Second Swiss Contribution

**Malta**

**Annual Cooperation Programme Report**

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| --- | --- |
| Reporting Period | 1 January 2024 – 31 December 2024 |
| Report Number | 2 |
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**List of abbreviations**

CH Switzerland

CHF Swiss Franc

NCU National Coordination Unit

EA Executing Agency

FPD Funds and Programmes Division within the Office of the Prime Minister

SID Strategy and Implementation Division within the Office of the Prime Minister

SDC Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

SM Support Measure

1. **Executive Summary**

This Annual Cooperation Programme Report has been produced by the Maltese NCU in terms of Article 3.11 of the Regulations on the implementation of the Second Swiss Contribution to selected Member States of the European Union to reduce economic and social disparities within the European Union.

The report covers the period 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024. It shall be discussed and approved at the Annual Meeting scheduled to held in Malta on 9 April 2025.

The Swiss-Maltese Cooperation Programme consists of only one SM, titled ‘Comprehensive response to heart diseases.’ The SM Agreement was signed by Inġ. Anthony Camilleri, Head of the Maltese NCU and H.E. Monika Schmutz Kirgöz, Ambassador of the Swiss Federation to Malta on 23 April 2024 during a ceremony that took place at the Office of the Prime Minister in Valletta. Thus, that date is the first date of eligibility for expediture incurred under the SM.

The progress and achievements of the Cooperation Programme during the reporting period; physical and financial planning; management; audits; irregularities; evaluations; and communication activities are discussed in the following sections of the report.

1. **Cooperation Programme progress**
   1. **Achievement of objectives of the Cooperation Programme**

This is the second Annual Cooperation Programme Report on the implementation of the Second Swiss Contribution to Malta, covering the period 1January 2024 to 31 December 2024. The Contribution to Malta forms part of the Second Swiss Contribution to selected Member States of the European Union to reduce economic and social disparities within the European Union.

The impact that the Programme and the Support Measure that underpins it aim to achieve is stated as “Better quality of life and lower mortality rates from cardiovascular disease for the population in Malta.” To that end, two objectives have been set. These are (a) Improved health services: Diagnostic and therapeutic management of heart diseases, and pre-hospital care during emergency remote rescue operations by A & E personnel enhanced and (b) Prevention and Control of Cardiovascular Risk factors during cardiac rehabilitation phase improved: BMI, LDL, Smoking and Exercise.

In order to reach those objectives, the Programme includes the procurement of specialised hospital equipment to boost the capacity for cardiological interventions; training of two cardiology fellows at the Istituto Cardiocentro Ticino; training of up to twenty-four Accident & Emergency personnel at Swiss Air Rescue REGA; and the implementation of health promotion and prevention measures, including a Health Awareness mobile phone app.

* 1. **Status of implementation**

Effective implementation could only commence once the Support Measure Agreement between the Maltese NCU and SDC had been signed. This took place on 23 April 2024, and the work started immediately afterwards. 2024 was dedicated to important preparatory work, paving the way for delivery of the expected outputs and outcomes to start in 2025. This preparatory work consisted of the following activities:

23 April 2024: SM Agreement between the Maltese NCU and SDC signed in Valletta

23 April 2024: First Annual Meeting, organised by the Maltese NCU

22 May 2024: Implementation Agreement between the Maltese NCU and the Executing Agency signed. This agreement governs the implementation of the SM.

25 June 2024: Partnership Agreement between the Istituto Cardiocentro Ticino and Mater Dei Hospital signed. This agreement provides for the training of the two cardiology fellows.

6 August 2024: Call for the selection of the first cardiology fellow published, following its approval by SDC on 1 July 2024. The call closed on 23 August 2024 with the result being published on 17 October 2024. A successful applicant was identified to take up the fellowship in interventional cardiology in January 2025.

30 September 2024: The logframe matrix, revised as requested in the Decision Letter Second Stage Approval dated 29 January 2024, was finalised and approved. The Maltese NCU would like to record its appreciation for the support and advice provided by Ms Isabelle Molo in performing this exercise.

24 October 2024: First Steering Committee meeting, organised by the Executing Agency. At this meeting it was agreed that the Ministry for Health would submit a duly justified request to SDC through the NCU, to procure Radiation Protection for the Cath Labs, Advanced Intravascular Imaging for the Cath Labs (high definition IVUS and OCT), and Echocardiography equipment instead of the Coronary Robotic System.

28 October 2024: Partnership Agreement between Swiss Air Rescue REGA and Mater Dei Hospital signed. This agreement covers the training of up to twenty-four Accident & Emergency personnel in Switzerland during 2025.

8 November 2024: The call for expression of interest among Accident & Emergency personnel launched. The call closed on 22 November 2024. There were fifty-four applicants and the interviews to select eight doctors, eight nurses and eight EARs were due to be held between the 20 and the 22 January 2025.

3 December 2024: The draft call for quotations for the services of a Project Administrator submitted to SDC for review. SDC approved the text on 12 December 2024.

Equipment tender document drafting was also undertaken during the reporting period. These documents will be submitted to SDC for review in 2025, prior to publication. As at the end of the reporting period, a Pre-Market Consultation regarding the Health Awareness mobile phone app was also still under way.

*Eligible expenditure*

Aside from preparatory work outline above, no project implementation incurring eligible expenditure took place during the reporting period.

*Framework Agreement*

There have been no amendments to the Framework Agreement and its Annexes during the reporting period.

* 1. **Work plan and financial planning**

Key activities in 2025:

January 2025 – Planned start of fellowship in interventional cardiology at the Istituto Cardiocentro Ticino

January 2025 – Launch of Cath Lab site Design & Build tender (this is outside the framework of the SM and financed 100% by Maltese national funds)

January 2025 – Interviews for the selection of Accident & Emergency personnel to proceed to REGA for training

April 2025 – Second Meeting of the SM Steering Committee

April 2025 – Second Annual Meeting

June 2025 – Training of first group of Accident & Emergency personnel at Swiss Air Rescue REGA

June 2025 – Submission of equipment tender documents to Switzerland for assessment

July 2025 (tentative) – Finalisation of the Pre-Market Consultation exercise issued in 2024 regarding the Remote Patient Monitoring System / equipment to be procured as part of the health promotion and awareness campaign

September 2025 – Launch of tenders for the supply, installation and commissioning of a single plane Cardiac Cath Suite and a Coronary Robotic Control System (conditional upon the successful placement of the site Design & Build contract by August 2025)

September 2025 – Launch of Project Management Services tender (conditional upon successful placement of the site Design & Build contract by August 2025)

September 2025 (tentative) – Launch of the Communication and Outreach tender

September 2025 (tentative) – Submission of the health promotion and awareness campaign tender documents to Switzerland for assessment

November 2025 – Monitoring visit by the NCU

1. **Cooperation Programme Management**
   1. **Management and control systems**

No changes to the setup and staffing of the national authorities involved in the management and control system took place during the reporting period.

* 1. **Audits**

No audits were performed by the Audit Authority during the reporting period.

* 1. **Irregularities**

No complaints were received through the complaint mechanism at https://fondi.eu/contact-us/. Furthermore, no irregularities were reported or detected during the reporting period.

* 1. **Monitoring and evaluation**

The monitoring and evaluation plan in terms of Article 10.1 of the Regulation is at Annex 7 of this report. In view of the lack of a technical assistance budget under the Programme, the NCU proposes to use national funds to finance the ex-post evaluation foreseen for 2028.

Given that the SM was still in the initial phase of implementation at the cut-off date of this Annual Report, no monitoring or evaluation activities took place during the reporting period. However, the NCU plans to conduct its first Monitoring visit in November 2025.

1. **Communication activities**

The main communication activity that took place during the reporting period was one around the signing ceremony of the SM Agreement, on 23 April 2024. News of the ceremony featured in local online portals as well as on television and radio. The event was also publicised on social channels Facebook, Instagram and X (formerly Twitter).

Meanwhile the NCU has worked with the Communications Unit within the Office of the Prime Minister to create a webpage dedicated to the Swiss-Maltese Cooperation Programme. The webpage, which provides information about the Second Swiss Contribution and the Swiss-Maltese Cooperation Programme can be found on the Government of Malta’s EU and EU-accession related funding website: <https://fondi.eu/swiss-maltese-cooperation-programme/>https://fondi.eu/swiss-maltese-cooperation-programme/

It is worth mentioning again that the decision was taken early on – presumably during the Framework Agreement negotiation phase, and so before FPD became involved as the NCU for the Programme – that 100% of the Swiss Contribution would be allocated to one SM under Specific Objective 4 ‘Strengthening of social systems’, Thematic Area (xi) ‘Health and social protection’ and to do away with technical assistance. That, in turn, has meant that there is no provision for communication activities at the level of the Cooperation Programme, since these are normally funded through the technical assistance budget.

The NCU has been given to understand that the reason for that decision was that the Programme consists of just the one SM, thus making the SM coterminous with the Programme. The SM budget does include an allocation for publicity and communication activities. Although the Executing Agency is responsible for the implementation of communication activities at the SM level, these shall be designed in consultation with the NCU to take account of the Programme level perspective.

1. **Risk management at the level of the Cooperation Programme**

The overall level of risk of the SM (and therefore of the Cooperation Programme) is assessed by the Maltese NCU as Medium to High.

The detailed assessment, including the NCU’s comments, are at Annex 9.

**Annex 1: Reporting according to Swiss core indicators at Cooperation Programme level**

| Core Indicator, incl. definition and units | Baseline 2024 | Target 2028 | Achieved this period | Cumulatively achieved | Cumulatively achieved as percentage of target | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| HEA\_CI\_1 Number of people reached with improved healthcare measures |  | | | | | |
| **Outcome 1**  Improved health services:  Diagnostic and therapeutic management of heart diseases, and pre-hospital care during emergency remote rescue operations by A & E personnel enhanced: |  | | | | | |
| *Increased number of Structural Heart procedures.* | 200 per annum | 260 per annum | - | - | N/A | |
| *Increased number of Ablation procedures.* | 86 procedures | 160 per annum | - | - | - | |
| *Number of people reached with improved healthcare measures within 3 years of project completion.* | - | 3765 (by 2031) | - | - | - | |
| *Number of people benefitting from training to improve institutional and professional capacity.* | - | Up to 26 | - | - | - | |
| **Outcome 2**  Prevention and Control of Cardiovascular Risk factors during cardiac rehabilitation phase improved: BMI, LDL, Smoking and Exercise. | Not available | Not estimated | - | - | N/A | |
| **Output 1**  Health institutions supported by necessary medical equipment (Outcome1; Component 1): |  | | | | | |
| *Single Plane Cardiac Cath Suite delivered, installed, and commissioned.* | 0 | 1 | - | - | - | |
| *Coronary Robotic Control System for the Cardiac Cath Suite delivered, installed and commissioned.* | 0 | 1 | - | - | - | |
| **Output 2**  Health promotion and prevention measures developed, implemented, and monitored (Outcome 2; Component 2): |  | | | | | |
| *Number of enrolled patients on the Health Awareness Mobile application.* | N/A | Not estimated |  |  |  | |
| **Output 3**  Health specialists trained and better qualified (Outcome 1; Component 3): |  |  |  |  |  | |
| *Number of Cardiology fellows trained* | 0 | 2 | - | - | | - |
| *Number of Accident and Emergency Personnel trained in pre-hospital care* | 0 | 24 | - | - | | - |

The above data is based on the revised log frame matrix approved by SDC on 30 September 2024 and endorsed by the SM Steering Committee on 24 October 2024.

**Annex 2: Status of implementation**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SM name including Swiss and Partner State SM codes | Status | Swiss contribution to the SM in CHF | Start date | End date | SM Agreement and Amendments (dates of entry into force) | Reporting status | Assessment of progress by NCU |
| Comprehensive Response to Heart Diseases  7F-10046.01  MESC/FPD/03/2024 | In implementation | CHF3,560,000 | 23.04.2024 | 31.12.2028 | 23.04.2024 | on track | on track |

**Annex 3: Financial status**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SM name including Swiss and Partner State SM codes | Swiss contribution to the SM [CHF] | Total reimbursements received from CH [CHF] | | % of Swiss contribution to the SM received from CH |
| Comprehensive Response to Heart Diseases  7F-10046.01  MESC/FPD/03/2024 | CHF 3,560,000 | CHF 0 | | 0% |
| Total | CHF 3,560,000 | | CHF 0 | 0% |

**Annex 4: Work plan for the coming year (2025)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SM name including Swiss and Partner State SM codes | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec |
| Comprehensive Response to Heart Diseases  7F-10046.01  MESC/FPD/03/2024 | CF  CT  I |  |  | SC |  | P  TR |  |  | CT  P |  | MV |  |
| Cooperation Programme level |  |  |  | AM |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Key activities in 2025:

January – Planned start of fellowship in interventional cardiology at the Istituto Cardiocentro Ticino

January – Launch of Cath Lab site Design & Build tender (this is outside the framework of the SM and financed 100% by Maltese national funds)

January – Interviews for the selection of Accident & Emergency personnel to proceed to REGA for training

April – Second Meeting of the SM Steering Committee

April – Second Annual Meeting

June – Training of first group of Accident & Emergency personnel at Swiss Air Rescue REGA

June - Submission of equipment tender documents to Switzerland for assessment

July (tentative) – Finalisation of the Pre-Market Consultation exercise issued in 2024 regarding the remote patient monitoring system / equipment to be procured as part of the health promotion and awareness campaign

September – Launch of tenders for the supply, installation and commissioning of a single plane Cardiac Cath Suite and a Coronary Robotic Control System (conditional upon the successful placement of the site Design & Build contract by August 2025)

September – Launch of Project Management Services tender (conditional upon successful placement of the site Design & Build contract by August 2025)

September (tentative) – Launch of the Communication and Outreach tender

September (tentative) – Submission of health promotion and awareness campaign tender documents to Switzerland for assessment

November – Monitoring visit by NCU

Abbreviations:

Annual Meeting: AM

Audit: AU

Call for tenders: CT

Cardiology fellowship: CF

Communication activity: C

Evaluation: EV

Interviews: I

Monitoring visit: MV

Reimbursement Request: RR

Steering Committee Meeting: SC

Submission of tender documents to CH for assessment: P

Submission of SM Completion Report to CH: SMC

Training: TR

**Annex 5: Financial planning (ongoing Support Measures)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SM name including Swiss and Partner State SM codes | Swiss contribution to the SM [CHF] | Reimbursements planned to be requested from CH [CHF] | | | | |
| 2025 | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 |
| Comprehensive Response to Heart Diseases  7F-10046.01  MESC/FPD/03/2024 | 3,560,000.00 | - | 491,112.75 | 107,398.28 | 2,857,061.53 | 104,427.44 |

**Annex 6: Irregularities**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SM name including Swiss and Partner State SM codes | Irregularity reference number | Swiss contribution to the SM in CHF | Nature of actual or suspected irregularity | Estimation of total financial damage in CHF (if any) | Proposed financial correction in case of financial damage | Status |
| Comprehensive Response to Heart Diseases  7F-10046.01  MESC/FPD/03/2024 | Not applicable | CHF 3,560,000 | Choose an element. | Not applicable | Not applicable |  |
|  |  |  | Choose an element. |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Choose an element. |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Choose an element. |  |  |  |

There are no irregularities to report.

**Annex 7: Monitoring and evaluation plan for the coming years**

**A. Overview**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SM name including Swiss and Partner State SM codes | 2024 | | | | 2025 | | | | 2026 | | | | 2027 | | | | 2028 | | | |
| Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
| Comprehensive Response to Heart Diseases  7F-10046.01  MESC/FPD/03/2024 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | MV |  |  |  | MV |  |  |  | MV |  |  |  |  |
| Cooperation Programme |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | E | E | E |

Monitoring visit: MV

Evaluation: E

**B. Additional information on the strategic planning of evaluations**

The Swiss-Maltese Cooperation Programme consists of a single Support Measure. This means that the Support Measure and the Cooperation Programme are coterminous. In view of this, it is envisaged that the NCU will launch a departmental tender for an ex-post external evaluation at the Programme level following completion of the Support Measure, currently projected during H2 2028. The plan is to publish the call for tenders during Q2 2028, with the contract being awarded in Q3 2028.

The proposed external ex-post evaluation would be expert-driven and intended to assess the Swiss-Maltese Cooperation Programme and the Support Measure from the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness sustainability and (likely) impact perspectives. The evaluation should also identify key lessons and recommendations.

Since the Cooperation Programme does not include a technical assistance budget, national funds would need to be allocated for this exercise.

**Annex 8: Overview of communication measures at country level during the reporting period**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Communication measure | Positive results in terms of visibility and awareness of the Cooperation Programme and CH’s image (media response, feedback etc.) | Lessons learnt (e.g. related to (timing, place, adjustment to target groups, use of logo etc.) |
| Framework Agreement Signing ceremony | Reported in the national press and media and posted to the webpage dedicated to the Swiss-Maltese Cooperation Programme. |  |
| Setting up of a dedicated webpage within the EU accession funds related website of the Government of Malta (Fondi.eu) | The webpage is online and freely accessible to the public: <https://fondi.eu/swiss-maltese-cooperation-programme/> |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Since (a) the SM and the Cooperation Programme are coterminous, (b) there is no technical assistance budget at the Programme level and (c) the Support Measure already includes a budget of €16,157.76 [CHF15,398.35] for this use, the Project Operator of the Support Measure will lead the implementation of the communication measures. The NCU should be closely involved in the preparation and design of the measures. On current projections further communication measures are foreseen during 2026 and 2028.

**Annex 9: Overview of risk assessment on Support Measure Level**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| SM name including Swiss and Partner State SM codes  7F-10046.01  MESC/FPD/03/2024 | Overall risk | Assessment and comments by the NCU |
| Comprehensive Response to Heart Diseases | Medium-High | The Support Measure originally identified seven (7) risks, two (2) of which are rated as ‘Medium’. These are:  **Environmental risk** – This is the risk associated with the end-of-life disposal of the equipment being procured through the project. As Project Operator of the SM, the Ministry for Health and Active Ageing must take care to dispose of the equipment in line with relevant regulations in force at the time, including recycling where possible.  **General public procurement risks** – Public procurement has been highlighted as a risk to this project being completed on time. Public procurement risks present themselves at every stage of the process, from tender launch all the way through to delivery, installation and commissioning of the equipment. The risks include delays in the publication of the the tender document, non-receipt of compliant offers, the tender evaluation taking more time than initially anticipated, the possibility of an objection to the recommendation of award being lodged, delays in the manufacturing, shipping and delivery of the equipment and complications arising during the installation and commissioning phase. In planning the project, the Project Operator has designed the implementation schedule in a way to take account of these risks as much as possible.  During the first 8 months of implementation, additional risks have been identified by the Executing Agency. These are detailed in the Annual Support Measure Report, but the NCU assesses the following as the most pressing:   1. The timely implementation of this SM depends on the successful award of the Design and Build tender for the new Cath suite theatre. Considering that this tender was published in 2024 and failed since there was only one bidder whose offer was over budget, the risk that this tender will not be awarded when launched again in January 2025 should not be underestimated. **This risk is assessed Medium-High.** 2. Another risk – **considered High** - arises from the fact that there is only one company producing the Coronary Robotic Control System and the machine currently available on the market is a prototype. The cardiologists in Malta are not in favour of using this machine on their patients. In this regard, discussions between the Executing Agency, the NCU and SDC are already underway to remove this equipment from the project and replace it with other equipment without any adverse effect on the impact and outcomes of the Support Measure. 3. The success of the cardiology fellowships at the Istituto Cardiocentro Ticino hugely depends on the selected candidates’ willingness and ability to take them up and, if faced with the situation of a candidate declining a fellowship, there would be the risk of that fellowship being lost. This risk materialised in early January 2025, when Dr Sara Xuereb decided to decline the first fellowship in interventional cardiology. The NCU, MHA, SDC and Istituto Cardiocentro Ticino are currently in discussions about recovering the situation by selecting two other Maltese cardiologists to take up the fellowships (one in Interventional Cardiology and the other in Imaging) in March 2027.   These additional risks raise the overall risk rating of the Project to Medium-High. |

The most immediate risk at this point is the one associated with the tender for the design and construction of the new Cath suite theatre. Although that is not part of the project, and it is not being co-financed through the Swiss-Maltese Cooperation Programme, the timely placement and execution of the works contract is critical to the successful implementation of component 1 of the Support Measure.

Risks (b) and (c) cannot be overlooked and in fact, mitigation measures in their regard have already been proposed and are awaiting approval or otherwise from SDC and Istituto Cardiocentro Ticino.