



**External Review for the Framework Agreement Project
“Home Care towards an Independent and Dignified Life”
within the Thematic Fund “Inclusion of Roma and other Vulnerable Groups” of
the Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Programme**

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE by SDC/SCO - 08 December 2016

1. Background

In October 2016 the “Home Care” project was externally reviewed by a team of international experts from the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research (EC, Vienna, Austria) complemented by the national expert in the field of integrated services Ms Steli Peteva. This end-of-project review assess project outcomes (3) while also provides insights with regards to the piloted (Home Care) model coherence, relevance and sustainability in the present reforms context in Bulgaria.

2. General notion

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Swiss Contribution Office (SCO) in Sofia acknowledge the receipt and approve the final report prepared by the Review team and would like to express their satisfaction with the conclusions and recommendations drawn thereto. It is also acknowledged that in the restricted time of the mandate, the review team managed to comprehend main features of the model, the context and the project’s purview.

3. Appreciation of Report and Evaluation Process

- The external review has been conducted in a professional manner by an international team backed by a national consultant.
- The report provides an external and independent view on the results of the home care services project. It is well written, concise and well structured.
- We take note with satisfaction that the review confirms that the project is highly relevant in national context and has for the most part been able to accomplish the majority of the planned outcomes.
- The findings and lessons learnt reveal some interesting aspects that could be improved in the current project and are also valid for similar projects supported by SDC as follows:
 - 1) **The necessity for an integration of the social and medical home care services in the health system**: coordination with the secondary level of care, referral and counter-referral still need to be formalized; this lack of systemic anchorage may explain the current difficult situation in ensuring financial sustainability of these new services.
 - 2) **The need for more implication of the relatives/informal carers and volunteers**: this is vital for the efficiency of the delivered services, for the continuity of care between the visits, and for the general motivation of the society towards the new home care services (as this still need to be strengthened).
 - 3) **The importance of demonstrating that the model of home care services developed by the project is cost-effective** in comparison with other solutions (specialized institution, reducing hospitalization costs, other type of services). This kind of study, as planned to be available along with the review process, is instrumental for the advocacy work related to the financial and institutional sustainability of the model.
- We regret that the chapter dedicated to “effectiveness at national level” is not more detailed concerning the regulatory and policy framework related to the integrated services to be delivered at home. We would have expected as well more information and analysis regarding

the other barriers to be surmounted to ensure enough institutional support for the new model of care.

The SCO and SDC by the present management response validate the review's findings and conclusions.

4. Recommendations of the review report

- The SCO and SDC consider that the recommendations of the external review report are useful for the short (until April), mid (until 2020) and long term perspectives of further institutionalization of the home care services in the Vratsa district and at the national level.
- We fully agree with the 3 first recommendations until April 2017. They are of crucial importance to ensure a smooth phase-out of the project under the Swiss funding and for the further operation of the 4 centers in particular. The follow up on these recommendations will then require diligence from the SRC and BRC in expressing their position and in defining a road map with concrete measures to be taken and implemented until end of April 2017.
- Cost-benefit (benchmark) study – since the mandate is already underway commissioned by BRC, some of the recommendations of the review can be taken up while conducting the study or during possible next phase of the project (ex-ante evaluation).
- For the other recommendations and as they are ventilated per stakeholder, it is important that the BRC thinks about the ways and means to communicate them to the national stakeholders, to get their validation and to involve these partners in the definition of concrete follow-up measures. We consider this step as important for the further strengthening of the ownership of the Bulgarian partners on the new home care services.

5. Next steps

- Dissemination of the review report among key stakeholders – participants at the debriefing exercise, Advisory Committee, municipalities/local stakeholders. To this end BRC may secure translation of the review report in Bulgarian language.
- It is expected that SRC/BRC will elaborate their respective management response to the review report by the end of 2016.
- BRC/SRC are expected to provide a road map/plan, including legislative outputs, depicting their respective short-term, until April 2017, but also mid-term priorities. This road map shall be ready and communicated to SDC/SCO early enough (January 2017) to assist coordinated efforts towards project closing in April 2017.
- Financial viability of the model – above mentioned road map shall include the process of elaboration and communication of the so called cost or benchmark study (at National and regional level). Consolidated SDC/SCO feedback on the inception report (SRC communication from December 6,) will be provided by 15th of December.
- Final project (closing) conference, as planned in the extended project document, shall be articulated in the road map along with communication plan of the project (messages, outreach, materials etc.).