

Swiss-Maltese Co-operation Programme

Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 17 May 2013

ATTENDANCE

Present for the meeting were:

Maltese National Co-ordination Unit

- Mr Raphael Scerri, Director General (Funds and Programmes), MEAIM
- Mr Stephen Calleja, Director (Programmes and Projects), MEAIM

Swiss Confederation Representatives

- Ms Maryline Dafflon, Programme Manager, Division New EU Member States, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

Others present

- Ms Maria Camilleri, Auditor, Internal Audit and Investigations Department, OPM
- Mr Joseph Sghendo, Director (EU Paying Authority), MFIN

Secretary

- Ms Christine Tong, EU Fund Officer, Funds and Programmes Division, MEAIM

PROCEEDINGS

Introduction

Mr Raphael Scerri opened the meeting by thanking Ms Maryline Dafflon for her presence. He proceeded to the adoption of the Agenda.

Adoption of Agenda

Mr Scerri went through the items to be discussed, giving an overview of what developments had taken place since the previous Annual Meeting (4 May 2012):

- The PET/CT scan project had been completed and the final payments to suppliers were expected to be processed by July 2013. The final Reimbursement Request would then be submitted to SDC by November 2013 as per Disbursement Plan;
- MEDAC was proceeding well and according to the projected timeline.

Word was passed over to the Swiss delegation. Ms Dafflon expressed gratitude towards the National Co-ordination Unit (NCU) for its work, which had contributed to the strengthening of the excellent bilateral relations between the two countries.

She proceeded to give a brief update of the state of affairs with the Swiss Contribution. She mentioned that the final commitment had been concluded last year, and that everything had been settled in due time. She mentioned that Romania and Bulgaria were still in the project selection phase, with Croatia among the countries expected to benefit from an eventual contribution. Also mentioned was the Annual Swiss Cooperation Conference due to be held in Bern on the 31 May 2013, which would include presentations on the countries currently benefiting from the Contribution, including Malta.

The Agenda for this meeting was adopted.

Discussion on Annual Report for the period 1 May 2012 to 30 April 2013

Mr Scerri opened discussions on the Annual Report by giving an overview of the developments listed therein:

- *Establishing Positron Emission Tomography/Computed Tomography (PET/CT) scanning in the Maltese Islands:*

In terms of the PET/CT project, Mr Scerri confirmed that the machine was now in place and that the supplies related to it had been delivered. An official inauguration by Prime Minister Dr Lawrence Gonzi took place on 6 February 2013, in the presence of the Ambassador of the Swiss Confederation, H E Bernardino Regazzoni.

Mr Scerri mentioned that two Reimbursement Requests had been made, with the third one due to be submitted to SDC by November 2013.

Mr Calleja intervened with a clarification, saying that what remained were the final payment on the equipment and the payment on the maintenance agreement. These would be included in the final Reimbursement Request along with the Project Completion Report, and the Final Audit Report, which was due by IAID in October. In accordance with the Disbursement Plan, all of this would be completed by November 2013.

Furthermore, the project budget had been examined in order to ensure that the full amount would be utilised. Mr Calleja stated that no savings were envisaged for this project, and that depending upon the exchange rate, the resultant co-financing might be slightly less than 85%. Reimbursement Requests sent to Switzerland by the Paying Authority were to be in Swiss Francs, but the supply / service contracts were in Euro, making it difficult to predict precisely the final amount to be claimed. He further stated that the daily rate of exchange was being used to make calculations.

Further to this, it was stated that at programme level, no publicity had taken place yet. The Ministry for Health, as the Executing Agency, had undertaken publicity at project level related to the PET/CT scanner.

- *Support to the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies (MEDAC):*

Mr Scerri made reference to the report in terms of the MEDAC project and its students, who had recently paid their annual study visit to Geneva and Bern, which included a visit to the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation as well as the Swiss Parliament.

Also mentioned was the July 2012 MEDAC-organised human rights summer school, themed 'Human Rights, Protest and Change'.

The administrative aspect of things, Reimbursement Request 4 had been submitted in October 2012, while Request 5 would be sent to SDC by the Paying Authority towards the end of May 2013.

- *The Technical Assistance Fund:*

The tender for the promotion of the Swiss-Maltese Cooperation Programme and awareness of its achievements was launched on 17 May 2013. The tender dossier would be uploaded on the FPD website and the closing date for the submission of offers was 14 June 2013. In the meantime the Tender Opening and Tender Evaluation Committees would be established. It was hoped that offers would be received and that they would administratively, technically and financially compliant. Mr Calleja explained that in case all the administratively and technically compliant offers came in over the budget, the NCU would request a shift of funds from the 'Participation in Meetings outside Malta' budget heading to the 'General Publicity Measures' heading in order to re-launch the tender with a higher allocation.

Quoting timings, Mr Scerri stated that he envisaged the campaign being rolled out towards the end of Q2/ beginning of Q3 of 2013, since a twelve week campaign was planned to take place.

Also mentioned in relation to visibility was the new Funds and Programmes Division website which had been launched as separate from that of the Planning and Priorities Division, with specific pages dedicated to information on the Swiss Contribution.

Mr Calleja also mentioned CHF 14,500 set aside for an ex-post evaluation of the programme, to be carried out once both projects were concluded. The terms of reference for the tender had already been elaborated and the NCU would share them with SDC in the same way as it had done in relation to the publicity tender. The NCU's concern at this stage was that the budget available might be on the low side for an evaluation.

On this point, both sides agreed that depending on the outcome of the procurement procedure for the publicity tender, funds would be shifted from 'Participation in Meetings outside Malta' to either 'General Publicity Measures' or 'Hiring of Consultants for monitoring / review'. In either case, the allocation under 'Participation in Meetings outside Malta' would be reduced to CHF 500 for each of the years 2013, 2014 and 2015, while no provision would be required under this heading in 2016 and 2017.

Audit

- *Interim Financial Audit Reports:*

Mr Scerri moved on to the next item on the agenda and introduced Ms Maria Camilleri from the Internal Audit and Investigations Department. Ms Camilleri gave an overview of the two interim audit reports submitted to Switzerland along with the Project Annual Reports. For the PET/CT scanner project, the interim audit covered the period 1 January 2012 to 31 August 2012. No recommendations were put forward. For the MEDAC project, the interim audit covered the period September 2010 to June 2012 and 30% of the expenditure had been examined. Two recommendations were issued involving the recovery of €748.70 and €601.28.

The NCU had accepted these recommendations and action would be taken to set off these amounts against the amount to be claimed in Reimbursement Request 6.

The final financial audit on the PET/CT scanner project would be carried out in October 2013, whilst the one on the MEDAC project would be carried out after June 2014.

Any other business

Ms Dafflon mentioned a health campaign which had been proposed by Malta in the early stages of the PET/CT scanner project. Mr Calleja clarified that as far as he could recall this campaign had been proposed at the time when Malta was allocated the additional CHF 2 million but this idea was then abandoned in favour of the MEDAC project. He also mentioned that the training component under the PET/CT scanner project was entirely funded from national funds. The training involved Maltese radiographers visiting IOSI in Bellinzona in order to gain further knowledge on how to interpret the results of the scanner. Apart from this, an expert had visited Malta in order to calibrate the machine in preparation for patient use.

Ms Dafflon queried about the conclusion of the MEDAC project, asking what kind of evaluation would be carried out on MEDAC. Mr Calleja stated that the evaluation of the MEDAC project would form part of the overall ex-post evaluation which had been discussed earlier during the meeting. MEDAC maintained contract with its alumni body and one possibility would be for a survey (or possibly a questionnaire via email correspondence) in order to gauge the effectiveness of the project and gain feedback. Mr Sghendo remarked that the impact of the MEDAC project was not only local however, as it had a multiplier effect. Mr Calleja said that this kind of evaluation would have to take place in Q3/Q4 of 2014.

Ms Dafflon agreed to this, requesting that the impact of the Human Rights Summer School also be gauged.

Ms Camilleri enquired about the future of the MEDAC project beyond the lifetime of the Swiss-Maltese Co-operation Programme. Ms Dafflon and Mr Calleja both agreed that the project would continue to be sustained by Switzerland via other sources of funding.

Conclusions

The Annual Report for the period 1 May 2012 to 30 April 2013 was unanimously approved.

Ms Dafflon thanked the Maltese delegation, commenting upon the good media coverage done so far on the PET/CT scanner project before proceeding to a site visit at Mater Dei Hospital.

Concluding Mr Scerri again thanked everyone present and hoped to continue with this fruitful cooperation in the next twelve months.