



Switzerland's contribution to the enlarged EU

Results of country programmes
completed in the
EU-12 countries



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Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

State Secretariat for
Economic Affairs SECO

Cover photo left: Switzerland provided expertise to assist Bulgaria in reforming its vocational education and training system. The new VET model involves more practical work and the active participation of companies in traineeships. More than 170 companies are actively involved in developing curricula or investing in teacher training and workshops. © SDC

Cover photo right: Switzerland promoted the use of renewables and helped to improve energy efficiency in Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovenia. Switzerland has invested a total of CHF 200 million in this sector. Annual carbon dioxide emissions have been reduced by about 100,000 tonnes a year thanks to the implemented measures. © SECO

Dear reader

The ten-year period for implementing Switzerland's enlargement contribution to twelve of the thirteen countries that joined the European Union (EU) in 2004 (EU-12 countries) came to an end in December 2019. Enlargement contribution projects are running in Croatia until 2024, as Croatia only joined the EU in 2013. Since 2007 Switzerland has contributed CHF 1.257 billion in total to support 249 projects and thematic funds in the EU-12 countries. This annual report, produced jointly by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), seeks to take stock and answer the following question: has Switzerland's contribution been effective in helping to reduce economic and social disparities in the EU?

These cooperative efforts have produced impressive results: in the environmental sector, investments in energy efficiency and renewable energies are reducing CO2 emissions into the Earth's atmosphere by about 100,000 tonnes per year, public transport has become a more attractive alternative, and 130,000 tonnes of asbestos have been safely disposed of. Projects to promote economic growth created over 8,000 jobs and 128 research partnerships between Switzerland and the EU-12 countries allowed 30 new

patents to be registered. Switzerland also made an important contribution to the social sector. For example, over 100,000 Roma now have better access to health services and educational programmes. To protect public safety, mobile police units at the external Schengen border received around 100 special vehicles and invested in further training. To strengthen civil society, Switzerland also supported over 900 NGO projects, particularly in the areas of environmental protection and health.

This contribution to a secure, stable and prosperous Europe is in Switzerland's interest. Switzerland is seen as a reliable and innovative partner that makes a constructive contribution to addressing cross-border challenges in Europe. Behind the numbers cited in this report are people – people who have succeeded in translating their ideas into action and improving their living conditions. As a result, numerous partnerships have been established which will continue to link Switzerland with its EU partner countries in future.

We hope you will find this report informative and interesting.



Marie-Gabrielle Ineichen-Fleisch

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Ineichen-Fleisch', written in a cursive style.

State Secretary
Director of SECO



Manuel Sager

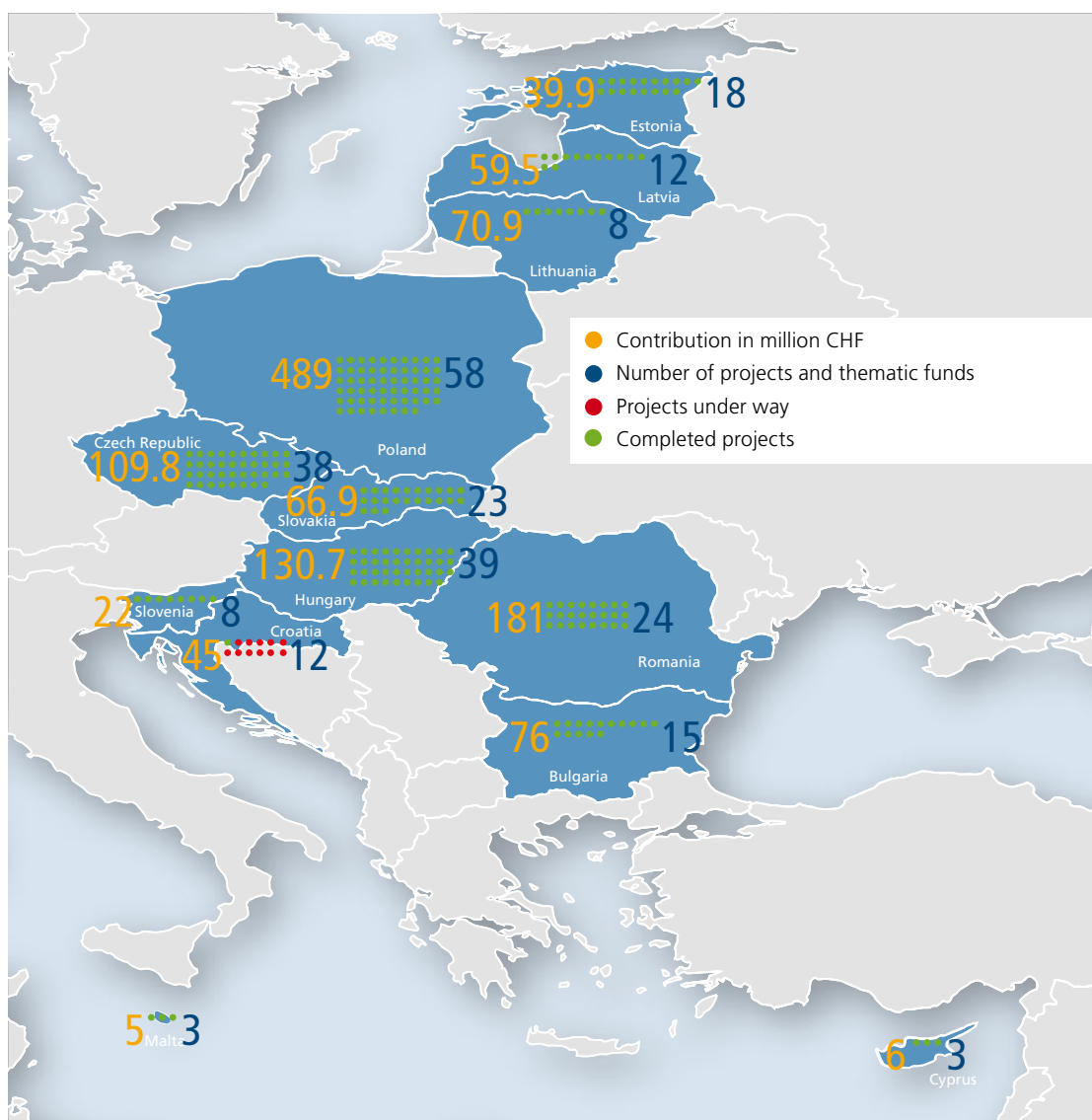
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Sager', written in a cursive style.

Ambassador
Director General of the SDC

Switzerland's contribution to the enlarged EU

Switzerland's independent contribution of CHF 1.302 billion to the enlarged EU in support of bilateral projects in the 13 countries that have joined the EU since 2004 has helped to reduce economic and social disparities in those countries. The contribution has its basis in the 2006 popular vote in which the Swiss electorate voted in favour of the Federal Act on Cooperation with the States of Eastern Europe.

The enlargement contribution is a sign of Switzerland's solidarity and responsibility. But it is also in Switzerland's own interest, as the projects involved promote numerous partnerships that strengthen Switzerland's relations with the new EU member states and the EU as a whole. This contribution is an important part of Switzerland's European policy and strengthens Switzerland's reputation. It improves the chances of Swiss companies bidding in public procurement processes within the EU. Another objective is to help tackle cross-border challenges such as climate change and organised crime.

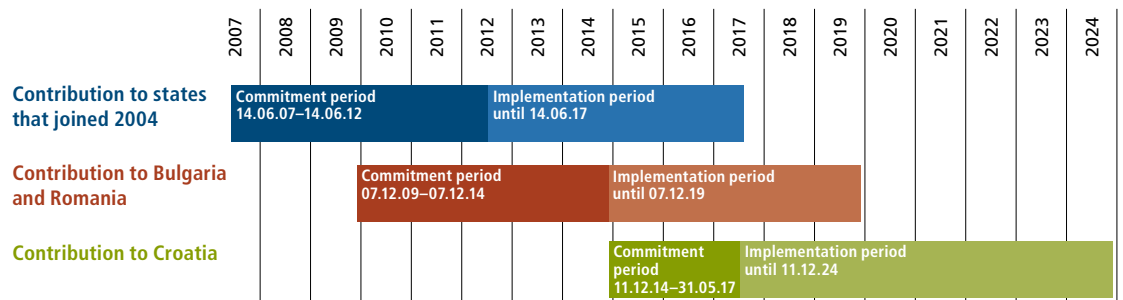


The distribution of the enlargement contribution among the 13 partner countries based on population size and per capita income. Switzerland decided which projects it would support in consultation with the partner countries and independently of the EU.

The projects in Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia were completed in 2017, followed by Bulgaria and Romania in December 2019. Only the projects in Croatia are still under way.

Time frame of the enlargement contribution

Graph 1: the projects under the enlargement contribution must be completed within 10 years. The projects are selected during the commitment period, which is followed by the implementation period during which all of the projects have to be completed.



Switzerland's contribution in figures:

CHF 1.302 billion to reduce economic and social disparities in the enlarged EU

13 partner countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

5 project goals: promoting economic growth and improving working conditions; increasing social security; protecting the environment; improving public security; strengthening civil society

10% of Switzerland's contribution to the enlarged EU benefited Swiss companies, universities and other Swiss institutions involved in the programmes

Good marks for the enlargement contribution – but let's not rest on our laurels

The audits carried out in recent years by the Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) and the independent, external evaluation confirm that the enlargement contribution concept has proven its worth and has been properly implemented. The evaluation showed that the contribution was implemented successfully and that the projects have made a positive contribution to promoting social and economic development in the 13 partner countries. In the vast majority of projects, the targets have been achieved or exceeded.

The evaluation makes the following, specific recommendations for Switzerland's second contribution:

- › Greater focus on issues and regions;
- › Simplification of project approval process without compromising quality;
- › Clearer guidelines and a leaner system for reporting at project level;
- › Strengthening communication measures in the partner countries.

The SDC and SECO see the potential for improvement and want to exploit it.

Results in the EU-12 countries

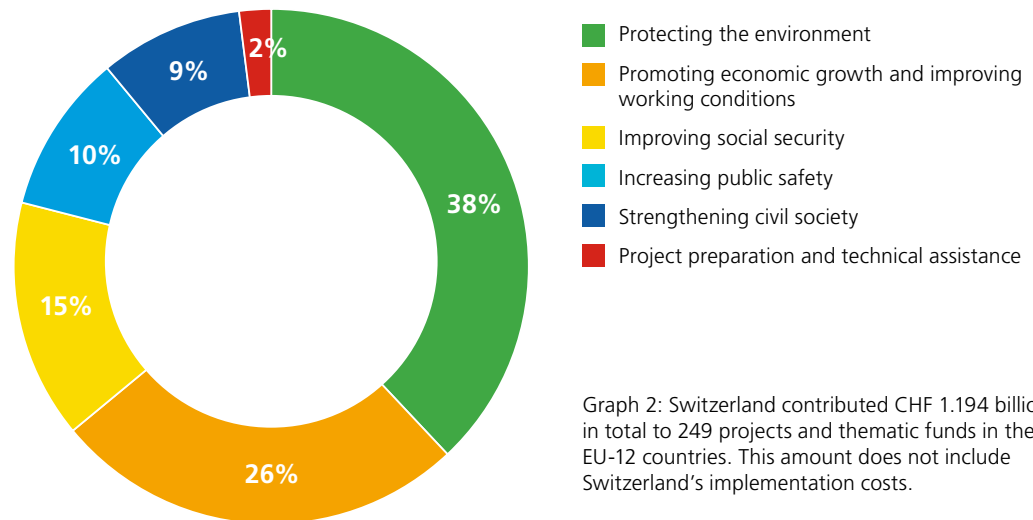
The five objectives of Switzerland's contribution to the enlarged EU

The enlargement contribution helps to reduce economic and social disparities within the enlarged EU. To achieve this, the environment is better protected and economic growth is promoted. Another focus is on the areas of social and public security and strengthening civil society.

The country programmes in the EU-12 countries were concluded in 2019. In the various target areas, Switzerland made significant contributions to solving problems and improving the living conditions of large numbers of people. Moreover, the results achieved

by numerous projects serve as models that can be applied in other regions of the partner countries as well as for further systemic and policy reforms. Macroeconomic statistics provide little conclusive information about the effects of the enlargement contribution. It is however clear that the programmes and projects carried out as part of Switzerland's contribution to the enlarged EU have by and large helped to reduce disparities in the partner countries. The following sections provide examples in support of this conclusion. The various projects are described in detail in the annex to this annual report.

Enlargement contribution to the EU-12 countries, broken down by objectives



Graph 2: Switzerland contributed CHF 1.194 billion in total to 249 projects and thematic funds in the EU-12 countries. This amount does not include Switzerland's implementation costs.

Protecting the environment

In the EU-12 countries, around CHF 450.7 million of the enlargement contribution was invested in environmental protection projects. These included infrastructure projects promoting energy efficiency, the use of renewables, public transport, hazardous waste disposal, wastewater treatment, drinking water supply and environmental monitoring. Given that environmental pollution and climate change in particular do not stop at national borders, these projects are also in Switzerland's interest. The environmental sector opens up new sales markets for Switzerland, a leading nation in clean technologies.



Energy efficiency and renewable energy: Switzerland's enlargement contribution helped increase energy efficiency and the use of renewables in 25,000 households and some 500 public buildings in Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovenia. A biomass cogeneration plant was built in Poland and the heating system in Warsaw was overhauled to make it more energy-efficient. A noise barrier along a section of motorway in Slovenia was fitted with solar panels. These measures have reduced carbon emissions by more than 100,000 tonnes a year. Another important aspect of these projects was to raise public awareness of climate protection and to exchange expertise with Swiss experts.

Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 196.6 million



Public transport: passengers in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland and Romania are benefiting from upgrades to public transport services. Funding was provided for new trains, railway stations, tram and trolleybus lines and tram stops. Switzerland also provided assistance with sustainable mobility studies and plans and facilitated exchanges with Swiss experts. Increased use of public transport is helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve local air quality. The various transport projects generated orders worth several million Swiss francs for Swiss companies.

Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 78.6 million



Waste management: materials containing asbestos were removed from the roofs of 44,000 homes in Poland. Thanks to this building renovation project, 130,000 tonnes of asbestos-containing materials were disposed of in an environmentally friendly and sustainable manner. Five municipalities also participated in the construction of a new waste disposal plant and remediated four landfills. In Latvia, an oil slick was pumped out in the Riga port area and contaminated soil removed and safely disposed of, reducing groundwater pollution by 60-70%. Advice provided by Swiss specialists and the use of Swiss technology to monitor the remediation works contributed to the project's success. Switzerland helped Bulgaria dispose of some 3,800 tonnes of toxic pesticides left over from the Communist period. These were stored in warehouses that were slowly falling into disrepair. In order to ensure that the waste was safely disposed of, the pesticides were removed and incinerated by specialist companies, including companies in Switzerland. Five Bulgarian municipalities also constructed collection points for hazardous household waste.

Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 76.2 million



Wastewater treatment: in eight Slovakian municipalities, 90 km of sewage pipes were newly built or modernised. This is enabling 10,000 people to be connected to the sewerage system. This not only helps prevent water pollution, but also improves living conditions in the municipalities concerned. In Cyprus, a wastewater treatment plant was built to treat industrial sludge and household sewage, helping to reduce environmental pollution.

Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 30.9 million



Drinking water supply: in Hungary, 150 km of pipelines were renovated or laid, improving water quality for around 200,000 people and lowering maintenance costs.

Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 24.9 million



Biodiversity: various measures, such as the protection of 4,000 hectares of natural habitat, have enhanced plant and animal biodiversity in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. Numerous partnerships were established with Swiss nature conservation organisations. In addition, thousands of government officials and people working in agriculture and forestry received training. In some countries, there was also an emphasis on raising awareness among primary school children. In Hungary, for example, over 200,000 children and young people took part in nature conservation activities.

Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 24.1 million



Environmental monitoring: thanks to the modernisation of the laboratories and monitoring stations of 16 inspectorates, agencies and research institutes in Estonia and Hungary, the monitoring of waste disposal sites, water, air, radioactivity and natural disasters is now carried out more effectively. Reliable, nationwide environmental data is needed to implement a range of EU directives, but also enables the authorities to make informed and effective decisions to protect the environment. The various projects facilitated the exchange of information with Swiss experts. A Swiss company was also awarded a contract to supply hardware and software for real-time GPS monitoring.

Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 19.3 million

“The project will improve people’s quality of life.” Miroslav Michalka, Slovak mayor, on a project co-financed by Switzerland to modernise wastewater treatment systems in eight Slovak municipalities.

In Latvia, a 1,700 tonne oil slick in the Riga port area was pumped out and 7,000 tonnes of contaminated soil was removed and safely disposed of, reducing groundwater pollution by 60-70% – over twice as much as originally planned. © SECO



“The whole region has gained a better understanding of the benefits of renewable energy.” Rok Šimenc, head of the BSC Kranj regional development agency, on the information campaign for the energy projects in Slovenia.

Switzerland supported ten projects in Poland to promote the use of renewable energy and improve energy efficiency. Presentations on the topic were given in several schools. The photo shows a prize-giving ceremony for children who took part in an art competition on the topic of solar energy. © SECO



“Improvements to track and level crossings have significantly increased transport safety. The new trains also meet the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility. This all creates a favourable image of Warsaw’s train services and increases passenger satisfaction.” Jolanta Dałek, Financial Director, Warsaw Commuter Railway

There are 28 trams from Basel operating in Sofia, Bulgaria. Staff from Basler Verkehrs-Betriebe (Basel’s transport operators) provided training in maintaining and operating the trams to their Bulgarian counterparts. © SECO



Promoting economic growth and improving working conditions ■

In the EU-12 countries, Switzerland invested CHF 317.4 million in projects to promote economic growth and improve working conditions. This included access to long-term funding for SMEs, research and scholarship programmes, support for structurally weak regions, the application of international accounting standards and the promotion of vocational education and training and corporate social responsibility. The Swiss export industry and Swiss investors are also benefiting from Eastern Europe's growth markets and an attractive environment for cultivating new business relationships. This ultimately helps to secure jobs in Switzerland. The enlargement contribution's strong focus on bilateral research cooperation also strengthens Switzerland as a centre of research.



Financing for SMEs: thanks to the enlargement contribution, credit facilities, venture capital and guarantees for investment loans were provided to over 2,500 companies in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Romania, enabling them to create around 7,000 jobs. The funds will continue to operate and secure additional jobs in the future after the programme has been completed. The projects also opened up business opportunities for a Swiss investment fund.

Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 110.6 million



Research and development: Switzerland funded 128 research partnerships, making it possible to file 30 new patent applications. High-quality basic research was carried out in selected scientific areas such as the environment and health. This is a key factor for developing businesses and creating attractive job opportunities. In addition, as part of a research placement programme, 655 young scientists conducted research in Switzerland for several months between 2011 and 2019. The research partnerships enabled researchers to make significant contributions to finding solutions to global challenges, for example in the storage of radioactive waste and in pain research. The articles published by partner institutions in leading peer-reviewed journals have been positively received by the international research community. This has also allowed the researchers to build and maintain international networks, creating favourable conditions for the long-term sharing of knowledge with scientists in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 107.3 million.



Regional development and employment: Switzerland has helped promote economic development in structurally weak regions of Slovakia, Poland and Hungary. Switzerland's contribution to 15 projects helped to train 24,000 people, set up 160 companies and create 900 jobs, and provided support for a further 1,000 local small businesses and farms. In addition, sports and cultural facilities were upgraded and tourist centres with modern information systems were developed, enhancing of the regions' appeal for tourism.

Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 60.9 million.



Regulation of the financial sector: the enlargement contribution funded further training for government authorities and private-sector associations in the application of international accounting and auditing standards. The international exchange of experience, including with Swiss supervisory bodies, was an important aspect of these projects. Internationally comparable accounting practices and audits that ensure transaction traceability are improving the investment climate and the stability of the financial sector in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Poland and Slovenia. Another project is helping to improve data security in Romania's Ministry of Public Finance.

Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 20.4 million.



Vocational education and training (VET): VET programmes in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Romania and Slovakia have made it easier for young people to enter the job market and helped to lower youth unemployment. In Slovakia, 440 young people completed practical training courses set up as a result of Switzerland's enlargement contribution. The programmes' success prompted the Slovak government to establish the legal framework for a dual VET system which is partly based on the Swiss model. Switzerland also assisted Bulgaria in reforming its VET system so that it is more closely aligned to the needs of the job market. Companies are now involved in developing curricula and providing on-the-job training. A total of 32 vocational schools have come on board, providing courses to over 1,600 trainees. In Romania, more than 9,000 students have participated in training programmes to prepare them for the job market.

Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 10.4 million.



Export promotion for SMEs: thanks to training courses, product analyses and new quality assurance standards, some 80 Romanian SMEs operating in the organic farming and wood furniture manufacturing sectors are now well placed to compete in international markets. Pilot projects were also launched to help 177 Polish SMEs take on greater corporate social responsibility.

Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 7.4 million.



Public procurement: a more effective public procurement framework was established in Bulgaria by producing a new manual, delivering training courses and sharing experiences with the Swiss authorities.

Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 0.5 million

“Lack of funding is sometimes the only obstacle to putting your ideas into practice.” Rolands Paņko, chairman of the Latvian development bank Altum, on the microcredit programme co-funded by Switzerland.

The Hungarian venture capital fund enabled a company to develop an ‘intelligent’ surgical knife that makes it easier to analyse tissue during surgery. Support for SMEs in the form of micro-credits, venture capital and loan guarantees created 7,000 jobs in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Romania. © SECO



“My stay in Switzerland allowed me to broaden my field of research. I discovered techniques and research methods that were unknown in Hungary at the time.” Peter Matus, a post-doctoral researcher from Hungary, on the Swiss SCIEX scholarship programme.

Furthermore, 128 bilateral research partnerships made it possible to file 30 new patent applications in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. © SDC



Improving social security ■

Switzerland provided CHF 176.6 million for a wide range of measures to improve social security. The focus was on the elderly, people with health problems and disabilities, and disadvantaged groups such as the Roma minority. Equal opportunities and integration reduce social tensions. The projects in the health sector also opened up opportunities for the Swiss medical technology industry.



Social services for disadvantaged target groups: over 100,000 Roma in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia gained better access to education and healthcare facilities. Renovations, new equipment and continuing education and training have increased the quality of life in 50 Polish, Slovak and Czech homes for the elderly and people with disabilities. Fourteen residential homes were opened in Estonia, allowing 95 orphans to grow up in a protected environment. In Latvia, Switzerland provided support for 26 youth centres.

Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 68.7 million.



Hospital modernisation: Switzerland provided modern medical equipment for 27 maternity clinics in Lithuania. Over 2,300 healthcare workers participated in training courses. The enlargement contribution built on Swiss transition assistance provided during the 1990s, which brought about substantive improvements in the health of mothers and children in Lithuania. Sustained and comprehensive support to extend and develop neonatal medicine in Lithuania has played a crucial role in reducing infant mortality by 80% since 1992. In Cyprus and Malta, the enlargement contribution has provided wider access to diagnosis and radiotherapy services, and in Estonia new equipment is helping accident victims to regain mobility. Partnerships with Swiss hospitals and the delivery of Swiss medical devices and equipment played a significant role in all these projects.

Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 35.3 million.



Basic health services: Switzerland provided funds to renovate and equip nine health centres in the Czech Republic which treat people suffering from chronic and terminal illnesses. Medical and NGO staff working in the field palliative and long-term care completed basic and further training courses to help elderly people in need of care lead a dignified life. The need for action was particularly acute in rural disadvantaged areas. In remote areas of north-eastern Hungary, for example, new group practices were set up, providing 50,000 people with increased access to healthcare. A pilot project was launched to try out a home care system in Bulgaria based on the Swiss Spitex model. In addition, seven community centres delivering integrated social and medical services were set up in Romania and training provided to the carers.

Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 30.4 million.



Various social services: in Latvia, 110 new school buses are providing some 9,000 schoolchildren living in sparsely populated rural areas with safe transport to and from school. In addition, in remote municipalities in Latvia, fire detection systems were installed in old buildings belonging to 115 state schools, ensuring the safety of some 14,000 pupils. Switzerland also modernised Estonia's emergency services, shortening response times and improving the quality of patient care nationwide. A cooperation initiative between the Romanian air rescue services and Rega, the Swiss air rescue service, allowed 34 pilots to hone their flying skills at various training centres. This has improved the quality and safety of air rescue services in Romania.

Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 25.2 million.



Prevention: in Poland, prevention campaigns helped to improve dental hygiene and reduce hepatitis C and alcohol and tobacco consumption among a target population of 1.5 million people. These prevention programmes used a wide range of social media, internet platforms and other modern communication tools to raise awareness and inform as broad a segment of the Polish public as possible of the risks of disease.

Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 17 million.

A range of programmes, primarily in the healthcare and education sectors, are facilitating the integration of Roma communities in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia.
© SDC



“What could be more important than the health of a mother and her newborn child? Is there a greater happiness than a mother’s joy at the birth of her child? The answers to these questions are self-evident. We would like to extend our deepest thanks to Switzerland. Thanks to your support, Lithuanian hospitals are now able to offer excellent, safe care for pregnant women, women giving birth and newborn children.” Aurelijus Veryga, Lithuania’s Minister of Health, on Switzerland’s support for 27 Lithuanian hospitals.

A pilot project was launched in Bulgaria to try out a home care system based on the Swiss Spitex model. This has significantly enhanced the quality of life of 734 people with care needs. © SDC



Increasing public safety

CHF 116 million was provided for border protection measures, modernising the judiciary, managing natural disasters and combating organised crime and corruption. Human trafficking, illegal migration and smuggling are international problems which Switzerland also wants to solve.



Border security: better infrastructure and equipment at five border crossings in Estonia and Poland have improved the handling of cross-border traffic. Switzerland supported Bulgaria in setting up the Schengen Information System for national border control. Bulgarian police officers have a new e-learning tool to familiarise themselves with the Schengen Agreement. In consultation with Swiss experts, training courses in irregular migration, interviewing techniques and the detection of forged documents were delivered to over 100 law enforcement officers in Romania.

Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 29.2 million.



Modernising the judiciary: using modern information technology to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of judicial systems is pan-European objective. In the three Baltic States and in Slovakia, over 160 courts and prisons were equipped with modern video conferencing and audio recording technology, including mobile devices. Hungarian court buildings were fitted with modern IT equipment, metal detectors and x-ray scanners. Training in how to apply new criminal legislation was provided to 10,000 judges and prosecutors in Romania. Bulgaria's juvenile criminal law has been updated and improvements made to court premises and professional training courses.

Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 25.6 million.



Management of natural disasters and emergency situations: the training of specialists and the purchase of inflatable mobile dams from Switzerland significantly enhanced the Hungarian government's flood response capability. In the Czech Republic and Poland, the authorities received support in dealing with emergency and crisis situations. In Estonia, specialists were trained in fire protection techniques and 175 hospitals received emergency blankets and fire-retardant bedding.

Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 16 million.



Internal security: the number of road deaths in Poland has fallen by 17% since 2012 thanks in part to Swiss-backed police training and traffic-calming measures. Community policing was introduced in small towns in Hungary and Romania, in consultation with Swiss experts. In Romania, communication and mediation training courses were provided to some 3,000 police officers.

Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 22.5 million.



Combating corruption and organised crime: over 4,000 members of the police forces in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia benefited from continuing education and training. At the same time, the technical equipment used by the police was upgraded, and funding provided for IT systems to facilitate investigation and analysis. The majority of projects promoted cooperation between national judicial and law enforcement authorities, and their integration into the European networks. Measures to prevent human trafficking were also implemented in Bulgaria and Romania. Cooperation with the Swiss authorities was also encouraged.

Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 22.7 million.

“Training and new equipment have made the fight against organised crime more effective in Estonia and at the EU’s external borders.”
Aleksander Miksjuk, Estonian tax official, on the automatic number plate recognition system at seaports made possible with Swiss support

Training and equipment for the police are helping to combat organised crime and corruption in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia.
© SDC



Thanks to training and new equipment, the Polish and Slovak authorities are better prepared for crisis situations.
© SDC



Strengthening civil society ■

The Swiss contribution funded projects in the amount of CHF 110 million to promote civil society. The projects helped to strengthen civil society and to foster partnerships between Switzerland and local institutions. Switzerland provided over 1,000 projects with contributions of between CHF 10,000 and 250,000 each.



Non-governmental organisations (NGOs): in all countries except Malta, local NGOs were able to submit applications to fund projects aimed at strengthening civil society. Support was provided to approximately 935 projects mainly concerned with social services and environmental protection. The social projects supported marginal groups, such as young victims of domestic violence and elderly people living in poverty. Other projects were aimed at supporting and improving the lives of people with physical or mental disabilities. Environmental projects received financial contributions for environmental education, organic farming and protection of biodiversity and endangered species. As a result, the quality of social services was improved and the role played by NGOs in society and in their dealings with government institutions was strengthened.

Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 78.4 million.



Bilateral partnerships: the partnership funds supported the exchange of knowledge and experience between partner countries and Switzerland. Communes, cities, foundations and associations were able to participate equally. Some 270 projects were implemented in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Valuable and sustainable partnerships were established in a wide range of areas, including non-motorised transport, waste management, strengthening democracy, culture, environmental education in schools and the social integration of minorities.

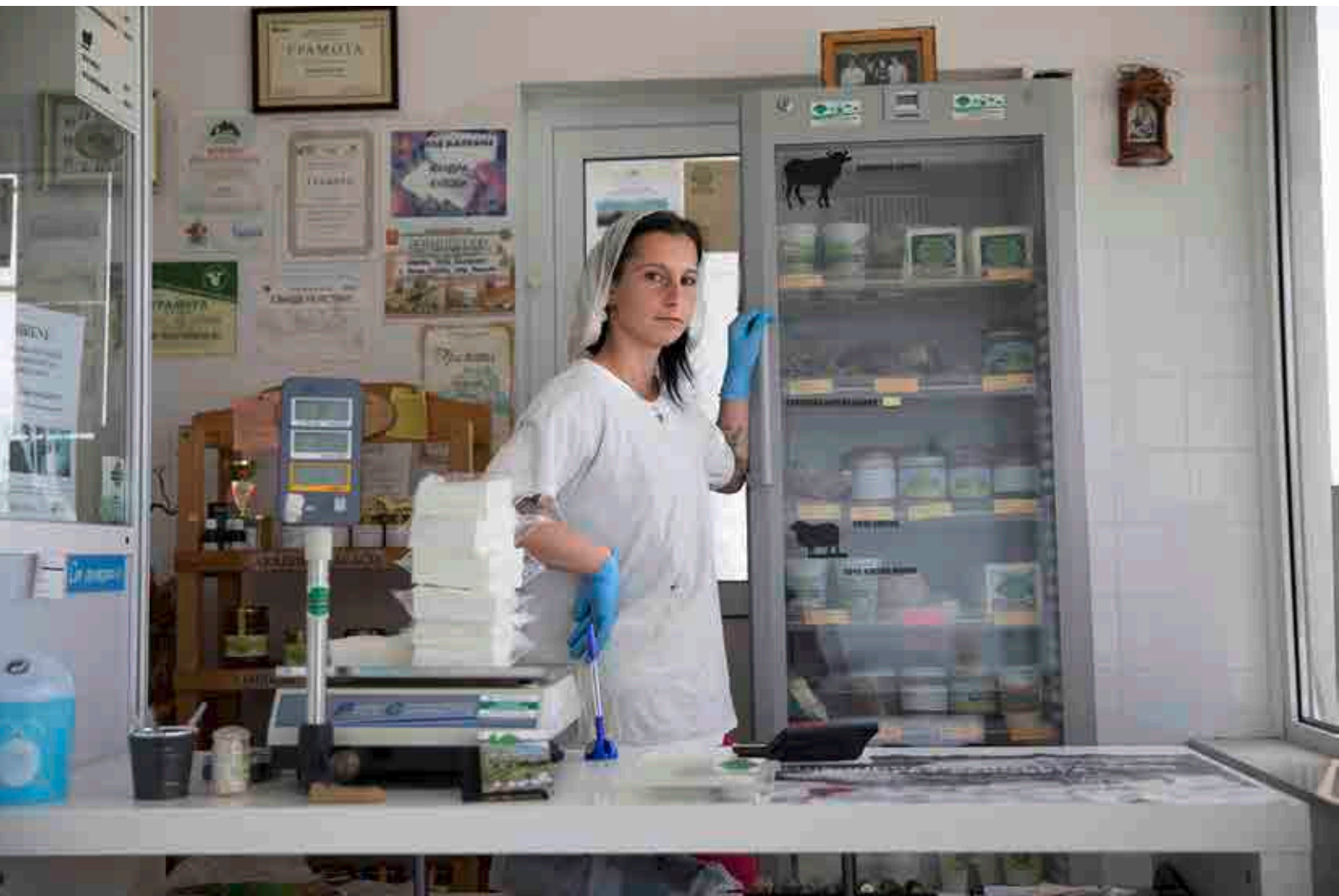
Contribution to EU-12 countries: CHF 31.6 million.

“The International Institute for the Rights of the Child finds the Czech initiative, which brought together various experts to develop an interdisciplinary approach to children’s rights, to be very valuable. It has resulted in a professional network that is proving to be highly valuable for partner institutions and to provide support for children at risk”. Paola Riva Gapany, Director of the Geneva-based International Institute for the Rights of the Child, on a Swiss-Czech partnership project.

NGOs provided support in facilitating social inclusion and access to education and jobs for disabled people in Romania. © SDC



A partnership between Bulgarian and Swiss NGOs successfully promoted organic farming, regional products and ecotourism, creating new jobs and prospects for people living in one of the EU's poorest regions. © SDC



Swiss interests

Switzerland's contribution to the enlarged EU is in several respects in Switzerland's interests.

Strengthening relations with the EU

EU enlargement strengthens stability, democracy, prosperity and peace in Europe. With the enlargement contribution, Switzerland is helping to reduce economic and social disparities within the EU and is thus contributing to the costs of EU enlargement in a spirit of solidarity.

With the enlargement contribution, Switzerland is strengthening its bilateral relations not only with the new EU member states but also with the EU as a whole. The contribution to the enlarged EU is part of Switzerland's European policy and strengthens Switzerland's reputation abroad.

Opportunities for the Swiss economy

EU enlargement has brought many benefits to Switzerland and provides considerable export and investment opportunities. Switzerland's engagement improves the visibility of Swiss companies and thus also their chances in public tendering procedures, particularly within the framework of the EU structural funds and the EU Cohesion Fund. A survey organised through the Swiss embassies revealed that between 2010 and 2015 Swiss companies received over 580 contracts worth around CHF 2 billion from EU-funded projects in the 13 partner countries. As Swiss companies are not required to disclose information to the federal government about contracts they have been awarded, this survey reflects only a fraction of the total number of contracts won by Swiss companies.

In addition, there were direct returns from the enlargement contribution. Around 10% of the amounts granted benefited Swiss companies, associations and universities in return for their services in the partner countries.

Strengthening partnerships

Several hundred new partnerships were established between institutions in the partner countries and Switzerland. Swiss partners included entities within the federal and cantonal administrations, communes, cities, foundations, associations, NGOs and educational and research institutions. These partnerships are invaluable to Switzerland's integration in European networks. Cooperation promotes the exchange of knowledge and experience and raises Switzerland's profile in Europe.

Addressing cross-border challenges

Many of the projects were also in Switzerland's interest in terms of security policy, promoting for example the protection of the external Schengen borders, the fight against organised crime or the integration of migrants. Environmental pollution does not stop at national borders either. Swiss projects helped to remediate contaminated sites, improve air and water quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Annex: Project examples from the EU-12 countries

Specialist waste disposal companies repackaged the pesticides and transported them to strictly controlled incineration plants.
© SECO



Disposal of pesticides in Bulgaria

Addressing a serious environmental problem

Switzerland helped Bulgaria dispose of toxic pesticides left over from the communist period in an environmentally responsible way. The pesticides, which are now banned, were stored in warehouses that were slowly falling into disrepair.

Several thousand tonnes of toxic pesticide residues and other contaminants, which are now banned, were stored in over 200 warehouses in Bulgaria. Many of these storage facilities were in a bad state, posing a threat to the environment and public health. The affected communities, mostly in rural areas, did not have the financial or logistical resources to tackle pollution on this scale or undertake the complex process of disposing of the harmful pesticides. Switzerland therefore supported Bulgaria in disposing of the substances in an environmentally responsible way.

Complex, eco-friendly waste disposal process

Properly disposing of pesticides involves collecting, transporting and incinerating them – a costly process that had to be undertaken by specialist companies. There are no approved incineration plants in Bulgaria, which meant that waste had to be transported to other countries, including Switzerland. In transporting the waste to the various incineration plants, it was necessary to comply with strict international rules which require all transit countries and countries of destination to issue and check authorisations.

Switzerland provided funding for experts to be deployed. They were tasked with ensuring that warehouses were properly cleared and cleansed and that pesticides in warehouses were properly repackaged. The experts took photographs to document the condition of warehouses when they were opened and were involved in the process of repackaging, weighing and loading the pesticides onto trucks. In addition, Switzerland only paid disposal companies for the waste actually delivered to incineration plants to discourage them from dumping pesticides illegally. Switzerland's support allowed 3,800 tonnes of pesticides to be disposed of properly and responsibly.

Monitoring the build-up of sediment in the coastal region makes it possible to take measures to mitigate risks associated with climate change. © Arno Mikkor, National Coordination Unit, Estonia



Environmental monitoring in Estonia

Breath-taking and waterproof

Switzerland equipped Estonian laboratories and monitoring stations with modern devices and financed the training of personnel. This has given Estonia comprehensive, reliable environmental data on water, air, radioactivity and natural disasters.

Estonia is sparsely populated and has vast swathes of virtually untouched landscape. The country is characterised by its proximity to water: it has over 1,500 islands and 1,000 lakes. Numerous marshes, upland moors and forests shape its landscape.

Collecting reliable environmental data is crucial to preserve this unique natural landscape, enabling the Estonian authorities to make informed decisions on protecting the environment. For Estonia, good air and water quality, radiation protection and the prevention of natural disasters are especially important. For this reason, environmental monitoring has been improved in these areas in particular.

Modern equipment and training

Switzerland participated in the purchase of modern measuring and analysis devices and the necessary training of staff. Switzerland contributed to a total of eleven environmental monitoring projects:

- › The Estonian air quality network was improved. New methods and equipment enable better measurements of pollutants and particulate matter, which in turn enables the development of action plans to deal with air pollution in urban areas. Swiss and Estonian experts conducted a measurement campaign together.
- › A Swiss company supplied equipment to Estonia to allow satellite monitoring of contaminated sites and transportation of hazardous substances.
- › Using funds from the enlargement contribution, researchers were able to purchase devices to monitor the sediment development in the coastal region and the quality of seawater. The data collected forms the basis for appropriate measures to protect water resources and manage the risks associated with climate change.

Reliable, comprehensive, rapidly available environmental data

Thanks to these projects, Estonia has been able to improve its implementation of EU regulations on environmental monitoring and gather comprehensive, reliable data. Data collection costs have fallen by 40%.

An information campaign has raised awareness of renewable energy and energy efficiency among over 20,000 teachers and students. © SECO



Promotion of renewable energy in Slovenia

Slovenia's longest solar noise barrier

Up to now, 'green energy' in Slovenia has been almost exclusively derived from hydroelectric power plants, but that is set to change: Switzerland has been supporting a project in Slovenia that promotes other sources of renewable energy.

Switzerland contributed CHF 3.68 million to support the use of renewables in municipalities in the Slovenian coastal region of Primorska.

Energy from the sun and biomass

The project comprised three parts. First, a 648-metre-long noise barrier along a segment of the motorway leading to Italy was fitted with solar panels. The longest of its kind in Slovenia, this noise-protection wall now generates enough solar energy for all public lighting in the town of Šempeter.

As a second component of the project, Switzerland supported the installation of 12 biomass heating systems that have since been providing heating to 29 public buildings by using locally-produced wood chips and pellets, which is both cost-effective and sustainable. Twelve of these buildings were also made energy efficient. Among the 29 buildings are schools and kindergartens with nearly 2,000 children as well as two information centres in Triglav National Park, which is visited by 45,000 people every year. Thanks to biomass conversions and renovations for improved energy efficiency, heating costs in these buildings have been reduced by about 50% and energy consumption by 30%.

Information campaign

The third part of the project was a public awareness campaign. Screens showing the production of renewable energy and CO₂ savings were set up in Triglav National Park, schools and near the motorway's solar noise barrier. Local events, brochures, textbooks, the internet and other media were used to raise awareness of the topic among the public, local businesspeople, and around 20,000 teachers and pupils. In Cerklje, an Eco House was opened which now receives visits from school classes from all over Slovenia to learn about sustainability issues. In spring 2015, a well-known business magazine described the project as the most successful and sustainable educational programme in the whole of Slovenia.

Courses at the VET school for food processing and hotel services in Bratislava are a good foundation for apprentices entering the Slovakian job market.
© SDC



Promoting economic growth and improving working conditions

Reform of the vocational education and training and system in Slovakia

Switzerland supported the reform of Slovakia's vocational education and training system. Encouraging cooperation between vocational schools, trade associations and employer organisations resulted in vocational education and training programmes better geared to the requirements of the Slovakian labour market. Switzerland thereby helped to reduce youth unemployment in Slovakia.

The dual vocational education and training system is one of Switzerland's strengths. Thanks to the direct connection between vocational training and the labour market, a high proportion of Switzerland's workforce is well-qualified compared with other European countries.

Practice-oriented education and training improves job market prospects

Slovakia has a very high youth unemployment rate – over 30% at the start of the project. At the same time, employers in many sectors of the economy complained that it was difficult to find well-qualified staff and wanted to see more practice-oriented vocational education and training. Vocational schools provided apprentices with theoretical and practical training often without a clear idea of what Slovakian companies expected from the school leavers or how the job market was developing. This resulted in gaps between the skills acquired in the Slovakian VET programmes and the needs of companies, which in turn contributed to high youth unemployment.

The project successfully completed the reform of the vocational education and training system through close cooperation between the Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training and the Slovakian State Vocational Education Institute. Training programmes and courses were therefore developed that were better aligned to the needs of the labour market. Vocational school teaching staff and apprenticeship instructors were trained and a nationwide campaign to raise awareness of the benefits of vocational education and training was organised.

Positive results

In collaboration with vocational schools, professional associations and employer organisations, training programmes in technology, chemicals, baking and confectionery, glass, construction and hairdressing were adjusted to the requirements of the Slovakian labour market. The 440 people who graduated from these VET programmes in 2017 were in a better position to find employment and had better prospects for the future.

Milestone: successful reform

The Slovak government made legislative changes following the success of the project and building on the insights gained. In 2015, the Slovak Parliament approved new vocational training legislation, thus creating the national legal basis for the dual education system. The act is based in part on the Swiss model. The reform is strengthening the dual vocational education and training system in Slovakia, helping to reduce unemployment and offering better prospects for young people in their home towns and regions.

A farm in Eleja used a microcredit to buy a new car and seeds. Eight family members work on the farm, which provides employment for an additional four people during the peak season.
© SECO



Microcredits for small businesses and the self-employed in Latvia

Ways out of unemployment

The unemployment rate in Latvia rose dramatically as a result of the economic and financial crisis. The microcredit programme makes it easier for micro enterprises and the self-employed to obtain business loans and results in the creation of new jobs.

After years of boom, Latvia's economy collapsed in 2008 as a result of the global economic and financial crisis. The country's economic output fell by 18% in 2009 – a more dramatic decline than in any other EU country. The unemployment rate rose sharply to almost 20% in 2010.

To counter this development, the Latvian government decided to allocate state funds to facilitate lending to small businesses. Around three quarters of Latvian companies employ fewer than nine people. Switzerland contributed CHF 7.92 million to help launch additional start-ups in Latvia, furthering the country's entrepreneurial and economic development.

Targets exceeded

The original goal of the programme was to grant 650 loans and thus create 900 jobs. This target was exceeded: thanks to Switzerland's contribution, over 1,000 microcredit facilities were extended, creating over 2,500 jobs. 49% of the microcredits were granted in the areas of agriculture and forestry. 22% benefited the service sector, 15% the trade sector and 10% the manufacturing sector. The regional distribution of the microcredits was well balanced, benefiting both urban and outlying regions.

Development bank with many years of experience

ALTUM, Latvia's development bank, was appointed to carry out the project. ALTUM set up a credit fund to lend to businesses that met the following conditions:

- › Self-employed people and businesses with fewer than nine employees could apply for a microcredit up to a maximum of EUR 14,000. Projects costing EUR 7,000 and over must provide 10% of their own capital. The microcredits had interest rates of 5-8% per year.
- › Part of the loan repayment was waived for borrowers who complied with all the provisions of the credit agreement. The waived amount could not exceed EUR 700 for borrowers in large towns and EUR 1,000 for those in rural areas.
- › 97.6% of the microcredits were repaid.

The Lithuanian health programme reduced infant and maternal mortality rates and improved energy efficiency and the indoor climate in the maternity wards. © SDC/SECO



Energy efficiency, modern equipment and well-trained health personnel in Lithuania

The health of mothers and children

Thanks to Swiss support, conditions for mothers and newborns in Lithuania have improved greatly. Switzerland provided funding for modern medical equipment, energy-efficient renovations and further training in 27 hospitals.

Despite great progress made by the Lithuanian healthcare system since the early 1990s, in 2010 the country's infant and maternal mortality rates remained above the European average. The healthcare system was well organised, but its infrastructure and equipment were inadequate. Energy efficiency upgrades were also needed, as most Lithuanian hospitals were built between 1960 and 1980 to the Soviet standard of the time.

Reduced infant mortality and energy consumption

The conditions for newborns and mothers in Lithuania have now improved significantly. Most strikingly, infant mortality has fallen by 80% since 1992.

The Swiss contribution has achieved the following:

- › 27 hospitals were provided with modern medical equipment.
- › Over 2,300 healthcare workers received training.
- › 70 diagnosis and treatment guidelines were developed to standardise and systematise treatment of the most common diseases.
- › Doors, windows, roofs and walls were renovated or replaced to improve the indoor climate, reduce maintenance costs and lower energy consumption.
- › Hospital building technology – heating and water supply systems, electrical installations, air supply and ventilation – were modernised. The installation of heat pumps and solar panels enable the use of renewable energy.

Ongoing support

Switzerland's support was intended to build on the transition assistance provided in the 1990s. The level of medical care for infants in Lithuania is remarkable thanks to the long-term partnership with Switzerland, said Lithuania's President Dalia Grybauskaitė during her state visit in Bern in 2015. A hospital partnership with the Geneva University Hospitals was established as part of this programme and Swiss companies received contracts totalling CHF 2.3 million.

Rega trains pilots in the Romanian air rescue service, improving the safety, efficiency and speed of rescue operations. © SDC



Faster emergency services in Romania

25 years of invaluable support for the Romanian emergency services

More than 25 years have passed since Switzerland started to support Romania in developing its emergency services. Much has been achieved thanks to Switzerland's systematic funding, creativity and innovative strength.

Switzerland's support for Romania's emergency services has steadily changed and developed over the years. A wide range of projects have been implemented: new training centres for specialist medical staff have been set up, the syllabus leading to the qualification of emergency medicine specialist has been completely redesigned, and courses on improving the management of A+E units have been held. Switzerland has also financed the purchase of new medical devices and training courses on how to use them. Thanks to this long-term cooperation, Romania has been able to implement legal reforms and guidelines for its emergency medical services. Under Switzerland's contribution to the enlarged EU, two projects have been implemented:

Rega training for pilots in the Romanian air rescue service

Rega delivered training for Romanian air rescue service staff in new aeronautical procedures, communication, organisation, security management and organisational culture. This was intended to increase the safety, efficiency and speed of rescue operations and avoid losing vital time when responding to accidents. That is also why prospective instructors at the Romanian rescue service took part in Rega medical training courses. In addition, Romanian air rescue service staff completed training sessions in a flight simulator at the Swiss Air Force training centre at the military air base in Emmen.

Learning via simulation-based training

Developing simulation-based training in anaesthetics and intensive care – two high-risk areas with a minimal margin for error – is helping to improve Romania's healthcare system. Unlike classroom-based teaching, simulation centres offer a hands-on approach to learning: simulations give students practical experience that is relevant to routine clinical work. Students not actively involved in the simulation can follow the event via live transmission. Those who took part can then watch the video to see how they performed. Watching the videos is essential to group discussion and reviewing ideas, actions and processes that proved to be successful or that could be improved. Simulation-based training is particularly useful for changing old routines that are not effective.

Border security was increased in Poland. Further training enabled 90% of Polish mobile border guards to improve their knowledge and skills. © SDC



Improved border and migration management in Poland

Secure borders and better integration measures

In Poland, Switzerland invested in the modernisation of border crossings at the EU's external border and in the training and further education of specialists in the integration of migrants and the management of migration. As a result, the Schengen area's eastern border is functioning more efficiently and the process for integrating migrants is now organised more sustainably. This is not only important for Poland and the EU, but also has an overall positive effect on Switzerland's security.

Poland's external Schengen border measures 1,200km – one of the longest in the EU. But much of the infrastructure at Polish border crossings was outdated and in need of renovation, making it impossible to carry out border controls efficiently.

Increasing security at the EU's external border

Switzerland's contribution to the enlarged EU was therefore used to invest in modern, up-to-date equipment for the external Schengen border. On the border with Belarus, two border crossings for car and rail traffic were renovated and equipped to Schengen standards. Thanks to targeted investments in infrastructure, food inspections and veterinary checks can also now be carried out at these border crossings. Despite rapidly growing cross-border traffic, effective border controls and customs clearance now enable border officials to perform their duties more efficiently and combat the smuggling of people and goods more effectively. In addition, further training workshops have allowed border guards from Switzerland and Poland to share knowledge and experience, benefiting both sides.

Improved migration management

The number of migrants in Poland has increased in recent years. Switzerland therefore provided assistance to help Poland manage migration more effectively. A total of 72 Polish organisations, including 26 NGOs and migrants' associations, benefited from training workshops on migration and diversity management and courses on Polish culture.

The establishment of a nationwide platform on migration for diaspora associations, NGOs and government agencies facilitated better communication between the various stakeholders. This allowed government agencies to draw up migration directives with a better understanding of the needs and expectations of the organisations concerned. These measures have also furthered intercultural dialogue and understanding of issues relating to migration among actors with an influence on the integration process.

Workers securing the banks of the River Tisza in Hungary against flooding.
© SDC



Flood prevention and management in north-eastern Hungary

Flood protection with Swiss expertise

Adapted contingency plans, easily transportable emergency dams and the stabilisation of protective walls have greatly reduced the risk of flooding in north-eastern Hungary. As a result, thousands of people will be better protected against flooding in the future. ETH Zurich and a Swiss company were closely involved in the implementation of this project.

Climate change and human interventions such as deforestation have greatly increased the risk of flooding along the Tisza and other rivers in north-eastern Hungary in recent years. Flooding has become more frequent, causing major damage. Switzerland carried out projects and applied its own experience to support the Hungarian authorities in preventing flood disasters through appropriate protection measures.

Better protection against flooding

Aerial photographs were taken to collect data on the topography and vegetation along the banks of the River Tisza near the Ukrainian border. The data was used to update flood contingency plans and inspect about 120km of embankments. This was particularly important because in the Ukrainian part of the river there is no safety reservoir to collect water during heavy rains. In addition, mobile protective dams were erected which had been supplied to the Hungarian authorities by a Swiss company. The Hungarian authorities are now able to respond to rapidly rising water levels and deploy the easily transportable dams at the specific locations most at risk, as is the practice in Switzerland.

Reliable flood forecasts

In addition, a complex, reliable flood forecasting model was developed for the Tisza catchment area with assistance from Swiss experts from ETH Zurich. Combined with a hydrological measurement network to monitor water levels, temperature and precipitation as well as secure communication channels in crisis situations, the forecasting model allows decision-makers to take flood control action more rapidly.

The 98 partnership projects between Switzerland and the Czech Republic facilitated the exchange of expertise in various sectors, including transport. © SDC



Partnership fund in the Czech Republic

Partnerships for the future

A partnership fund supported 98 bilateral partnerships between Swiss and Czech institutions to facilitate the sharing of experience in non-motorised transport, teacher training, environmental protection and other areas. Partnerships at local and national level strengthened bilateral relations between Switzerland and the Czech Republic.

Switzerland has considerable expertise in a wide range of areas, such as environmental protection and social policy. Swiss organisations working in these areas can help partner countries which lack experience in these areas, mainly for historical reasons. In the Czech Republic, for example, Switzerland supported a study on children's rights which was consulted for a change in legislation and a national action plan.

Partnership for non-motorised transport

A project on non-motorised transport, an area in which Switzerland has extensive experience, is another example of the diverse range of projects carried out as part of Switzerland's contribution to the enlarged EU. SwitzerlandMobility is a foundation that promotes non-motorised transport by selecting routes for pedestrians, cyclists, in-line skaters and even canoes. The Czech Environmental Partnership Foundation has a similar programme called Greenways. Mutual visits by members of the two foundations inspired the Environmental Partnership Foundation to explore how to replicate the SwitzerlandMobility initiative in the Czech Republic. The Environmental Partnership Foundation then identified promising cycling routes throughout the Czech Republic to promote non-motorised transport. The cycling routes are showcased on the Greenways website.

Strengthened bilateral relations

Many of the partnerships with Czech organisations will continue after the end of the current enlargement contribution period, as Lukas Stadtherr from SwitzerlandMobility confirms: "Cooperating with our Czech partners was extremely motivating and delivered added value for both sides. We are building networks and staying in touch with our partners in the Czech Republic, including through the European EuroVelo network." A total of CHF 4.11 million was invested in 98 projects in the Czech Republic. The partners included foundations, associations, municipalities and cities.

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