.4 Scholarship Fund</b></p>	
	<p>The Bulgarian-Swiss Scholarship Programme is an extension of the Sciex programme that has been carried out in 10 new EU member states since 2008. Rectors’ Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS) is mandate to manage (SIB) scholarship programmes in Bulgaria. The Science Directorate of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education, Youth and Science (SD/MEYS) is the local Coordinator of the programme. After overcoming initial lack of information and applications, the interest of the Bulgarian scientific community on the opportunities offered by this facility is revived. First two granted Sciex scholarships were completed in 2013 and the research fellows are back to Bulgaria. Ongoing changes within Youth and Science (SD/MEYS) hampered collaboration between the Bulgarian Coordination Body and the Swiss Intermediate Body and potentially the visibility of the Sciex Programme in Bulgaria. In January 2014 the last 5th call for Bulgaria under this program is launched.</p>
<p><b>B.5 Research Fund</b></p>	
<p>Bulgarian-Swiss Research Programme</p>	<p>The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) is managing the Bulgarian-Swiss Research Programme (BSRP). Science Directorate of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education, Youth and Science (SD/MEYS) is the National counterpart for this program. With contracting the 13 approved projects the program exhausted the committed Swiss grant and hence reporting, monitoring and systematic provision of Bulgarian co-financing will focus efforts 2013 onwards. In one project Bulgarian Executing agency experienced some problems concerning transfer of funds to a third party but the issue was solved with the involvement of the Swiss partner institute.</p>

	Projects' monitoring and reporting will dominate activities under this facility throughout 2014. A publicity event will be conducted in Bulgaria along with a session of the Steering Committee. It will take place in May and aim at raising the profile of Bulgarian scientific institutions involved.
<b>New initiatives / Dual Education</b>	
Reserve and unallocated funds	Discussions on the commitment of the reserve and unallocated funds held during the second Annual Meeting of the Programme concluded that both countries see potential in supporting a project in the field of dual vocational education where Switzerland has an experience that could be extended to Bulgaria. It was agreed that further technical discussions on this subject will be conducted during a deliberate Technical Meeting. Such meeting was organised in Switzerland from 9 to 13 of September and financed by TAFA. Bulgarian NCU Head as well as representatives of the Audit and Paying Authorities could meet with different counterparts including Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET). One particular outcome from the technical meeting, in which Bulgarian Embassy in Bern was also involved, was the decision to organise a first exploratory mission of Swiss dual education experts to Bulgaria. The mission took place in November and could touch on all important aspects, policy and institutional set up of professional education in Bulgaria. A second mission is planned for the first quarter of 2014 with the purpose to elaborate Project Outline of a full-fledged project in the field of dual education.

#### **4.1. Progress in implementation of the Thematic Funds<sup>3</sup>**

##### **PROGRESS ACHIEVED AND PLANNED ACTIVITIES**

This report summarises progress achieved so far and outlines main steps to be initiated in 2014 for each Thematic Fund of the Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Program. More details are to be found in respective Annual Reports of each instrument under consideration.

#### **Schengen Project (Part of the Security Fund)<sup>4</sup>**

##### **Introduction**

As the accession date of Bulgaria to the Schengen zone is still not clarified, the project finds itself in an impasse. Therefore, with one exception, the remaining activities of the original project had to be kept on hold also in 2013.

##### **Activity Review**

In November 2013, the partners conducted a Steering Committee Meeting to decide upon the way forward in the project. Due to the political situation (elections, new government, no clarity with regard to the government's position in the Schengen issue), no activities could be conducted in 2013.

<sup>3</sup> The information in this part of Annual Report is provided by SDC

<sup>4</sup> Based on fedpol Annual Report



## Challenges met and corrective measures

Due to the political situation and ongoing impasse in the Schengen accession, the partners agreed to eliminate some of the remaining activities, which in the light of the current situation were not likely to be implemented anytime soon. At the same time, the partners decided upon several new activities to be considered for funding within the remaining budget. Furthermore, they agreed to finalize the project by the end of June 2013.

## Planned activities for 2014

The following activities are planned for 2014:

- New edition of the Schengen Flyer, containing the new developments and adapted processes.
- Additional training of new officers of the SIRENE Bureau Bulgaria.
- Technical support for the implementation of a mobile access to the Schengen Information System.
- Purchase of additional equipment for the SIRENE Bureau.
- Realization of one additional seminar for spokespersons of the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior.

## The Security fund in Bulgaria (without Schengen Project)

Based on SIB Review 2013

### Introduction

Most of the projects retained in the Framework Agreement have entered the implementation stage: In 2013, six out of the eight projects retained in the Framework Agreement have been operational.

A considerable effort to identify and structure potential projects for stage 2 of the Thematic Fund Security has been undertaken by the SIB. Three projects in the field of assistance of victims of Human Trafficking (THB) and one project on elaborating a policy strategy in the field of organized crime and countering corruption have been identified. After several coordination meetings with different stakeholders, it has been decided to cluster the three THB projects under one programme. SIB has drafted a programme document that has been discussed with the concerned Executing Agencies and that is still being adapted according to the different remarks and inputs. Two Steering Committee meetings have been held in 2013 (21.05.2013 and 17.12.2013). In most projects considerable delays are observed due to different reasons – shifts and replacements in the EA structures, formal contractual aspects etc. One of the retained projects “Exchange practice in the field of Migration” after more than a year of discussions was withdrawn from the Bulgarian counterpart (Ministry of Interior).

### Activity Review

On the project level, the following activities have been realized in 2013:

#### **1. Capacity building for forensic experts**

On May 16, 2013 the project was officially launched with a launching ceremony. Since then, several project activities took place. A tender for the acquisition of Real Time DNA PCRs has been prepared. Besides several expert meetings (also with Swiss experts) took place and in October a workshops with the title “Analyzing and estimation of forensic training in Bulgaria” has been conducted.

The project is facing minor delays.

## ***2. Increase of the control and the respect of the rules set out in the legislation protecting the environment and risk management***

In February a round table was held and was attended by the experts from the working group and NGO representatives. In addition, a second seminar of the working group was conducted. These activities are part of SO1 "Creating a database of EU and international best practices and outlining guidelines for prosecutors dealing with matters of environmental crimes in a manual".

From March 27 to March 29, 2013 a second working meeting was held in Veliko Tarnovo related to SO1 "Creating a database of EU and international best practices and outlining guidelines for prosecutors dealing with matters of environmental crimes in a manual". During the meeting participants have been informed about the problems, expectations and results from the conducted Round Table (conducted on February 20, 2013) and cases submitted by NGOs have been put forward to discussion. An interim report on the work of the working groups and their responsibilities has been presented. Experts from the Ministry of Environment and Water and from the Executive Forest Agency have presented the legal definitions of the terms used by the punitive law, which exist in the specific environment-related legislation as well as the competent state bodies for findings of violations of the specialized environmental legislation, the existing techniques and expertise. Other topics presented include: main methods for proving environmental violations and what evidence is needed; environmental violations - difference between administrative-legal and punitive-legal aspects of the responsibility and main problems in Bulgaria; current prosecutors practice (in the country in order to identify good practices throughout Bulgaria). In June two study visits of Bulgarian prosecutors to Munich and Brussels took place. The last of the three working group meetings was conducted in July. The elaboration of the website and the manual on environmental crime is still on-going. In November the APB became member of the European Network of Prosecutors for the Environment (ENPE).

The project is well on track and is implemented in professional manner towards achieving results and objectives as set in the project documentation.

## ***3. Counteraction to crimes related to motor vehicles***

In the context of a launching ceremony a presentation of the project and a press conference were held on February 27, 2013. The event was attended by the Swiss ambassador in Bulgaria, an SCO representative, SIB representatives, the Bulgarian deputy minister of interior and heads of police departments. The event had good press coverage. In June, a visit of two Swiss experts to Sofia took place. In October, an expert meeting was held in order to determine the locations of the video control systems in Bulgaria. The preparation of the tender for surveillance cameras and software has been on-going and an order has been issued by the Director of Police for the setting up of a team of experts who to prepare the technical specifications for the tender. The first meeting of the team is set for 10 January 2014 and the deadline for the elaboration of the specifications is 20 January 2014. The project runs behind schedule.

## ***4. Juvenile Justice***

The gap analysis on Juvenile Justice in Bulgaria has been elaborated and shared with the Swiss project partner. Training modules have been elaborated and experts from academia and the civil society have been chosen to prepare a set of criteria for the selection of the locations of the Juvenile Chambers. Inter institutional meetings between the MoJ and the MoI took place in order to discuss the creation of a consolidated data base for Juvenile Justice and Juvenile Delinquency. After having set up and trained a project management unit at the beginning of the year most of

the members of this team have been either replaced or laid off. The project manager and the head of the EA have been replaced as well and the project is being re-launched at the moment. The project is behind schedule.

#### ***5. Human rights based policing***

The project has been launched in September. The project team has postponed the first project activities to commence in January 27-30, 2014.

The project is behind schedule.

#### ***6. Strengthening Youth protection and Juvenile Delinquency Prevention in Bulgaria***

The project has been launched in September. After the launching ceremony an expert meeting between Swiss and Bulgarian experts took place. On October 29, 2013 a one-day expert meeting was organized to analyse the National Police Program "Work of the police in the schools" on a regional and national level. Proposals and ideas for an update of the Program have been presented and discussed and the following topics have been approved for further elaboration: Cybercrimes, Safe behaviour in Internet, Sport hooliganism and riots, Prevention of radicalism.

The project is running behind schedule.

#### ***7. Increase of the integrity and motivation prosecutors and prosecuting new challenges in crime (former "Combating organized crime, trafficking of human beings and money laundering")***

The Project was approved at the Steering Committee Meeting in December after serious reorganisation and efforts by the newly appointed project team within the Prosecution office of Bulgaria as a follow up of ongoing reforms and particularly the Action plan of the Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 01.09.2013-01.03.2015. SIB is currently working on the preparation of the Credit Proposal that is to be submitted to the SDC for final approval.

#### ***8. Exchange practice in the field of Migration***

Due to insufficient project management capabilities and low motivation of the Executing Agency to implement the project, it had been jointly decided to discontinue elaboration of this project. No replacement project has been submitted to the SIB so far.

#### **Challenges met and corrective measures**

The challenges the SIB is facing are the partially severe delays in project implementation. This is partly due to low project management capabilities of some of the Executing Agencies and partly due to the replacement of project managers and Heads of the Executing Agencies. SIB will continue in coaching and supporting the Executing Agencies in implementing the projects.

#### **Planned activities for 2014**

The focus of the SIB in 2014 is to start the implementation of stage 2 projects and to further push the timely implementation of the projects of stage 1 by assisting the Executing Agencies to the largest extent possible.

### **Reform Fund linked to Civil Society Participation**

Based on SIB Annual Report 2013

#### **Introduction**

In year 2013 practically was finished the signing of Activity Agreements (AA) with the successful applicants under both the Block Grant scheme and retained project. The process started in 2012 with signing the AA with “Linking Nature Protection and Sustainable Rural Development” project and will finish in the beginning of 2014 with the last AA to be signed with applicant to the Block Grant scheme. The Steering Committee (SC) at its session on 24 April 2013 approved the proposed list of 31 project proposals, which according to their evaluation score, were of good quality. The list included project proposals, which cumulative budget was within the available resources for the block grant, as well as 6 reserve project proposals. Due to the political developments – national protests and national elections, which led to having three different governments in one year, the implementation of the FA project where governmental institution is involved met certain problems related to the co-financing. The efforts to overcome the problem continue throughout the year.

### **Activity Review**

Due to various reasons Swiss Intermediate Body submitted with some delays requested reports. A contract with the Bulgarian audit company Audit Consult Ltd was signed. The audit company will conduct audits of all projects – including the FA project, the block grant funded project, as well as audit of the activities of the Bulgarian member of the consortium – the Balkan Institute for Labour and Social Policy.

“Linking Nature” project started in September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012. Two quarterly operational reports (1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the first project year), one 6-month and one annual report were duly submitted. The implementation of this project follows on a schedule of activities and an approved budget for each project year. After the completion of the first project year an audit was launched and conducted. The audit report is pending. Although there were some problems and challenges, the project activities during the first project year were implemented according to the plan. The implementation of project activities proceeds in accordance with the approved schedule and budget for the second project year.

A list of high scored project proposals was presented to the members of TF CSP Steering Committee (SC) for consideration and decision. At its session of April 24, 2013 the SC decided to propose a list of 24 projects (incl. 3 reserves) in the “social” domain and 13 projects (incl. 3 reserves) in the “environmental” domain for approval and funding by SDC. The list of the proposed projects was approved by SDC.

In the period June-July 2013 all the approved projects were thoroughly reviewed by SIB. Where deemed necessary, budgetary reductions, as well as improvement of the indicators proposed, were negotiated with the applicants. This process led to the finalizing and concluding of Activity Agreements on 23 social (including 2 reserves) and 10 environmental projects by mid August 2013. One more environmental project (the first-ranked reserve project) was invited in the beginning of August 2013 to consider the comments of SIB on the project proposal and on the budget and introduce the respective amendments. By the end of the reporting period AA was signed and negotiations with the applicant with the second reserve project have started. Signing of AA with that applicant is expected in early 2014.

With signing the last AA with the applicant to the block grant all the indicative financial allocation for activities retained in the FA and identified on the basis of the call procedures (block grant) are in fact committed.

According to the provisions of Annex 4 of the Framework Agreement and the CSP Thematic Fund Agreement, both the FA project and the Block Grant projects are co-financed by the implementing EAs by at least 10% of the approved total amount of the eligible costs. Three exceptions exist: 1) the co-financing of one of the FA project partners – the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, represented in the project by the Executive Agency for Selection and Reproduction, is 15%; 2) the co-financing of two of the Block Grant projects, where Executing Agency is National Catholic Federation “Caritas Bulgaria”, is 20%; 3) Youth Forum 21<sup>st</sup> Century is 15,7%. Co-financing is fixed both as % and as certain amount in the AA. The effective provision of the co-financing by the EAs is included in all their expenditures under the project as the amount of the final (balance) payment by SIB is up to the approved percentage of grant financing.

SIB has developed and distributed Procurement Rules, Visibility Guidelines and Instruction Manual for documenting the implementation of activities and incurring of costs as well as templates for reporting and payment requests. So far all the Executing Agencies (EA) have submitted the requested reports and SIB checked and approved them accordingly. SIB duly provides information and instructions to the EAs upon request. SIB has paid more than 20 monitoring visits to EAs (mainly the FA project EA but also to 14 EAs from the block grant).

During the reported year the 20% advance payment was made to 33 EAs who have signed AAs and have requested this payment. The total amount of 20% advance payments in 2013 was CHF 568 380,77. Six EAs have spent more than 75% of their initial advance payment and have submitted payment requests for the second advance payment. The total amount of the second advance payment transferred to the EAs by SIB was CHF 110 910,13. A second advance payment of 100 000 CHF was made to the EA of FA project by SIB following a payment request.

In December 10, 2013, a regular SC session was conducted. SIB reported to the SC about the developments in the implementation of the FA project and the block grant scheme. SC members agreed upon the fact that the TF CSP has been implemented according to the initial schedule and expectations. SC decided that SIB should suggest what shall be done with the remaining funds (approximately 26 000 CHF) at the next session.

### **Challenges met and corrective measures**

One of the consortium partners implementing the FA project has left the consortium. Respectively, activity B.1.6 “Co-financing of 10 pilot on-farm processing units” showed a small delay. Never-the-less the latest observations showed that the partners, who have taken over the responsibilities of the one left, were catching up. A major challenge here is the provision of the 15% co-financing by the governmental partner – the Executing Agency for Selection and Reproduction at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

So far no significant deviations from the implementation of the first activities by the block grant EAs were observed.

### **Planned activities for 2014**

A monitoring plan was prepared by SIB and will be submitted to SDC in January 2014. Among the dates of on-site visits and report checks, a two-week mission with evaluation purpose by both Swiss partners in the SIB consortium – InnovaBridge and Neosys AG, is planned for May-June 2014.

Due to insufficiency of funds other missions for the time being are not planned. Such missions can be decided on upon necessity.

Two sessions of the Steering Committee of TF CSP are planned for 2014 – one in May and one in December.

## **Reform Fund linked to the Inclusion of Roma and other vulnerable groups**

### **Activity “Home Care Services”**

#### **Introduction**

The “Home Care and Assistance Services towards Independent and Dignified Life” Project is implemented by the Bulgarian Red Cross in the capacity of an Executing Agency (EA) in partnership with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Swiss Red Cross. The Swiss Red Cross is also performing the role of a Swiss Intermediate Body (SIB). The project started in 2012 and its main objective is to support the introduction in Bulgaria of a model for complex provision of health cares and social services at home as a form of long-term care for older people with chronic diseases and permanent disabilities drawing on the Swiss experience.

Except for provision of home care services to beneficiaries in the target region and improving of their quality of life, the project aims at establishing an institutional framework for sustainable provision of this type of services in Bulgaria, incl. proper legislative regulation, payment mechanisms, national quality standards and unified training programs for the staff. Among the main priorities of the project is to raise the awareness about home care services at all levels of the Bulgarian society in order to validate them as a form of integrated provision of health and social services to older people with chronic diseases and disabilities.

The implementation phase for this project covers the period from 1.1.2012 – 30.6.2015.

#### **Activity Review**

##### **Adoption of legislative changes**

A draft proposal for changes in the Health Act regulating the provision of home care services was elaborated in 2012 with the active involvement of relevant institutions and stakeholders. As a result of the political processes taking place in Bulgaria in 2013 and the change of the Government the work in this project area was seriously delayed and was resumed in the second half of the year after the present Government entered on its duties. Following a series of discussions with the partner ministries – health and social, which led to some changes in the text of the original proposal, it was finalized and submitted to the Council of Ministers by the Ministry of Health at the end of November 2013 as a first step of the legislative procedure. It is expected that it will be introduced in the Parliament in the first quarter of 2014.

##### **Cost-effectiveness analysis and cost-pricing of the services**

One of the basic components of the project is addressing cost-pricing of home care services and proving their effectiveness in comparison with other existing forms of social services and medical cares. The process also includes the elaboration of payment mechanisms of the services in the context of their sustainable provision after the end of the project. In this regard a contract has been signed with the Technical University in Sofia with the objective to provide expertise and

support in the data management of home care activities and facilitate the definition of the costs. The analysis of the home care activities itself will start in January 2014 and it will be supported by a health economist – expert of the Swiss Red Cross as well as by expert groups involving representatives of relevant health and social institutions in Bulgaria.

### **Provision of home care services in the target region**

The beneficiaries of home care services in the target region were selected strictly according to the criteria defined in the project and the selection itself was performed in each municipality by a joint committee, comprising the manager of the HC Center, a representative of the respective municipality as well as of the Regional Department for Social Assistance and the Regional Health Inspection.

The total number of beneficiaries served by the four HC Centers reached 340 persons at the end of 2013 and their capacity will be further expanded in the first months of 2014. The analysis of the data shows that patients in the age group 70-80 prevail /44 %/, followed by patient in the age group 80 – 90 years old /38 %/ and 60-70 years old /16 %/. A very small percentage consists of patients over the age of 90. The most common diseases are those of the cardio-vascular system, of the locomotory system, neurological and endocrine diseases.

After one year of regular home care services provision in the region, two facts became evident. Home cares are very much appreciated by the population as through them not only social services are provided as it is in other municipal or state programs but also health care. Besides, health care is quite difficult to access for many population groups and especially for older people. The second important aspect of the services is that they are very appropriate form for smaller locations, distant from the regional centers, where usually no form of health or social care exists and people have to travel a long distance when having different health problems.

### **Continuous training of the staff**

The nurses and the home-helpers employed at the HC Centers receive regular support and practical trainings by experts of the SRC with profound experience in home care. The trainings include different topics, among them: planning of cares, prophylaxis of decubitus, kinaesthetic and hygiene of the services provided at home, etc. These trainings raise the qualification of the staff and improve the quality of the cares provided leading to more adequate satisfaction of the needs of the beneficiaries.

### **Feasibility study among Roma community**

Among the basic project objectives is to encompass other vulnerable communities in the provision of home care services. In this relation, a feasibility study among the Roma community in the region of Vratsa was carried out in 2013 in order to explore their specific needs and find out the opportunities to provide home care services. Although delayed with a few months because of the political changes and the parliamentary elections in May 2013, the study was implemented in the period June-September. A sociological agency with significant experience in research as well as in working with ethnic communities elaborated the methodology and organized the implementation of the study. The final report with the results from the study was provided at the end of 2013.

### **Inclusion of Roma into the home care services provision**

On the basis of the results from the study, eight additional job positions for Roma home-helpers were created, two in each HC Center. They were successfully trained in September, 2013 and employed at the HC Centers. Thus the percentage of Roma working at the HC Centers reached 25 % from the total number of job positions opened in the project. Based on the results from their

work it can be stated that they are valuable members of the staff showing serious attitude towards their job and very well accepted by the beneficiaries. Furthermore, the number of beneficiaries from Roma origin served is 43 out of all 340 patients which is a proof that home care services are an appropriate form for the Roma population given their health and social status.

### **Monitoring visit**

Mr. Ulrich Stuerzinger – Head of Division New EU Member States at SDC, Mr. Patrick Etienne – Programme Manager at SDC, Mrs. Franziska Keller from SECO and Mr. Gerassim Gerassimov – Program manager at the Swiss Embassy in Bulgaria visited the HC Centers in Vratsa and Oryahovo on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2013. They were acquainted with the activity of both centers, meetings with the Mayor in Vratsa and Oryahovo were held as well as with the Deputy Regional Governor.

At the end of July the Home Care Center in Vratza was visited by Mr. Mattia Poretti – Head of the Swiss Contribution Office in Bulgaria, together with Mrs. Zornitza Rusinova and Mrs. Lilia Gouneva – both working on the “Inclusion of Roma and other Vulnerable Groups” Thematic Fund. Mrs. Christine Rutschmann – coordinator of the project on behalf of the Swiss Red Cross also took part in the field visit.

### **Presenting of the project at the SDC annual conference**

The Home Care Project was presented at the SDC annual conference for Eastern Europe held on 31st May in Bern. A selection of projects from several countries, among them Bulgaria, illustrated the activity of SDC how the projects for the implementation of the enlargement contribution are progressing. Government representatives and experts from Switzerland and abroad discussed the importance and the impact of these projects. Except for the Home Care Project, projects from Latvia, Poland, Czech Republic and Slovenia were presented.

### **Challenges met and corrective measures**

#### **Significant delay of the project activities as a result of the political changes**

In order to achieve its objectives, the Home Care Project is very much dependent on good cooperation with various institutions. The existing situation in the country in 2013 created immense barriers in front of the Project Implementation Unit and did not allow major activities related to progress in establishing institutional framework of home care services to move forward. Among them are:

- the work related to the adoption of the draft legislative changes was blocked;
- the proposal for the adoption of a new profession Home – helper in Bulgaria could not be moved forward;
- the activities originally planned for 2013, i.e. elaboration of quality standards for home care services; elaboration of state educational requirements and training curriculums both for home-helpers and for nurses providing cares at home were postponed.
- The feasibility study among the Roma community was delayed because of the Parliamentary elections held in May 2013.

For these reasons and following a decision of the Advisory Board of the project, it was discussed between Bulgarian and Swiss Red Cross if the project could be extended until the end of 2016 as it is, as mentioned above, dependent from the proper functioning of different institutions. The extension would be financed through financial means not used up during project implementation in 2012 onwards.

### **Planned activities for 2014**



- Regular provision of home care services to older people in the target region further expanding the capacity of the centers up to 400 beneficiaries;
- Work related to the adoption by the Parliament of the draft legislative proposal introducing changes in the Health Act;
- Elaboration of sub-legislative acts regulating the organization and functioning of the Home Care Centers;
- Data collection and cost-effectiveness analysis of the home care services, incl. the establishment of an expert group with experts of relevant institutions;
- Establishment of expert groups for elaboration of quality standards for the social services and for the health cares provided at home;
- Organizing of PR and awareness raising events both at national and local level.

## **Activity “Inclusion of Roma and other vulnerable groups”**

### **Introduction**

The thematic fund agreement for the reform fund linked to the inclusion of Roma and other vulnerable groups concerning the Programme for the promotion of social inclusion of Roma and other vulnerable groups was signed on the 21<sup>st</sup> of January 2013. The PMU started its activities as from 16.05.2013 and during the two first months (May-June) was located in the Embassy of Switzerland. As from July 2013, the PMU was accommodated in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MoLSP).

### **Activity Review**

The PMU has conducted several field visits as follows: in June 2013: Burgas and Plovdiv, in August 2013: Stara Zagora and Sliven, in October 2013: Dobrich, Varna and Montana. During those visits the PMU met representatives of the local authorities and NGOs working with the Roma community in the field of health, education and social integration, more specifically in the segregated neighbourhoods of those cities. In Sofia, the PMU met key actors in the governmental (12) and non-governmental sectors (15) which are active in the field of Roma integration with focus on education, healthcare and social inclusion. The PMU has thoroughly reviewed analytical documents provided by the MoLSP and other stakeholders as well as the available 27 regional strategies on Roma integration. Following all those visits, meetings and analytical work, the PMU established a list of current interventions and possible strategies in the field of Roma integration and issued an inception paper which was presented to all stakeholders (MoES, MoLSP, MoH, SDC, NCU and Association of municipalities) during a working meeting held on 16.10.2013 in Belchin. During this meeting it was decided to skip the pilot phase as it was initially presented in the programme outline paper and to start working directly on integration projects with 4 to 5 municipalities with a specific focus on pre-school and primary education, as well as primary healthcare and maternal and children health. The decision to merge priority lines 1 and 2 was also taken.

The PMU is currently participating in the meetings of the Coordination group set up by the National Council for cooperation on ethnic and integration issues.

The PMU has initiated the set-up of a working group for the purpose of the programme. The working group includes representatives from the 3 line ministries and had so far 4 meetings during which were drafted and agreed the pre-selection criteria for the municipalities as well as the core activities in the field of education and health. The PMU participated in the regional seminar on Roma inclusion held in Belgrade from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> of December. End of November, the PMU has also

started the organisation in January 2014 of the Programme Information meeting for municipalities.

### **Challenges met and corrective measures**

The PMU was established in mid May 2013 and at the end of the month the new government was appointed. To a certain extent that slowed the coordination with the three line ministries. But by September with the final appointment of responsible deputy ministers and the establishment of a working group to support the PMU with representatives for MLSP, MES and MH improved the coordination with the national policies. The unstable political situation is still one of the highest risks for the implementation of the programme.

### **Planned activities for 2014**

The activities for 2014 are focused on the accelerating the process for contracting the municipalities that would implement the projects. In January the Steering Committee (SC) is to be established and the first meeting is planned for February. The pre-selection of the concepts of the municipalities will be finalized in March and it is expected that the selected municipalities will be invited to propose their detailed projects in April, after their approval by the 2<sup>nd</sup> SC meeting. In April the Programme document will be finalized for approval by the 2<sup>nd</sup> SC meeting. It is expected the implementation of the projects to start in the second half of 2014.

## **Scholarship Fund – Sciex NMSch**

CRUS Brief report of the activities 2013

### **Activity Review**

#### **Three main activities were conducted within the Scholarship Fund in 2013:**

##### **a) Evaluation and selection of the proposals from the 3<sup>rd</sup> call:**

For the record, 14 eligible proposals were sent into the evaluation procedure for the 3<sup>rd</sup> call of Bulgaria (deadline: November 1<sup>st</sup> 2012). The first step of the evaluation procedure (scoring by the Home and Host Institutions) was completed by Mid-January 2013 and the second step of the evaluation procedure by the Sciex Evaluation Committee was accomplished by the end of February 2013. At this stage, each eligible proposal was assessed by three different experts from the respective scientific field. The experts met on February 13<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> 2013 to discuss all eligible proposals and to allocate the final ranking focussing on the scientific quality.

At the end of the procedure, the Sciex Steering Committee held a meeting on March 25<sup>th</sup> 2013 in order to select the proposals on the basis of the results of the evaluation and the budget available. Out of the 14 eligible proposals submitted for the 3<sup>rd</sup> call, the Sciex Steering Committee has approved 8 Bulgarian-Swiss projects for a total amount of 696'262.50 CHF.

Payments to these projects were made directly by the Sciex Management (CRUS) to the Swiss Host Institutions as soon as all contractual documents were delivered (Multipartite Contract signed between CRUS and Host Institution, work contract of the Sciex Fellow, specification sheet, work permit). Host Institutions administrate then the Fellowship received and pay a monthly salary to the Sciex Fellows.

##### **b) Formal check and evaluation of the proposals from the 4<sup>th</sup> call:**

The 4<sup>th</sup> call for Bulgaria was launched on September 1<sup>st</sup> 2013 and closed on November 1<sup>st</sup> 2013. Altogether, 15 proposals were submitted from Bulgaria.

After the Formal Check conducted by the Bulgarian Coordination Body, only 13 proposals were declared formally eligible and sent into the evaluation procedure (see below).

The first step of the evaluation procedure by the Home and Host Institutions (scoring) begun in December 2013 (until Mid-January 2014 - with the final decision by the Sciex Steering Committee at the end of March 2014).

**c) Organization of the third Sciex Fellows Event and of the Training Session for Coordination Bodies and Regional Offices on October 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> 2013 in Zurich.**

The novelty of this third edition was a poster session where around 20 Sciex Fellows presented the research project they conduct in Switzerland. Among them, two Bulgarian Sciex Fellows participated, Ms. Pavlina Sasheva Naydenova (12.222) and Dr. Yassen Mutafchiev (12.184). Information on this event is available at the following web site: <http://www.crus.ch/information-programmes/sciex-nms-ch/rn/sciex-fellows-event-2013/poster-session.html?L=1>

Unfortunately, no representative from the Bulgarian Coordination Body could attend these meetings.

- Overview on the participation of Bulgaria in the different calls

Bulgaria	Number of proposals submitted	Number of eligible proposals	Number of granted proposals
Call – Deadline November 2011	15	14*	4
Call – Deadline April 2012	4	3**	1
Call – Deadline November 2012	16	14***	8
Call – Deadline November 2013	15	13****	<i>Decision at the end of March 2014</i>

\* 1 application was withdrawn

\*\* 1 proposal was not eligible since it was incomplete until the deadline

\*\*\* 2 proposals were not eligible due to the new personal requirements introduced with the call from November 2012 (for a doctoral fellowship, start of the fellowship at the earliest 1 year after having started the PhD studies / for a postdoctoral fellowship, start of the fellowship at the latest 5 years after obtaining the doctorate)

\*\*\*\* 1 proposal was not eligible due to the personal requirements and 1 proposal has been withdrawn

- Overview on the 13 granted Bulgarian-Swiss projects

**- Research Field**

Human and Social Sciences: 2 projects.

Mathematics, Natural- and Engineering Sciences: 5 projects.

Biology and Medicine: 6 projects.

**- Status**

7 Doc. Cand. / 6 PostDoc

**- Gender**

7 Ms / 6 Mr

**- List**

- \***11.113**: IDAST - Identification of Dehydrin Types involved in Abiotic Stress Responses in *Trifolium repens* (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences/ University of Bern)
- \***11.233**: N-IANG - Notch signaling as a potential regulatory mechanism of intussusceptive (splitting) angiogenesis (Medical University of Sofia/ University of Bern)
- \***11.235**: TRADYCLAD - Linking transposon dynamics with heat responsiveness and climate adaptation (Institute of Plant Physiology and Genetics, Sofia/ University of Neuchatel)
- \***11.283**: Theodore Abu Qurrah - The reception of Aristotelian thought in Byzantine philosophy (Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski/ University of Lausanne)
- \***12.154**: EISM - Extracellular Interactome Screening for Melanoma (Trakia University, Medical Faculty/ University of Zurich)
- \***12.184**: ACUAPHYL - Diversity and phylogenetic relationships within the parasitic nematode family Acuariidae (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences/ University of Geneva)
- \***12.197**: Silver Wires - Design of linear Ag complexes by using tautomeric ligands (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences/ University of Fribourg)
- \***12.221**: PAMSCOD - New Perspectives and Analysis Methods in Spanish Historical Linguistics Based on Corpora of Old Documents (Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski/ University of Zurich)
- \***12.222**: DMR-RDA - Identifying Differentially Methylated Regions in non-model systems using Representational Difference Analysis (Medical University of Sofia/ University of Zurich)
- \***12.249**: ORGASOL - Development of Novel organic Dyes and Redox Electrolytes for Dye sensitized Solar Cells (University of Chemical Technology and Metallurgy/ Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne)
- \***12.280**: SPRAYWIN - Metal oxides layers deposited by spray pyrolysis for smart window technology (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences/ EMPA)
- \***12.352**: AQUA-SAFE - Enhancing safety and security of Aquaponics technology for fish and vegetable cultivation (Trakia University/ Zurich University of Applied Sciences)
- \***12.368**: HELIOS - cationic HELIcenes for Optical Spectroscopy (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences/ University of Geneva)

**- Financial Overview (in CHF) as per 31.12.2013**

Available budget for fellowships:	1'839'450.00
Total granted:	1'146'512.50
Reimbursed from terminated projects:	16'484.89
Remaining budget:	709'422.39

After the three first calls for Bulgaria, less than 40% of the scholarship funds remain for applications to be considered under the two calls left.

**Challenges met and corrective measures**

The implementation of the Sciex Programme in Bulgaria is running smoothly and satisfactory. The interest of the Bulgarian scientific community is there and the level of participation in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and

4<sup>th</sup> calls was good. The first two granted Sciex projects were completed in 2013 and the Sciex Fellows back to Bulgaria after their research stay in Switzerland (11.131 & 11.235).

Unfortunately, the different successive changes of Director within the Science Directorate don't facilitate the collaboration between the Bulgarian Coordination Body and the Swiss Intermediate Body and potentially the visibility of the Sciex Programme in Bulgaria.

### **Planned activities for 2014**

- January 1<sup>st</sup> 2014: Launching of the 5<sup>th</sup> and last call for Bulgaria;
- Spring 2014: results of the revised mid-term Review conducted by SDC (yet to be confirmed);
- March 24<sup>th</sup> 2014: SC Meeting (final decision on the 4<sup>th</sup> call);
- April 1<sup>st</sup> 2014: Deadline for the submission of the proposals under the 5<sup>th</sup> call;
- End of August 2014: SC Meeting (final decision on the 5<sup>th</sup> call);
- Autumn 2014: Annual Training Session and Sciex Fellows Event (yet to be confirmed);

Ongoing:

- Support for Swiss and Bulgarian researchers;
- Check of the scientific and financial reports of the granted projects.

## **Bulgarian-Swiss Research Programme (Research Fund)**

SNSF Annual Report 2013

### **Introduction**

#### **Progress achieved in 2011, 2012**

- 20.09.2011: Signature of the Mandate Agreement between the SDC and the SNSF
- 26.10.2011: 1st Steering Committee Meeting in Sofia (more details -> report 2012)
- 27.10.2011: Information Event in Sofia (more details -> report 2012)
- 15.11.2011: Launch of the call for proposals
- 15.01.2012: Establishment of Xing platform for interested researchers in Bulgaria and Switzerland
- 15.03.2012: Deadline for submission of proposals -> submission of 47 applications
- 27.08.2012: Meeting of the evaluation panel
- 28.08.2012: 2<sup>nd</sup> Steering Committee Meeting in Bern -> confirmation of the evaluation results
- 11.09.2012: Meeting of the SNSF's Specialised Committee International Co-operation (FA IZ) -> approval of decision
- 18.09.2012: Meeting of Presiding Board of the SNSF -> approval of decision
- 30.09.2012: Information of the Swiss PIs about the outcome of the evaluation by sending them the decision letters
- 14.12.2012: Kick-off meeting for the Swiss PIs in Bern -> presentation of the guidelines for the lifetime management of BSRP Joint Research Projects.

#### **Activity review for 2013**

All the JRPs started between November 2012 and April 2013 (see table below). With the exception of one project, all the JRP have duration of 36 months.

The Swiss project contribution (88.25%) will be paid in three installments by the SNSF to the Swiss PIs, who will transfer the portion for the Bulgarian partners to their institutions in Bulgaria. The first installments have been done (see annex). The Bulgarian partner will receive the Bulgarian project contribution (11.75%) directly from the SD/MEYS (see annex, yet to be confirmed).

Before the first installment could be done, the applicants were asked to upload all necessary authorisations, a project summary and a copy of the "Grant Agreement", which had to be signed both by the Swiss and the Bulgarian PI.

Number	Applicant	Institution	Title of JRP	Start and end of JRP
IZEBZO_142967	von Gunten Stephan	BE	Design of modified immunoglobulin preparations with additionally induced polyspecificity for passive immunotherapy of sepsis	01.11.2012-31.10.2015 (36 months)
IZEBZO_142969	Imdorf Christian	BS	Social disparities and regional differences in school-to-work transitions in Bulgaria	01.11.2012-31.10.2015 (36 months)
IZEBZO_142978	Kretzschmar Ruben	ETHZ	Arsenic contamination of Ogosta river: Linking biogeochemical processes in floodplain soils with river system dynamics	01.11.2012-31.10.2015 (36 months)
IZEBZO_143110	Butterweck Veronika	FHNW	Valorisation of industrial wastewater: biologically active substances from side products of rose oil distillation	01.12.2012-30.11.2015 (36 months)
IZEBZO_143169	Kessler Felix	NE	Prenylquinones and carotenoids - potential mediators of tolerance of higher plants to combined light and temperature stress	01.12.2012-30.11.2015 (36 months)
IZEBZO_142972	Leifeld Jens	Sonstige	Land-use and management impacts on carbon sequestration in mountain ecosystems	01.01.2013-31.12.2015 (36 months)
IZEBZO_142974	Stolze Matthias	Sonstige	Addressing socio-economic regional disparities: the potential of organic farming for strengthening rural areas in Bulgaria	01.01.2013-31.12.2015 (36 months)
IZEBZO_142998	Green Eva	LA	The dynamic nature of interethnic attitudes in Bulgaria: a social psychological perspective	01.01.2013-31.12.2015 (36 months)
IZEBZO_142979	Nollert Michael	FR	Migration and Transnationalism between Switzerland and Bulgaria: assessing social inequalities and regional disparities in the context of changing policies	01.01.2013-31.12.2015 (36 months)
IZEBZO_143109	Bebi Peter	WSL	Subalpine forest development in Bulgarian Mountain Forests under climate change	01.01.2013-31.12.2015 (36 months)
IZEBZO_143004	Wintgens Thomas	FHNW	Innovative P-recovery from waste sludge	01.02.2013-31.01.2015 (24 months)
IZEBZO_142989	Meier Beat	ZFH	PhytoBalk	01.03.2013-29.02.2016 (36 months)
IZEBZO_143003	Hörtensteiner Stefan	ZH	Identification of genes that regulate plant tolerance to adverse biotic stress factors and determine plant ageing	01.04.2013-31.03.2016 (36 months)

Every 12 months, the Swiss and the Bulgarian PIs must provide a scientific and financial report. Four scientific reports were submitted so far (green). Some comments:

- In all projects, scientific articles have been published or are in preparation.
- Active participation in conferences/congresses is mentioned.
- In one project, the application for an European patent is foreseen.
- Several visits have taken place mainly from Bulgarian collaborators in Switzerland.
- No problems with telecommunication, transfer of funds, transfer of goods, taxation or customs were encountered.
- In one project, the Bulgarian PI faced unexpected bureaucratic problems concerning the transfer of funds to an agency that will conduct surveys for the project. Because internal regulations of the Bulgarian institute do not allow payment for a data collection project of the foreseen size, it was decided to retransfer the funds budgeted for the payment of the first installment to the agency to the Swiss PI's account at the University of Basel. The agency's first bill was paid through the project account at the University of Basel.

### **Challenges met and corrective measures**

#### **Steering committee meeting**

Originally, it was planned that the Steering Committee should meet at least once a year. However, the SNSF suggested to organise a broader meeting in 2014 (mid-term meeting), where the Steering Committee Meeting could be extended by a social event, including the attendance of the Bulgarian PI's.

#### **Collaboration between SNSF and MES**

Both organisations are in contact (correspondence by e-mail, telephone) and the collaboration is working well. SNSF and MES both respect the deadlines agreed upon. When unexpected situations arise, both organisations seek constructive and pragmatic solutions and agree on the actions that need to be taken.

#### **Planned activities for 2014**

- Check of the scientific and financial reports;
  - Release of the second installment for the 13 projects;
  - Organisation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Steering Committee Meeting in Sofia (preferably spring 2014);
- Preparation of a mid-term meeting for the Bulgarian PI in Sofia (preferably spring 2014);

### **Partnership and Expert Fund (PEF)**

Based on SIB Annual Report 2013

#### **Introduction:**

The Call for Proposals for the block grant scheme under the Partnership fund is a rolling one. In year 2013 the deadline for submitting project proposals under the PF block grant scheme expired. Actually the financial allocations for the FA project and the block grant projects were exhausted after the submission and evaluation of the second batch of project proposals – submitted until the end of April 2014.

The important external developments which influenced the implementation of activities under TF PEF in 2013 relate to the political developments in the country marked with the national protests throughout 2013, the period of a caretaker government, the national elections in the spring of 2013, the subsequent change of government in the beginning of summer 2013. The results from that were mostly problems in the timely and secure implementation of projects especially where governmental structures are involved. According to SIB fortunately most of these problems can be and are in the process of solving. Mostly these affected the implementation of the FA project *“Promotion of social dialogue and better working conditions for employees”* where the implementing structures are governmental bodies.

Another development related to TF PEF were the negotiations between the Bulgarian and the Swiss governments for changes in the structure of TF PEF namely transferring the funds from the block grant scheme of the Expert Fund to the block grant scheme resources of the Partnership fund. The finalization of this action is pending ratification by the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria. This increasing of the financial resources of the Partnership fund will have a positive effect for the eligible organizations allowing more good projects to be financed and more good organizations to be supported in their efforts to deal with development challenges and establishing of sustainable partnerships with organizations from Switzerland.

### **Activity Review**

The FA project *“Promotion of social dialogue and better working conditions for employees”* commenced on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2012 and will be completed on the 2 March 2016. The Activity Agreement (AA) was signed on 26 November, 2012. Two quarterly operational reports and one 6-month report were submitted by the EA based in the MLSP.

The implementation of project activities was delayed due to the changing political environment in the country. Practically the official establishment of the Project Management Team (PMT) was done in early August 2013. Never-the-less the experts from the MLSP conducted the most of the envisaged activities especially those which are related to tenders and financing and which could not have been caught up with later due to the specificity of the institution and its internal rules. SIB acknowledges the difficulties which the PMT encountered and several meetings were carried out in order to monitor the developments. An updated schedule of activities was prepared by the PMT and submitted to SIB in August 2013. So far SIB considers the situation with the implementation of this project as worrying but still manageable and intends to apply as much effort as necessary to encourage and assist the PMT in catching up in the implementation of the activities.

The developments with the project proposals to the PF block grant scheme included two batches of project proposals to be evaluated – the first consisting of project proposals submitted until the end of December 2012, and the second – until the end of April 2013. From 15 project proposals in the first batch, 12 were approved by the Steering Committee and SDC for financing. In the period June-September negotiations were carried out with the successful applicants and Activity Agreements were signed with 10 of them. With one of them the negotiations are still in progress. With one of the applicants the negotiations failed and SIB suggested to the Steering Committee to withdraw this project proposal from the list of approved projects.

29 project proposals were submitted until 30 April, 2013 and formed the second batch. The evaluation process was completed and 20 project proposals were submitted for approval to and



approved by the Steering Committee and later on by SDC. The approved list of project proposals includes a list of 13 small (Swiss grant less than 100 000 CHF) project proposals for which there are approximately enough financial resources left after signing the first 10 AAs, a waiting list consisting of 3 big (Swiss grant more than 100 000 CHF and less than 250 000 CHF) project proposals, and four reserve project proposals. The waiting list is waiting for the ratification of the amendment to the Agreement between the Swiss Federal Council and the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria for transferring the resources from the Expert Fund to the Partnership Fund and lifting of the limit of only three big projects to be funded under that block grant scheme.

The Steering Committee session of the TF PEF was carried out on the 11 December 2013.

All the contracted projects under the Partnership fund block grant scheme are in process of implementation. No deviations from the planning have been reported to the SIB so far. With the purpose of facilitating the EAs, SIB developed and distributed to the EAs Procurement Rules, Visibility Guidelines and Instruction Manual for documenting implemented activities and incurred costs. In addition, SIB duly provides information and instructions to the EAs upon request.

With signing of 10 AAs a total amount of CHF 1 108 865,53 from the Swiss grant was committed. A total of CHF 225 115,36 was paid as advance payment following payment requests from the EAs. One of the EAs requested and received the second advance payment of CHF 59 985,72.

### **Challenges met and corrective measures**

There was a significant delay in the implementation of the FA project. Updated scheduling of activities was requested and made by the EA. There is still pending the signing of partnership agreement between the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Swiss partner – Solidar Swiss, due to the changes in the management team of the Swiss partner.

One of the major challenges in implementing the Partnership Fund block grant scheme was the finding of a partner from Switzerland. SIB has made significant effort in resolving this problem by establishing a clear procedure for that including a template, which the Bulgarian organisations, which were looking for partner, could fill-in and then SIB were contacting appropriate organizations in Switzerland, explaining the objectives of the programme. The experience from the procedure showed that if a good, clear and specific project description was prepared, potential Swiss Partner Organisations were in general quite interested.

Reasons for cautiousness or low interest of potential Swiss Partner organisations were:

- ✓ the project idea was not clear;
- ✓ the project was not in the thematic focus of the organisation, it didn't support the project focus, (e.g. alternative medical cancer approaches) and it does not have the knowhow;
- ✓ the organisation in general does not conduct project abroad or does not have the capacity;
- ✓ in certain cases the organisation already runs a project with an Bulgarian or another Eastern Europe organisation (within the frameworks) and did not have the capacity for further cooperation;
- ✓ bad experiences with other EU partnership funds were nearly never mentioned;
- ✓ institution does not want to be only an enabler for transferring funds to Bulgaria, but wants to have real project (maybe having bad previous experience?).

In general being contacted by the SIB consortia member(s), gave certain credibility to potential Swiss partners on the reliability of the program. Few potential Swiss partners expected support by the Swiss SIB in the elaboration of the project, which could be provided.

Some reasons for difficulties in cooperation:

- Potential Bulgarian partner did not prepare a qualitative good project proposal or could not well define the requirements for and the extent of the Swiss Partner's support,
- Swiss partner lost confidence and suspected corruption, because potential Bulgarian partner changed contact persons without explaining or used private email addresses for communication.

More than 10 Bulgarian partnership requests (after mid of May) had been informed about the standby for the search for partner organisations, as the Funds seem to be exhausted with the second call from April 2013.

One of the cases illustrating the difficulty in establishing relations between Bulgarian and Swiss organisations was the case where the applicant was the administration of the Regional Governor of Sofia Region. The problem was related to the changes in the administration following the national elections and the problem of co-financing. The Swiss partner was worried about the changes of the persons initially included in the project and was doubtful about its further participation in the project. The Steering Committee at its session on 11 December gave a final deadline for completing the negotiations by providing a renewed Partnership statement by the Swiss partner and an explicit letter for the co-financing – 13 January, 2014.

#### **Planned activities for 2014**

A monitoring plan was prepared by SIB and will be submitted to SDC in January 2014. Among the dates of on-site visits and report checks a two-week mission with evaluation purpose by both the Swiss partners in the SIB consortium – InnovaBridge and Neosys AG, is planned for May-June 2014. Due to insufficiency of funds other missions for the time being are not planned. Such missions can be decided on upon necessity.

Two sessions of the Steering Committee of TF PEF are planned for 2014 – one in May and one in December.

#### **5. Technical Assistance Fund**

Technical Assistance Fund (TAF) is used for costs that are additional and directly related to the implementation and management of the Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Programme.

#### **Progress achieved in 2013**

In 2013 the NCU submitted to the National Fund, (Paying Authority) four requests for payments on a total amount of CHF 47 822,13, including national co-financing.

#### Technical Assistance performance 2013

<b>Budget Item</b>	<b>Disbursed amount (CHF), incl. national co-financing</b>
Annual meeting and other meetings/evaluation committee	4 333,28

TAF verification	5 641,80
Hiring consultants for Terms of reference preparation	2 944,26
Participation in meetings held with Swiss authorities	10 887,00
Translation costs	290,15
Administrative Assistance to NCU	23 725,67
<b>Total:</b>	<b>47 822,13</b>

*Costs for activities implemented in the last quarter of 2012 were included in the payment request prepared in January 2013.*

The total amount disbursed under TAF is 69 747.18 CHF, and reported co-financing stands at 10 462.08 CHF.

#### **Activities implemented in 2013 under TAF:**

- Annual Meeting of the Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Programme was organized and held in the period 13-15 March 2013 in Pirin Hotel, Sandanski, Blagoevgrad municipality. The logistics of the meeting included renting of meeting room and technical equipment, transportation costs;
- TAF Manager was paid from January 2013 till June 2013. The responsibilities of TAF Manager according to the temporary labour contract consist of approval of the verified expenditure, TAF budgeting, forecasts, monitoring, preparation of financial statements and reports. A Civil contract was signed in July 2013 for provision of advise concerning: the spending of the budget for TAF activities and the overall management of the TAF budget; the implementation of work, carried out by subcontractors; as well as for the provision of support for BSCP activities;
- On 9<sup>th</sup> of April 2013, a contract was signed for provision of legal expertise in the making of arrangements for the execution of "Project Preparation Aid", as well as for issuing of opinions on project proposals and contracting;
- Since the beginning of 2013 two accountants from "Budget and Finance" Directorate at the Council of Ministers were appointed on temporary civil contracts for keeping records of payments in SAP and controlling;
- A contract for verification of the expenditures under TAF with "Grant Thornton" Ltd signed on 27 July 2012 was implemented in 2013 also. The implementation period for the contract activities is up to 31 January 2014. The company was selected by public procurement procedure. During the reported period the company verified all the expenditures spent under TAF for 2013;
- A Civil contract was signed for Terms of reference preparation for activities subject of public procurement and implemented;

- On 25<sup>th</sup> of March a NCU representative took part in the Steering Committee Meeting on the TF “Scholarship”, held in Fribourg, Switzerland;
- In the period 9-13 September 2013, in the city of Bern, Switzerland, representatives of NCU, PO and AA took part in a work visit and technical meetings:

**The following public procurement procedures were prepared in 2013:**

- Elaboration of Procedures and Guidelines – not started ;
- TAF Intermediary Audit –not started ;
- Selection of a new company for TAF verification – the contractor was selected but contract is not signed due to appeals procedure;
- Logistics - IB and EA Trainings; Annual meetings and Monitoring Committee meetings organization – contractor is selected, contract signature is in process;
- Information events organization and printing of information materials – the procedure was canceled.

**Planned activities for 2014**

The main activities under TAF for 2014 are as follows:

- elaboration of Procedures and Guidelines and TAF Intermediary Audit;
- selection of a company for TAF verification;
- IB and EA Trainings; Annual meetings and Monitoring Committee meetings organization;
- Information events organization and printing of information materials.

**6. Summary of the results achieved under the Programme for 2013**

- 2 Amendments of the Framework Agreement agreed;
- Second Annual Meeting held;
- Four SDC/SECO missions were held;
- Discussions on the texts of the Project Standard Agreement were finalized.
- 2 visits of Bulgarian representatives to Switzerland performed;
- Project Outlines in thematic area 3 approved by SECO;
- Final Project Proposal submitted and approved by the IB in thematic area 3;
- 2 additional project ideas identified for funding from the unallocated and unused funds;
- The Project document for project “Modernized Trams for the City of Sofia” was prepared and approved;
- 9 Steering Committee’s meetings held under the five TFs;
- Implementation of Technical Assistance Fund is ongoing;

- The thematic fund agreement for the reform fund linked to the inclusion of Roma and other vulnerable groups concerning the Programme for the promotion of social inclusion of Roma and other vulnerable groups was signed and the PMU started its activities;
- All Joint Research Projects started between November 2012 and April 2013;
- 2 calls for proposals launched under TF Scholarship;
- All the contracted projects under the Partnership fund block grant scheme are in process of implementation;
- 3 information events, related to Thematic Funds held.

### III. FINANCIAL PROGRESS

#### 1. Overall Financial Status

By the end of 2013 the total commitment of Swiss contribution funds stands to 59%, pre commitment is 37% and in total commitment and pre commitment is 96 %. The total amount disbursed is 13,987,631 CHF, or 18 % from the total programme budget and reported co-financing stands at 315,072 CHF.

The overall financial status of the Programme as per 31.12.2013, outlining allocated/pre-committed/committed/dispursed funds including Bulgarian co-financing share is extended in Annex 2.

#### Thematic Areas 2 and 3

The total pre commitment of Swiss contribution funds under Thematic Area 2 (Environment and Infrastructure) and Thematic Area 3 "Promotion of the private sector" is CHF 27 863 250.

#### Thematic Funds

The total commitment of Swiss contribution funds, including TF "Roma Inclusion" and Swiss administrative costs amounts to 44,650,000 CHF.

Total Actual amount disbursed by SDC is **13,987,631** CHF, and reported co-financing stands at 315,072 CHF.

#### 2. Funds remaining for commitment

The total amount of the reserve under the Programme accounts for CHF 3,5million. In the course of 2013 CHF 2.536 million free resources under Thematic area "Private Sector" and CHF 0,95 million set as Reserve in the indicative budget of the Programme remain unallocated. The total amounts to be committed in 2014 is CHF 3.486. 750.

Following these provisions, during the First Annual Meeting in March 2013 a discussion on the possible focus areas to be addressed by the unallocated funds was continued and was left open for more suggestions and ideas.

During the Technical meeting in Septemeber in Bern project ideas for the allocation of the remaining amount under the programme was discussed.

After the technical mision wich was held in the period 26-29 November 2013 one of the projects, proposed by the Swiss partners "Modernized Trams for the City of Sofia" was approved by the both sidesAs a result, the following activities were performed:

- The draft final project document was finalised by NCU and SECO during the reporting period;
- On 10<sup>th</sup> January 2014 the Monitoring Committee of the Programme voted support to the financing of the Project "Modernized Trams for the City of Sofia" and to the proposal, the funds foreseen for the development of a Multi-modal mobility study to be transferred to budget line "Reserve/Contingency". This budget will be used to finance activities complementing the existing Multi-modal mobility research and/or to perform measures to implement recommendations made in it;
- The NCU notified SECO for this decision by mail from 14 January 2014;
- The NCU received an official approval of the project by SECO on 28 January 2014;
- In the meantime, the NCU investigated the issue for possible VAT, duties and taxes which could be due at the import of the goods to Bulgaria. According to the position of the Bulgarian Ministry of Finance the import of trams from Switzerland shall be a subject to duties with a zero rate but a VAT shall be paid. As it concerns the compliance with the State Aid rules the NCU consulted the Ministry of Finance and will send an official letter to SECO.

A project in the field of dual vocational education was identified during the Annual Meeting 2013. A Swiss experts' mission was organised in the period 19-22<sup>nd</sup> of November for the preparation and design of a pilot Dual Education project in Bulgaria. The need of a second Swiss experts' mission for the preparation and design of this project was recognised and agreed to be held in early 2014.

### **3. Financial audits**

For the TF Reform Fund linked to Civil Society Participation a contract with the Bulgarian audit company Audit Consult Ltd was signed. The audit company will conduct audits of all projects – including the FA project, the block grant funded project, as well as audit of the activities of the Bulgarian member of the consortium – the Balkan Institute for Labour and Social Policy.

An audit was launched and conducted for the "Linking Nature" project.

During the reported period both sides came to an agreement that the PPF projects would not be subject to interim financial audit according to the provisions in Annex 3, p.4.5 as the projects implementation had not been started yet and no costs had been incurred during the two years from the start of the Programme.

## IV. PUBLICITY

During the reported period the NCU continued to implement its responsibilities for publicity of the Programme's implementation status through:

- Maintaining of the official webpage of the Programme: [www.swiss-contribution.bg](http://www.swiss-contribution.bg) or <http://www.eufunds.bg/bg/page/20> ;
- Ensuring the respect of information and publicity principles within the framework of initiatives, activities and projects, financed under the Programme as well as in the process of their planning and implementation.

### **Web based Publicity**

During the period the information on the official webpage of the Bulgarian –Swiss Cooperation Programme (<http://www.eufunds.bg/en/page/20> or <http://www.swiss-contribution.bg>), created in 2010 has been updated on a regular basis. New functionalities and documents were added, following the progress of implementation of the Programme.

Through the NCU's email addresses, published in the special section "Contacts" on the official web page of the programme, there were received many enquiries and questions, concerning general and specific issues of the cooperation programme.

## **Information Events**

During the reported period several public events and information days related mainly to the implementation of the Thematic funds were held, organized by different institutions in order to promote the Bulgarian - Swiss Cooperation Programme.

### **Official launch of the project "Counteraction to Crimes Related to Motor Vehicle Trafficking" (Tracing Vehicle Trafficking) under the Thematic fund "Security"**

On 27.02.2013 the official start was given, of the project "Counteraction to Crimes Related to Motor Vehicle Trafficking" (Tracing Vehicle Trafficking) under the thematic fund "Security" of the Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Programme.

The ceremony was attended by H.E. Mrs.Regina Escher-Ambassador of Switzerland to Bulgaria - and representatives of the Swiss Intermediate Body, the National Coordination Unit and the Ministry of Interior. The event was opened by the Deputy Minister of Interior Dimitar Georgiev. Addresses were given by H. E. Ms. Escher and the representative of the National Coordination Unit.

**Second Annual meeting on the Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Programme** was held on 14 March 2013 in Pirin Park Hotel, in the town of Sandanski. The meeting were attended by representatives of Swiss partners, National Coordination Unit, Intermediate bodies, Executive agencies, Paying Authority and Audit Authority for the programme.

On the High-level meeting issues regarding the progress of the Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Programme such as current achievements, bottlenecks and Work plan for 2013 was presented and discussed.

National Coordination Unit presented the Annual Report on the implementation of the Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Programme for 2012.

**The official launching of the project "Capacity Building of forensic experts" implemented by the Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Programme under the Thematic Fund "Security"** was held on 05/16/2013.

The opening ceremony was attended by the Ambassador of Switzerland in Bulgaria Her Excellency Regina Escher, as well as representatives of the Swiss Intermediate Body, the National Coordination Unit, Academy of the Ministry of Interior, the Research Institute of Forensic Science and Criminology-Ministry of Interior and the School of Criminology-Faculty of Law and Criminal Sciences, University of Lausanne, Switzerland. The presentation was opened by the Rector of the Academy of the Ministry of Interior Prof. Dr. Yordan Penev. Welcoming speeches were made by H. E. Ms. Regina Escher and the Director of the Research Institute of Forensic Science and Criminology, Ms. Dobrinka Markova.



**The official launch of the two projects: "Strengthening Youth Protection and Juvenile Delinquency Prevention in Bulgaria" and "Strengthening Human Rights-based Policing in Bulgaria"** was held at Grand Hotel Sofia, as the ceremony was attended by the Ambassador of the Swiss Confederation - HE Regina Escher, as well as representatives of the Swiss Intermediate Body, the National Coordination Unit and the Ministry of Interior. The event was opened by the Deputy Minister of Interior, Mr. Plamen Angelov. Welcoming speeches were made by HE Ms. Escher, Director - General, "National Police ", MOI -Chief Commissioner Antonov, Director of the Police Academy in Savatan, Switzerland - Mr. Bergonzoli, Rector of the Academy of the Ministry of the Interior Mr. Velikov and representatives of national partners on two projects.

## CONCLUSIONS

### Overall conclusions and recommendation

The current reporting period was characterized by intensive work on all instruments of the Programme which resulted in:

- Successful ratification of the amendment of Annexes 1, 2, 3 and 5 to the Framework Agreement;
- Amendment of Annex 4 to the Framework Agreement passed the approval by the Council of Ministers and ratification by National Assembly is pending. As a result SDC approved the second batch of projects under TF "Partnership" upon ratification.
- In 2013 the focus in thematic area "Environment and infrastructure" was mostly on:
  - ✓ drafting Final Project Proposals by implementing the PPF projects;
  - ✓ the public procurement process as a very important element for the success of the preparation of the FPPs;
  - ✓ receiving non-objection by SECO to the Terms of references for the [Feasibility studies]
  - ✓ close coordination between SECO and NCU.

The result was that the first drafts of the Final Project Proposals were prepared on time in November and December 2013 and discussed with all interested parties: SECO, SCO, IB and EA.

- In the thematic area "Private sector" the main focus was on the elaboration of the FPP "*Methodological support for the development of green public procurement in Bulgaria*".

The result was the presentation of the draft FPP to the Monitoring Committee and SECO.

Looking forward, a very active work aimed at submission and approval of the FPPs is expected in the year 2014.

Further steps are needed to strengthen the capacity of the EA in the area of implementation of the project activities as well as the reporting of implemented activities in order to speed up project implementation.

In 2013 the allocation of the non-allocated funds of Swiss Contribution was a subject to the most important discussions between the NCU and SECO/SDC. In line with the outcomes of the Annual meeting of 14 March 2013 and technical meetings during the year the Parties agreed on the commitment of unallocated amounts for the following projects:

- “Modernized Trams for the City of Sofia”;
- “Dual vocational education in Bulgaria”;
- “Helicopter Emergency Medical Service” under TF “Security”;

Final decision on the rest unallocated amounts and savings is pending.

The main goal for 2014 will be achieving a 100 % commitment of the Swiss contribution within the deadline of 7<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

***According to the TFs implementation:***

- Enacting implementation at activities level however took more time than planned initially. Organizational set-up involving multiple players like line ministries and/or NGOs signing the agreements, SIBs organised in consortia, Executing Agencies organised in partnerships, etc. made project design and implementation more time consuming and demanding tailor made approach.
- In 2013 main instances involved with overall SBCP coordination and steering – NCU and Swiss Contribution Office established very good working modalities which, despite dynamic political context, contributed to the smooth and constructive progress on all Thematic Funds. In many cases (setting up TF on Roma inclusion, design and approval of projects under TF “Security”) issues were discussed at operational level and solutions found in a conducive manner. Aspects like provision of National co-financing, exchange and coordination with other donors (Norway/EEA grants), commitment of remaining and unused funds, streamlining communications and visibility on the Programme will focus joint work in 2014.

The complexity of the setup given by the number and diversity of actors involved and the insufficient initial capacity of Bulgarian state authorities in designing and managing international projects and yet little acquaintance of SIBs with important contextual aspects in Bulgaria will require a tailor made approach in complementing project portfolio of several thematic funds with feasible, demand driven initiatives. Towards this end now traditional bi-monthly coordination and consultation setup between the Bulgarian NCU and Swiss Contribution Office should continue to address proactively and upfront such aspects.

The project implementation under the Thematic Funds, reporting and monitoring as well as visibility of initiatives in both Bulgarian and Switzerland shall focus efforts in 2014.

## ANNEXES

### Annex 1 Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Programme - Financial Overview as per 31st of December 2013

Swiss Contribution (CHF)					Bulgarian Contribution (CHF)			
Funding lines (CHF)	Indicative financial allocation (million CHF)	Pre-committed funds-1st loop	Committed funds-2nd loop	Disbursed funds	Co-financing as per FA/TFAs		Co-financing reported by SIB	
					%	amount	%	amount
<b>1. Security, Stability and Support for Reforms</b>	<b>26,75</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>26 750 000</b>	<b>7 723 698</b>		<b>1 285 735</b>		<b>155 812</b>
Schengen issues		0	197 000	89 202	15%	34 698	0	0
TF Security for Management		0	1 450 000	294 142	0	0	0	0
TF Security for Projects		0	8 203 000	2 226 951	15	0	0	1 470
TF CSP for Management		0	800 000	229 834	0	0	0	0
TF CSP for Projects		0	7 200 000	3 752 000	10	0	0	79 552
TF Home Care		0	1 980 000	1 050 000	14,4%	333 037	0	74 790
TF Roma for management			800 000	81 569	0%			
TF Roma for projects		0	6 120 000	0	15	918 000	0	0
<b>2. Environment and Infrastructure</b>	<b>27,4</b>	<b>27 400 000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4 835 295</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Disposal of obsolete pesticides		19 900 000	0	0,00		3 511 765		
Hazardous Households Waste		7 500 000	0	0,00		1 323 530		
<b>3. Private Sector</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>463 250</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>81 750</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Project 1 Export promotion		0	0	0,00	15%	0	0	0
Procurement		463 250	0	0,00	15%	81 750	0	0
<b>4. Human and Social Development</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6 000 000</b>	<b>3 744 103</b>		<b>706 000</b>		<b>145 819</b>
TF Research for Management		0	352 950			117 650	0	0
TF Research for Projects		0	3 647 050	2 750 000		588 350	0	145 819
TF Scholarship for Management		0	154 000	65 303	0	0	0	0
TF Scholarship for Projects		0	1 846 000	928 800	0	0	0	0
<b>5. Special Allocations</b>	<b>9,35</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9 350 000</b>	<b>2 519 830</b>		<b>264 706</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13 441</b>
TF PEF for management		0	600 000	181 532	0	0	0	0
TF PEF for projects		0	3 400 000	1 883 999	10	0	0	2 979
TAF		0	1 050 000	59 316,20	15%	185 294	0	10 462,08
PPF		0	500 000	0,00	15%	79412	0	0
Swiss Management		0	3 800 000	394 982,33	0	0	0	0
<b>6. Reserve</b>	<b>3,5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2 550 000</b>	<b>0,00</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>450 000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Basel trams for Sofia			2 550 000	0,00	0	450 000	0	0
exchange				0,00	0	0	0	0
<b>Total indicative allocations</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>27 863 250</b>	<b>44 650 000</b>	<b>13 987 631</b>		<b>7 623 486</b>		<b>315 072</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>18%</b>			

Source: SCO and PA

Pre-committed + Committed= 72 513 250  
Remaining= 3 486 750