

## **Annual Cooperation Programme Report**

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Reporting Period	1 January 2025 – 31 December 2025
Report Number	3
Report Submission Date	04.03.2026

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## List of abbreviations

CH Switzerland

CHF Swiss Franc

MDH Mater Dei Hospital, Malta

MHA Ministry for Health and Active Ageing, Malta

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 2025 to 31 December 2025. It shall be discussed and approved at the Annual Meeting scheduled to held in Malta on 15 April 2026.

The Swiss-Maltese Cooperation Programme consists of a single SM, titled 'Comprehensive response to heart diseases.' The SM Agreement was signed by Ing. 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 expenditure incurred under the SM. The SM Agreement expires on 31 December 2028 but may be extended by mutual concurrence between Switzerland and Malta until no later than 31 December 2029.

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.

## 2. Cooperation Programme progress

### 2.1 Achievement of objectives of the Cooperation Programme

This is the third Annual Cooperation Programme Report on the implementation of the Second Swiss Contribution to Malta, covering the period 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025. 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.

To reach those objectives, the SM Agreement as signed on 23 April 2024 foresees 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. However, due to issues that arose during 2025 changes have been made around the procurement of some of the specialised equipment and the training of the cardiology fellows. Details of these amendments are provided in section 2.2 below. It is worth noting that all amendments were discussed and approved by the Steering Committee.

### 2.2 Status of implementation

This section of the 2024 Annual Cooperation Programme Report alludes to the aspiration that delivery of the expected outputs and outcomes would start in 2025. Unfortunately, this has not been achieved to the degree that the NCU, SDC and MHA had been envisaging when the 2024 Report was finalised.

The implementation setbacks experienced during the reporting period were mainly around the failure of the candidate selected to take up the fellowship in interventional cardiology at the Istituto Cardiocentro Ticino (**component 3a of the project**), as well as the tender to design and build the premises to house the Single Plane Cardiac Catheterisation Suite (**component 1a of the project**).

Although that tender was to be fully financed through Maltese national funds, the NCU's and SDC's instruction to MHA was that the supply tender could not be launched until the plan related to the construction / reconfiguration of the hospital area where the Cath Suite was to be installed had been confirmed. Such a

plan was only confirmed during a meeting held at MDH on the 2 December 2025. It varies from the plan proposed during the Steering Committee meeting held on 16 July 2025 in that instead of new construction, it involves the reconfiguration of the Cardiology Department's existing footprint in a way that frees up the necessary space to house the new Swiss co-financed Cardiac Catheterisation Suite, without compromising patient care.

Another significant change to the project that occurred during the reporting period was the decision to replace the Coronary Robotic Control System (**component 1b of the project**) with radiation protection and other equipment for the Cardiology Department at Mater Dei Hospital.

All the implementation-related activities of 2025 are listed below:

15 January 2025: The selected candidate (Dr Xuereb) notified the Istituto Cardiocentro Ticino that she would not be taking up the fellowship in interventional cardiology.

16 January 2025: The 'design and build tender' for the construction of premises to house the Single Plane Cardiac Catheterisation Suite launched. This is outside the framework of the SM and financed 100% by Maltese national funds.

20 – 22 January 2025: Interviews for the selection of A & E personnel to proceed to REGA in Switzerland for training.

23 January 2025: Online meeting between SDC, FPD, MDH and MHA to discuss the follow up action to be taken in the wake of Dr Xuereb's decision to not take up the fellowship in interventional cardiology at the Istituto Cardiocentro Ticino.

23 January 2025: The NCU formally notified SDC that Dr Andrew Cassar Maempel had replaced Dr Robert Xuereb as Project Leader.

28 January 2025: The NCU formally notified SDC that as from the 3 February 2025, Mr Fabian Psaila would be assuming the role of Chief Coordinator responsible for the Swiss-Maltese Cooperation Programme, succeeding Ms. Abigail Camilleri.

3 February 2025: Results of the interviews of the A & E responders published.

12 February 2025: Dr Andrew Cassar Maempel wrote to Prof. Giovanni Pedrazzini to explore the possibility of two trainees finishing their CSST training in February 2027 to take up the interventional cardiology and imaging fellowships respectively at Istituto Cardiocentro Ticino starting March 2027.

16 February 2025: The NCU submitted a duly justified request to SDC concerning the substitution of the Coronary Robotic Control System for the Cardiology Department at Mater Dei Hospital.

4 March 2025: The NCU submitted the Annual Cooperation Programme Report and Annual Support Measure Report to SDC.

8 April 2025: Second meeting of the SM Steering Committee, hosted by MHA in Valletta.

9 April 2025: Second Annual Meeting of the Swiss-Maltese Cooperation Programme.

16 July 2025: Third meeting of the SM Steering Committee (online).

3 June 2025: The NCU submitted the draft tender dossier concerning the supply of a Fully Digital Catheterisation Mono Plane Angio Suite for the Cardiology Department at Mater Dei Hospital.

18 July 2025: SDC provided its formal approval for publication of the tender for the supply of a Fully Digital Catheterisation Mono Plane Angio Suite.

28 July 2025: The NCU submitted to SDC a revised SM budget, in view of the request dated 16 February 2025 to replace the Coronary Robotic Control System.

26 August 2025: The revised SM budget was approved in principle by SDC, with further amendments suggested.

9 September 2025: The NCU submitted an updated SM budget, Procurement Plan and Financial Plan in line with SDC's feedback of 26 August.

12 September 2025: SDC approved the updated SM budget.

2 December 2025: In view of the continued delays regarding the 'design and build' tender for the construction of new premises, the decision was made to move forward with an alternative plan presented by the Cardiology Department during a meeting held at MDH. This plan will see the reconfiguration of the Cardiology Department's existing footprint in a way that frees up the necessary space to house the new Cardiac Catheterisation Suite, without compromising patient care.

The radiation protection aprons and other equipment tender document drafting was also initiated during the reporting period. The documents shall be submitted to SDC for review in 2026, prior to publication.

#### *Eligible expenditure*

Apart from 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.

### **2.3 Work plan and financial planning**

Key activities in 2026:

April 2026 – Planned launch of tender the supply of a Fully Digital Catheterisation Mono Plane Angio Suite for the Cardiology Department at Mater Dei Hospital

April 2026 – Fourth meeting of the SM Steering Committee

April 2026 – Third Annual Meeting

June 2026 – Training of first group of Accident & Emergency personnel at Swiss Air Rescue REGA

June 2026 – Communication activity in relation to training of Accident & Emergency personnel at Swiss Air Rescue REGA

June 2026 – Submission of radiation protection aprons and other equipment tender documents to Switzerland for assessment

July 2026 – Submission of the Communication and Outreach tender documents to Switzerland for assessment

September 2026 – Training of second group of Accident & Emergency personnel at Swiss Air Rescue REGA

September 2026 – First Reimbursement Request to Switzerland (covering the period January to June 2026)

September 2026 – Launch of the Communication and Outreach tender

September 2026 – Submission of the health promotion and awareness campaign tender documents to Switzerland for assessment

October 2026 – Launch of tender for the procurement of radiation protection aprons and other equipment

November 2026 – Monitoring visit by the NCU

November 2026 – Possible launch of health promotion and awareness campaign tender

## **3. Cooperation Programme Management**

### **3.1 Management and control systems**

No changes to the setup and staffing levels of the national authorities involved in the management and control system took place during the reporting period. However, with effect from 3 February 2025, Mr Fabian Psaila replaced Ms Abigail Camilleri as Chief Coordinator responsible for the Swiss-Maltese Cooperation Programme.

### **3.2 Audits**

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

### **3.3 Irregularities**

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

### **3.4 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 no substantive implementation had taken place during the reporting period, there was no scope for the NCU to perform the monitoring visit scheduled for November 2025. Nevertheless, the NCU and MHA remained in close contact throughout the reporting period to monitor and deal with the implementation issues as they arose.

No evaluation activities took place during the reporting period either. The NCU currently intends to conduct a formal monitoring visit in November 2026.

## **4. Communication activities**

Apart from ensuring that the official webpage dedicated to the Swiss-Maltese Cooperation Programme was kept up to date, no further communication activities took place during the reporting period.

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 keeping in mind 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 understood 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.

## **5. Risk management at the level of the Cooperation Programme**

The overall level of risk of the SM (and therefore of the Cooperation Programme) is still 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					
<b>Outcome 1</b> Improved health services: Diagnostic and therapeutic management of heart diseases, and pre-hospital care during emergency remote rescue operations by A & E personnel enhanced:					
<i>Increased number of Structural Heart procedures.</i>	200 per annum	260 per annum	-	-	N/A
<i>Increased number of Ablation procedures.</i>	86 procedures	160 per annum	-	-	-
<i>Number of people reached with improved healthcare measures within 3 years of project completion.</i>	-	3765 (by 2031)	-	-	-
<i>Number of people benefitting from training to improve institutional and professional capacity.</i>	-	Up to 26	-	-	-
<b>Outcome 2</b> Prevention and Control of Cardiovascular Risk factors during cardiac rehabilitation phase improved: BMI, LDL, Smoking and Exercise.	Not available	Not estimated	-	-	N/A
<b>Output 1</b> Health institutions supported by necessary medical equipment (Outcome1; Component 1):					

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					
<i>Single Plane Cardiac Cath Suite delivered, installed, and commissioned.</i>	0	1	-	-	-
<i>Coronary Robotic Control System for the Cardiac Cath Suite delivered, installed and commissioned.</i>	0	1	-	-	-
<b>Output 2</b> Health promotion and prevention measures developed, implemented, and monitored (Outcome 2; Component 2):					
<i>Number of enrolled patients on the Health Awareness Mobile application.</i>	N/A	Not estimated			
<b>Output 3</b> Health specialists trained and better qualified (Outcome 1; Component 3):					
<i>Number of Cardiology fellows trained</i>	0	2	0	0-	0
<i>Number of Accident and Emergency Personnel trained in pre-hospital care</i>	0	24	-	-	-

Core Indicator, incl. definition and units	Baseline 2024	Target 2028	Achieved this period	Cumulatively achieved	Cumulatively achieved as percentage of target
<hr/>					
HEA_CI_2 Patient satisfaction with the provision of services from the health facilities					
<hr/>					
<b>Outcome 1</b>					
Improved health services: Diagnostic and therapeutic management of heart diseases, and pre-hospital care during emergency remote rescue operations by A & E personnel enhanced:					
<hr/>					
<i>Patient satisfaction with the provision of services from the health facilities: Implementation of a validated patient satisfaction survey about the care that patients receive.</i>					
<i>Baseline % of satisfied patients in 2025</i>	Yet to be surveyed	-			
<i>Target % of satisfied patients in 2028</i>	-	> 80%			
<hr/>					
CC_CI_1 Number of people benefitting from training to improve institutional and professional capacity					
<hr/>					
<b>Outcome 1</b>					
Improved health services: Diagnostic and therapeutic management of heart diseases, and pre-hospital care during emergency remote rescue operations by A & E personnel enhanced:					
<hr/>					
<i>Number of people benefitting from training</i>	-	Up to 26	-	-	-
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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	In implementation	CHF3,560,000	23.04.2024	31.12.2028	23.04.2024	on track	on track

7F-10046.01  
MESC/FPD/03/2024

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### 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	CHF 3,560,000	CHF 0	0%
7F-10046.01 MESC/FPD/03/2024			
Total	CHF 3,560,000	CHF 0	0%

## Annex 4: Work plan for the coming year (2026)

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			CT	SC		TR	P		TR	CT	MV	
7F-10046.01 MESC/FPD/03/2024						C			RR		CT	
						P			CT			
									P			
Cooperation Programme level				AM								

### Key activities in 2026:

- April 2026 – Planned launch of tender the supply of a Fully Digital Catheterisation Mono Plane Angio Suite for the Cardiology Department at Mater Dei Hospital
- April 2026 – Fourth meeting of the SM Steering Committee
- April 2026 – Third Annual Meeting
- June 2026 – Training of first group of Accident & Emergency personnel at Swiss Air Rescue REGA
- June 2026 – Communication activity in relation to training of Accident & Emergency personnel at Swiss Air Rescue REGA
- June 2026 – Submission of radiation protection aprons and other equipment tender documents to Switzerland for assessment
- July 2026 – Submission of the Communication and Outreach tender documents to Switzerland for assessment
- September 2026 – Training of second group of Accident & Emergency personnel at Swiss Air Rescue REGA
- September 2026 – First Reimbursement Request to Switzerland (covering the period January to June 2026)
- September 2026 – Launch of the Communication and Outreach tender
- September 2026 – Submission of the health promotion and awareness campaign tender documents to Switzerland for assessment
- October 2026 – Launch of tender for the procurement of radiation protection aprons and other equipment
- November 2026 – Monitoring visit by the NCU
- November 2026 – Possible launch of health promotion and awareness campaign tender

### 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 Measure)

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	3,560,000.00	-	66,768.06	1,075,403.61	2,312,148.24	105,680.08
7F-10046.01 MESC/FPD/03/2024						

## 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	Not applicable	CHF 3,560,000	Choose an element.	Not applicable	Not applicable	
7F-10046.01 MESC/FPD/03/2024			Choose an element.			
			Choose an element.			
			Choose an element.			

There are no irregularities to report.



## 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.)
Maintaining 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: <a href="https://fondi.eu/swiss-maltese-cooperation-programme/">https://fondi.eu/swiss-maltese-cooperation-programme/</a>	

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 Executing Agency for 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	Overall risk	Assessment and comments by the NCU
7F-10046.01 MESCF/FPD/03/2024		<p data-bbox="842 440 2092 504">The Support Measure originally identified seven (7) risks, two (2) of which are rated as 'Medium'. These are:</p> <p data-bbox="842 536 2145 663"><b>Environmental risk</b> – 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.</p> <p data-bbox="842 695 2145 999"><b>General public procurement risks</b> – 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 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.</p> <p data-bbox="842 1031 2154 1126">During the reporting period, the risk landscape has evolved along with the implementation issues that have emerged. The current risks as identified by the Executing Agency are set out in the Annual Support Measure Report, and the NCU classifies their level as follows:</p> <p data-bbox="842 1158 2163 1417">(a) The tender to design and build the new Cath suite theatre has failed even after being launched a second time in January 2025, thus turning the risk highlighted in this section in last year's report into a reality. The General Contracts Committee rejected the offer submitted by the only bidder on account of the financial offer being substantially higher than the published estimated tender value. The bidder has lodged an appeal and the decision on this is still pending. As a mitigation measure, it was decided in December 2025 to build the new cardiac catheterisation suite within Mater Dei Hospital without needing to take outside footprint. This allows the Executing Agency to proceed with the building of the new cardiac catheterisation suite to house the Single Plane</p>

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Cardiac Cath Suite. As a result of this measure the level of this risk is currently assessed as **Medium**.

- (b) The awareness campaign is currently being piloted through a Joint Action of the EU4Health programme JACARDI. The decision regarding the wearables will be taken at the conclusion / reporting stage of the JACARDI project, in 2027. **Risk: Medium-High**
- (c) Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of all the stakeholders, including SDC, the first attempt with the Istituto Cardiocentro Ticino and the second attempt with the Centre Hospitalier Universitaire Vaudois (CHUV Lausanne) have not materialised. A potential alternative to utilise the CHF 400,000 originally allocated to the two Cardiology Fellowships shall be discussed during the forthcoming Steering Committee meeting in April 2026. **Risk: High**.

Considering these risks, the NCU maintains the overall risk rating of the Project at **Medium-High**.

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Albeit reduced, the most immediate risk remains the one associated with the construction of the premises for the new Cath suite theatre (risk(a)). Although that is not part of the project, and it is not being co-financed through the Swiss-Maltese Cooperation Programme, the timely completion of the necessary works is crucial to the successful implementation of component 1a of the Support Measure.

In terms of risk (c), the NCU is working with the Ministry for Health and Active Ageing to formulate a proposal for the utilisation of the CHF 400,000 originally allocated to the two Cardiology Fellowships. The aim to present the proposal during the fourth meeting of the Steering Committee which is scheduled to take place on 14 April 2026.