



Swiss-Estonian Cooperation Programme
Support Measure "Supporting Social Inclusion"
Minutes of the Steering Committee meeting

Date and time: 17.02.2025
14:00–16:30

Place: State House (*Riigimaja*), National Foundation of Civil Society
Vabaduse plats 2, Viljandi

Participants:

Members with Voting Rights:

Kärt Kallion	Chair, Representative of the Programme Operator, Ministry of Culture
Olga Gnezdovski	Representative of the Programme Operator, Ministry of Culture
Evelin Liehti	Swiss Contribution Office of the Swiss Embassy to Estonia
Sandra Prince	Swiss Contribution Office of the Swiss Embassy to Estonia
Helena Musthallik	Representative of the National Coordination Unit, State Shared Service Centre

Members without Voting Rights:

Keit Spiegel	Representative of the Programme Component Operator (Component 1), Ministry of Culture
Ülar Vaadumäe	Representative of the Programme Component Operator (Component 2), Ministry of Social Affairs
Anu Vau	Representative of the Programme Component Operator (Component 3), Ministry of Education and Research
Minna Harjo	Representative of the Programme Component Operator (Component 4), Ministry of the Interior

Observers:

Elmo Puidet	National Foundation of Civil Society
Evelyn Valtin	National Foundation of Civil Society
Margit Tilk	Ministry of Culture
Maris Praats	National Foundation of Civil Society
Sandra Paulus	National Foundation of Civil Society

Agenda:

1. Opening remarks, introduction
2. Progress of the Components, including the special focus on media literacy activities in Component 1
3. Discussion addressing the approval conditions of the Support Measure:
 - sustainability (Component 1 and 4)
4. Communication activities, including discussion on the promotion of the Cooperation Programme on the Europe Day
5. Presentation of annual report 2024

Item 1. Opening remarks, introduction

The meeting was opened by Chair Kärt Kallion, who welcomed the participants to the second meeting of the Steering Committee. She encouraged everyone to actively and openly share their insights and thoughts during the meeting, thus strengthening the implementation of the support measure. She also informed participants that the meeting would be recorded to facilitate the preparation of minutes.

Tiina Oraste, Executive Director of the National Foundation of Civil Society, welcomed the participants to Viljandi and explained that National Foundation of Civil Society is located here because four years ago a decision was made at the state level to spread the organisations throughout Estonia and the National Foundation of Civil Society was moved to the centre of the country, Viljandi. However, the Foundation's expertise comes from all over Estonia as its staff work in different regions. Tiina Oraste wished everyone a successful meeting and expressed her hope to see the participants tomorrow at the Kick-off Event of the Social Innovation Activities of Component 4.

Evelin Liechti welcomed the participants and provided an update on the Swiss-EU negotiations, which also include the next contribution. She noted that the negotiations were concluded in December, but now the voting process in Switzerland should start. She highlighted the importance of raising public awareness at this stage, as many citizens still lack clarity on how the contributions are used. Therefore, efforts are being made to present the results and improve understanding.

Item 2. Progress of the Components, including the special focus on media literacy activities in Component 1

Programme component operators presented the update on the implementation of the components. The presentation started with Component 2, followed by Components 3 and 4, and ended with Component 1. The current stage and the workplan for 2025 were presented.



Each presentation was followed by a short discussion.

Questions and discussion on presentations

1) Component 2.

SCO asked about the conditions for the implementation of the activities to be adopted by the ministry - whether expenditures could not be made until these conditions are approved and whether the conditions need to be adopted every year. Ülar Vaadumäe explained that implementers can make expenditures before the conditions are adopted, but at their own risk. These conditions cover the whole period of the support measure, but each year a more detailed action plan and budget are adopted. This process is easier and much faster than developing and adopting the conditions themselves.

SCO also asked whether the conditions are the same for all ministries and components. The Estonian counterpart clarified that while some aspects are similar, others—such as activities, budgets, and partners—differ. Additionally, the lawyers sometimes have different opinions and therefore the legal interpretations may differ.

Evelin Liechti asked for more information on the integration of migrants into the social sector workforce. Ülar Vaadumäe explained that the idea is to provide an entry point into the sector for migrants. The aim is to create an employment programme that supports integration, including language learning, professional development, and working in parallel. SCO advised to get in touch with the Swiss partner, Bern University of Applied Sciences, as they could provide expertise and approaches to address this topic.

2) Component 3.

Evelin Liechti asked in which language the webinars for parents will be held, or if there will be translators. Anu Vau replied that the webinars will be in Estonian, with Russian and Ukrainian subtitles added to the recorded webinars.

3) Component 4.

It was explained that none of the procurements mentioned in the presentation are not included in the list of the Procurement Plan because they are below the threshold.

SCO asked for the feedback on the collaboration with the Swiss partner. Minna Harjo replied that the cooperation has been very useful, thanks to the practitioners who participated in the online workshop. They were able to identify key issues, and both the Swiss partner and the Estonian counterpart discussed and suggested potential solutions to overcome the obstacles. Additionally, the Swiss partners invited their Estonian colleagues to take part in other joint activities.

4) Component 1.

Keit Spiegel provided further insights into media literacy activities. Previous and existing media literacy initiatives have mainly focused on younger generations and teachers. However, there has been little attention - especially on a larger scale - to older generations, in particular people from different cultural or linguistic backgrounds. Most of the previous projects have also had a strong regional focus, while with this support measure we are aiming for national coverage. We are in continuous contact with the Government Office, and they really appreciate our focus on this target group and the approach we are taking. Our focus is on libraries as community centres that are taking on more and more responsibilities and tasks. We also pay attention to the digital skills of older people.

The SCO emphasised the importance of looking at previous projects and building on them. Keit Spiegel confirmed that this will not be an entirely new initiative, but rather an updated and more targeted version of past efforts.

Item 3. Discussion addressing the approval conditions of the Support Measure: sustainability (Component 1 and 4)

According to the approval conditions the Steering Committee has to discuss the sustainability of components 1 and 4.

Before the meeting, the file describing the sustainability of components 1 and 4 was distributed to the members of the Steering Committee:



Sustainability.docx

Olga Gnezdovski presented the Estonian strategy framework, which ensures that activities are planned from the outset to be sustainable (please see the presentation under item 2). The state budget consists of both national resources and foreign funds. Activities that are not reflected in the strategic documents cannot be funded. Sustainability is therefore assured, as the activities of the support measure are based on the national strategic documents, and they are one of the pieces of the puzzle.

SCO explained why the focus is on components 1 and 4. While the outputs of components 2 and 3 are concrete in the form of updated curricula, the outputs of components 1 and 4 are less tangible. For example, activities such as study visits raise questions about how knowledge from these activities is shared and sustained. The National Foundation of Civil Society clarified that the participants of the study visits are selected very carefully. They are selected from different sectors to encourage cross-sectoral cooperation, which is a key aspect of social innovation. The aim is also to ensure that those who gain knowledge can implement it in their daily work and contribute to the networks and discussions at national, EU or international level, integrating social innovation into strategic documents. Minna added that work is underway on a social innovation strategy up to 2030, which will hopefully lead to increased funding for the field.

SCO recommended documenting the outcomes of the study trip in order to preserve and share the acquired knowledge effectively. It was also suggested that a follow-up survey be carried out, for example one year later, to assess whether and how participants had applied what they had learned. The National Foundation of Civil Society proposed that they could post summaries of the study visits on the project's website and reflect them in podcasts to be produced as part of the project.

All agreed that the Steering Committee should periodically review sustainability issues based on implementation progress.

Item 4. Communication activities, including discussion on the promotion of the Cooperation Programme on the Europe Day

Olga Gnezdovski gave a brief overview of the general communication activities carried out so far and of the plans for 2025, and presented some initial ideas for the activities during Europe Day (please see the presentation under item 2).

The SCO suggested translating the info sheet into Estonian, adding that the Bern University of Applied Sciences is a Swiss partner of the support measure. The graphical layout can be organised by the SCO.

The side events (such as conferences) are fine for the SCO. However, participation in tents needs to be discussed again with the Ambassador. The SCO will conduct this discussion and provide an update. If the response is positive, the Estonian counterpart will start brainstorming and planning specific activities on how to attract public attention.¹

¹ On 20 February, the SCO confirmed that Estonian counterpart could proceed with preparations to promote the cooperation programme in a tent on Europe Day.

Item 5. Presentation of annual report 2024

The draft annual report was distributed to Steering Committee in advance.



2024 Annual Report Annex 1 Updated
SSIP 17-02-2025 .doc procurement plan.xl

Olga Gnezdovski summarised the information already presented under previous items:

- The year 2024 was primarily focused on organisational matters and on the preparation and detailed planning of activities.
- Almost no indicator achievements can be reported for 2024, except one output indicator (in component 3).
- Significant steps towards achieving the indicators has also been made in other components.
- It is worth mentioning that the partnership with the Swiss partner is progressing very well.

In presentation Olga Gnezdovski focused on the risks, that were reviewed by the Task Force of support measure in the end of January 2025. The highest risks (with a medium-high risk level) are related to the timeframe and the procurement process. The overall risk level remained the same – medium-low.

The SCO asked for additional information on “political risk”, the impact of which was assessed as one point lower. The Estonian counterpart explained that the risk was higher before the Support Measure Agreement was signed, as there was a possibility that the political agreement could be changed. However, now that the necessary agreements between the countries have been signed, it is ensured that the support measure cannot radically change its direction.

The overall feedback from the SCO on the annual report is positive. **The main suggestion for the future is not only to describe the process and current developments, but also highlight the changes resulting from them.**

The SCO inquired about the procurement plan. Most of the procurements listed in the plan are scheduled to be launched in 2026. However, given the tight timeframe and the possibility of unsuccessful procurement attempts, this may be too late. Ülar Vaadumäe explained that the Component 2 procurement is intentionally planned for 2026 to align with the curriculum modification process. Moving the procurement forward is not possible, as it depends on these modifications. The goal is to launch a strong and effective campaign advertising new possibilities and positive changes in the social sector once there are concrete results to present.

The SCO also asked about the procurement titled “Development and implementation of new digital tools” under Component 1. It was asked why there are three separate procurements with the same title and why the last one is so late, suggesting that they could be merged. Keit Spiegel answered that the Integration Foundation plans its work carefully and has a lot of experience in this area, thus the procurements have likely to follow specific stages. **However, in order to give a more precise answer, Keit will seek further clarification from the Integration Foundation.**

The SCO recommended considering **using the expertise of the Swiss partner, Bern University of Applied Sciences, in preparing the tendering documents.** This could potentially speed up Switzerland’s review process. The SCO also added that for the review the technical specifications and selection criteria must be submitted. Additionally, it was

stressed **the importance of ensuring that selection criteria go beyond just the lowest price, prioritizing quality as well.**

The discussion concluded that it is crucial to avoid any delays, so it is important **to start the procurement processes as soon as possible.**

After the meeting, the Steering Committee was introduced to the National Foundation of Civil Society.

Chair

(digitally signed)

Kärt Kallion

Head of Foreign Financing

Minutes secretary

(digitally signed)

Olga Gnezdovski

Coordinator of Estonian-Swiss
cooperation programme