



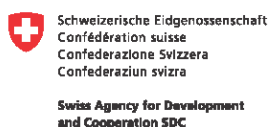
Enhancing Good Governance
and Social Inclusion for
Municipal Development

SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT

1 January – 30 June 2018



Republic of Serbia



Overall objective:	To contribute to improved governance by enhancing local capacities and resources to apply good governance principles in practice, and to implement effectively local social inclusion measures and policies in order to improve citizens', especially excluded citizens, life conditions.
Budget:	USD 6.9 million (CHF 6.9)
Duration:	1 January 2018 – 31 December 2021
Programme area:	99 local self- government from two NUTS regions: Šumadija and Western Serbia, South and Eastern Serbia
Donor:	Government of Switzerland, through Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)
Implementing partner:	United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)
Report date:	10 August 2018
Period covered:	1 January – 30 June 2018
Prepared by:	United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)

Acronyms

AoR	Area of Responsibility
CAS	Citizens Advisory Services
CFP	Call for Proposals
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DEU	Delegation of the European Union
EU	European Union
GEM	Gender Equality Mechanism
GG	Good Governance
GGCU	Good Governance Competence Units
LG	Local Government
LSG	Local Self-Government
MLEVSA	Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs
MSP	Municipal Support Package
MPALSG	Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government
PD	Programme Document
PSSC	Programme Sub-Steering Committee
RFP	Request for Proposals
RSOC	Serbia Operations Centre
SCTM	Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SIPRU	Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit
ToR	Terms of Reference

1. Executive Summary

Enhancing Good Governance and Social Inclusion for Municipal Development Programme – Swiss PRO, financially supported by the Government of Switzerland with USD 6.9 million (CHF 6.9 million) and implemented by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) in partnership with the line ministries of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM), commenced on 1 January 2018.

During the Inception Phase, which lasted until 30 April 2018, the Swiss PRO Programme conducted verification of the relevance and feasibility of the Programme, set up the management and organisational structure, initiated the development of concepts and the implementation of activities that would support the promotion of good governance and social inclusion in 99 local self-governments (LSGs) in the regions of Šumadija and Western, South and East Serbia.

The Swiss PRO held 15 meetings with relevant ministries, national institutions and organisations, as well as ten info sessions that gathered 209 participants (108 women and 101 men) from 86 towns and municipalities. Through this process, it was concluded that the planned interventions are in line with relevant national and local policies, while the administered questionnaire and work with focus groups identified the need for tailoring two activities from the social inclusion Outcome to the local needs.

Setting up the management and organisational structure, was successfully accomplished as well: the Programme personnel were hired and the Programme Sub-Steering Committee (PSSC) was established. Additionally, the Communication Strategy and the visual identity of the Programme have been adopted by the SDC to ensure the Programme's visibility.

During the reporting period, all concepts of the activities planned for that period were developed and advertised. The Grant agreement with the SCTM was signed on 31 January 2018, which meant the beginning of preparations for implementation of the first activities in the area of good governance (GG). Technical assistance related to application of GG principles was provided to the complementary EU PRO Programme during preparation for their Call for Proposals (CFP) for local infrastructural projects. Additionally, the Programme has published two tenders for submitting proposals and bids for the e-government assessment at local level, as well as proposals for conducting Training of Trainers (ToT) programme for continuing capacity building of the existing Good Governance Competence Units (GGCU).

When it comes to results related to the promotion of social inclusion, and based on the findings obtained during the inception period, the PSSC has approved modification of one activity, as well as advertising two Public Calls: support to CSOs for the implementation of social innovative projects and call for technical support to LSGs for the improvement of local procedures for allocation of funds to local CSOs, both published in June 2018. The Programme has published a tender for the submission of proposals on technical support to the promotion of social inclusion at local level.

In addition to a general overview, this report contains details of the results achieved during the reporting period, the programme context and information on key activities.

2. Introduction

2.1. Policy and programme context

In March 2018, the Government of Serbia adopted new *Decree on Funds for Financing Programmes of Public Interest Implemented by Associations*¹ that strongly enhances and supports the planned intervention of the Programme for introducing into a selected number of LSGs a systemic approach for defining the topics of public interest, assigning local-budget funds to local CSOs and improving overall good governance practices.

Adoption of the Law on Electronic Government² and the Law on Planning System of Republic of Serbia³ in April 2018 are the most significant policy changes, relevant for the Programme interventions. The newly adopted Law on Electronic Government should facilitate more transparent, and more efficient communication of citizens, legal entities, businesses, and civil society with the public administration. The later aims to establish efficient, transparent, and coordinated system for planning of development which covers spatial, regional, social, and economic aspects.

The Law on Amendments to the Law on LSGs, adopted in June 2018⁴, has several key positive changes in terms of new regulations, among which especially relevant to the Programme are: provisions for increased and improved participation of citizens in work of LSGs, improved regulation on functioning and oversight of Local Community Offices - LCOs ("MZ"), and inter-municipal cooperation.

The Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit (SIPRU)⁵ was temporarily inactive at the beginning of 2018 due change of their position within the Government. In April, SIPRU was reactivated and it will continue to work within the Cabinet of the Prime Minister.⁶ This is relevant as the Programme will consult the SIPRU when conceptualising of the social inclusion interventions.

In the course of its implementation, the Programme will adjust its support to LSGs in accordance with all relevant national strategic and legal frameworks, wherever necessary.

2.2. Programme intervention

Efforts to verify relevance and feasibility, and to present Swiss PRO included 15 meetings⁷ with national institutions and international partners, and development projects, and ten info sessions that gathered 209 participants (108 female and 101 male) from 86 towns and municipalities. For the purpose of general initial assessment⁸ and consultations with the LSGs, the Programme prepared the questionnaire related to the three results of the Programme i.e. good governance, social inclusion and gender equality, as well

¹ The Decree can be accessed at: <https://www.paragraf.rs/dnevne-vesti/230318/230318-vest15.html>

² The Law can be accessed at: <http://www.parlament.gov.rs/upload/archive/files/cir/pdf/zakoni/2018/164-18.pdf>

³ The Law can be accessed at: <http://www.parlament.gov.rs/upload/archive/files/cir/pdf/zakoni/2018/2386-17.pdf>

⁴ In addition to the above, amendment of laws of relevance for the programme implementation were adopted on 20 June, such as: Law on the National Minorities Councils, Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of the National Minorities, Law on the Official Use of Language and Scripts, Law on Territorial Organisation of the Republic of Serbia, Law on Ratification of Additional Protocol to the European Charter on Local Self-Government and Right to Participate in Local Authorities' Affairs.

⁵ Established in 2009 with the aim to strengthen capacity of the Government to develop and implement social inclusion and to support line ministries in developing and implementing social inclusion policies

⁶ <https://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/djindjiceva-cerka-pri-kabinetu-ane-brnabic-nadeno-resenje-za-tim-koji-podrzava/lwqtx4g>

⁷ The overview of the meetings held during the reporting period is available in the Annex I

⁸ The Findings of the Initial Assessment Questionnaire and focus groups is available in the Annex II

as for some questions concerning the Programme communication. The questionnaire was answered by 89 participants from 70 LSGs.

The responses given by the participants of the info-sessions are clearly supporting and justifying the design of the Programme, its objectives and the planned activities. All assumptions for the need of having an intervention of this scope were confirmed by the LSG representatives: governance at local level needs to be improved, especially in terms of accountability, transparency, citizens participation and local administration efficiency and effectiveness; LSGs need methodological support in assessing the needs of local excluded groups, as well as in adapting the existing or developing new local policies and practices pertained to social protection policies and practices; e-Government at local level is still a rather novel concept and LSGs will be needing strong technical and material support; the gender equality, as an important cross-cutting aspect in the work of the local public sector, still needs strong technical support from the outside entities, such as this Programme.

The findings of the Initial Assessment at local level revealed that implementation of social innovative projects⁹ would be more effective and relevant if the support was coupled, i.e. oriented towards direct support to civil society organisations (CSOs) for the implementation of projects addressing the needs of the excluded groups, as well as supporting LSGs to pilot the process of allocating funds to local CSOs, in accordance with the good governance principles. Through this approach, the existing shortcomings in terms of accountability and transparency in the decision-making process, as well as the roles of CSOs to respond to the needs of the excluded groups, would contribute to a more comprehensive support at the local level.

When it comes to the establishment of Citizens' Advisory Services (CAS)¹⁰ in LSGs, the findings demonstrated that the most of the municipalities are already providing some kind of advisory services to citizens, but the support is scarce and not systematised. Through discussions, it was concluded that the support could also include two approaches through piloting it in some municipalities, and by tailoring interventions that would address the needs of specific participating municipalities.

Additionally, LSGs reconfirmed the difficult position of the excluded groups, such as Roma, the unemployed, rural residents, young people, people with disabilities and the elderly citizens, and supported the activities that the Programme will implement in this area.

3. Progress towards achieving objectives and outcomes

Although it is still early to report on outcomes, the Programme has set grounds for further implementation of activities and achievement of the objective related to the enhancement of good governance and social inclusion at local level.

Outcome 1: Local governments (LGs) participating in the Programme enhanced use of good governance principles resulting in better and inclusive services for citizens.

As a basic starting point for all further activities in the area of good governance, **the Assessment of LSGs performance and capacities for applying of good governance principles** on a sample of 60 LSGs

⁹ Swiss PRO Programme Document, page 39, activity 2.2.1 Support informed citizens and/or local CSOs to engage in local decision-making and to contribute to collaborative local governance initiatives for addressing the needs of the excluded population

¹⁰ Swiss PRO Programme Document, page 41, activity 2.3.1. Support LGs in establishment of Citizens' Advisory Services

throughout Serbia was carried out using the Good Governance Index¹¹. This assessment will identify gaps in LSG's practices, and will generate recommendations for further capacity building and the empowerment of local governments to apply GG principles in their everyday work. The results of this assessment will enable identification of priority areas of support and further intervention, in collaboration with the MPALSG.

Developing existing and establishing new capacities for good governance at local level is a strong component of this Programme outcome. First activities in this area have been initiated and preparations have started for the establishment of Knowledge and Information Hub, delivery of online and regional trainings, further development of existing and establishment of new Good Governance Competence Units¹². It is expected that these activities in 2018 will increase level of knowledge, capacities and skills of 288 LSG employees.

Through consultations held with the Office for IT and e-Government, the first activities on the improvement of **e-Government at local level** were also identified. E-Government represents a new area in LSGs in Serbia, and there are procedural, technical, but also staff-related shortcomings for LSGs to effectively and efficiently implement delegated responsibilities. In order to enable the Programme to support the improvement of e-Government at local level, a comprehensive assessment of the current state of e-Government on a sample of 60 LSGs throughout Serbia was initiated. In June, the Programme published tender for the submission of proposals for the development of assessment of e-Government at local level, which will further generate recommendations for the improvement of efficiency, transparency and accountability of local administrations in providing better public services to citizens and businesses.

Outcome 2: Increased inclusion of excluded groups

The Programme has held a series of consultations with relevant national institutions and LSGs, which have confirmed the importance of planned activities aimed at the social inclusion of excluded groups. Findings obtained through the initial assessment have confirmed the need to modify two programme activities in order to respond to the identified needs at local level.

Based on the Programme's recommendations, the PSSC electronically approved on 13 June modification of activity 2.2.1 and the criteria of two Public Calls for the support to CSOs in implementing up to 25 socially innovative projects, and support to up to ten LSGs to improve internal procedures¹³ for allocating funds to CSOs for implementation of projects of public interest. Through this intervention, the Programme will support improvement of transparent and responsible partnership between LSGs and CSOs in implementing projects of public interest and in accordance with local community needs. It is expected that at least 2,000 members of marginalised groups will directly benefit from this intervention.

In the Programme's efforts in improving monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms on social protection at local level, as well as in developing or enhancing the existing strategic framework and pilot an integrated approach, a tender for the selection of a legal entity for implementation of this activity

¹¹ The Good Governance Index is a tool for objective assessment of LSG performance in the application of good governance principles, i.e. compliance with legal obligations and the implementation of public policies in thematic areas specific to the local self-governments work.

¹² GGCU available in: Babušnica, Bela Palanka, Blace, Bojnik, Bosilegrad, Brus, Crna Trava, Doljevac, Gadžin Han, Ivanjica, Knjaževac, Lebane, Medveđa, Nova Varoš, Novi Pazar, Priboj, Prokuplje, Raška, Sjenica, Surdulica, Tutin, Vranje, Vlasotince.

¹³ This intervention will respond to the requirements of recently adopted [Decree on Funds for Financing Programmes of Public Interest Implemented by Associations](#) which will enter into force in October 2018.

was published in June. It is expected that the Programme will provide technical support for up to 30 LSGs in promoting social inclusion in their local communities.

Outcome 3: Enhanced gender equality in the Programme participating municipalities

Although the implementation of activities in this area is planned from 2019, consultations with the Coordination Body for Gender Equality, UN Women and other national institutions, related organisations and projects have confirmed that the planned Programme activities in this area are in line with the national strategic framework, and that the Programme will provide very important support to institutional strengthening of local gender equality mechanisms (GEMs) for advocating gender equality at local level. The Programme will consider all the findings obtained during the preparation of the approach and the concept for implementation of activities under this Outcome, and will propose further intervention.

4. Outputs

A review of the key results achieved in the first six months of the programme implementation with an overview of specific Outputs is provided below.

Output 1.1: Raised awareness and general capacities for implementation of good governance principles at local level

- 1.1.1 Assessment of Performance and Capacities of LSGs in the Implementation of Good Governance Principle was conducted¹⁴ on sample of 60 towns and municipalities¹⁵ who expressed interest in participating in the analysis. Development of the Assessment has been slightly shifted compared to the initial plan due to relatively low level of response from targeted LSGs. This will affect initiation of other GG-related activities, but will not considerably change planned implementation by the end of 2018. A consultative meeting with representatives of relevant national institutions¹⁶ and preliminary presentation of assessment results was held on 22 June. Key findings will be presented to MPALSG in order to jointly define further steps to support towns and municipalities. The Assessment will be completed by the end of August 2018, which will be followed by preparation of further activities for implementation.
- 1.1.2 Detailed plan for the establishment of the Knowledge and Information Hub is developed¹⁷ specifying different supporting activities to be provided through Hub such as direct advisory support, providing answers to the most frequently ask questions, providing models of acts, manuals etc. The Knowledge and Information Hub is to become operational in August 2018.
- 1.1.3 Preparatory activities for the implementation of regional and on-line trainings on selected topics of good governance are in progress. The training methodology is developed¹⁸, but the final

¹⁴ The consulting company Partners Solution was selected through open tender procedure by SCTM.

¹⁵ The list of selected LSGs is available in Annex III

¹⁶ The Office for Information Technologies and e-Government, the Anti-Corruption Agency of Serbia, the Office for Human and Minority Rights of the Government of Serbia, the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, the Secretariat for Public Policies, the State Audit institution.

¹⁷ The SCTM-Detailed plan for the establishment of the Knowledge and Information Hub is available in Annex IV

¹⁸ The SCTM Proposal of the training methodology is available in Annex V

content and selection of GG areas will be defined once the Assessment Report is finalised. Implementation of these activities is planned for Q4 2018.

- 1.1.4 Preparatory activities on planning and designing the concept for implementation of the National Competition for the selection of good practice examples in the application of the GG principles are in progress and it will be implemented in cooperation with MPALSG. The Public Call is planned for early October, while the award ceremony is scheduled for December 2018.

Output 1.2:

Enhanced integration of GG principles in selected public affairs managed by LGs

- 1.2.1 The format and contents of Municipal Support Packages (MSP) are being finalised. Identification of the sub-areas and draft content in all three preselected areas (administrative efficiency, citizen participation/participative and gender budgeting and anticorruption) will be defined upon the completion of the Assessment. Public Call for MSP will be published in September 2018, and implementation of the packages in 12 LSGs is planned to start in the Q4 of 2018.

Output 1.3:

LGs capacities for integration of GG in development of policies and implementation of projects enhanced

- 1.3.1 Preparation of training programmes for capacity building of GG Competence Units in those LSGs where such centres have not been established is in progress. Based on the Assessment findings, in Q4 the Programme will organise four regional-level consultative meetings with LSGs in order to present GG activities and launch the further capacity building programme. Memorandum of Understanding on all GG activities will be signed with LSGs in Q1 2019.
- 1.3.2 The content for additional strengthening of existing resources in LSGs on the topic of good governance, through the building of their capacities for transfer of acquired knowledge and experience was developed. Request for Proposals (RFP) for conducting the Training of Trainers (ToT) services to the established 23 GGCU is prepared and will be published in July. The implementation of the activities is planned to start in Q4 2018.
- 1.3.3 Preparation of the concept is in progress for publishing the RFP for the selection of a professional legal entity for the implementation of the Citizens Satisfaction Survey (CSS) related to public services, which will be conducted on a sample of 50 LSGs participating in the Programme. At least 30 specific recommendations will be formulated to improve the provision of services. The RFP will be published in August 2018 and implementation of the activities is planned from Q4 2018.
- 1.3.4 Initial support provided to the complementary EU PRO programme in developing criteria for good governance within the CFP for local infrastructural projects. In July 2018, the Programme will participate in evaluation process of 46 applications and selection of GG-related projects for further technical support.

Output 1.4:

Institutional, technical, and human capacities for implementation of e-Government enhanced

- 1.4.1 Through consultations with the Office for IT and e-Government, the RFP for the selection of a professional legal entity, which will conduct the e-Government assessment on a representative sample of 60 LSGs in Serbia, was developed and published on 12 June. The RFP will last until 12 July while the implementation of the activities is planned to start in Q3 2018.

- 1.4.2 Preparation and commencement of implementation is planned for 2019, based on findings from e-Government Assessment.
- 1.4.3 Preparation and commencement of implementation is planned for 2019, based on findings from e-Government Assessment.
- 1.4.4 Preparation and commencement of implementation is planned for 2020.

Output 2.1:**LGs capacities enhanced to develop and implement local social protection services and to monitor and evaluate social inclusion and employment measures**

- 2.1.1 The RFP for the selection of a professional legal entity for the provision of expert support to LSGs in developing and/or strengthening local social protection policies, including mechanisms for their monitoring and evaluation was published on 7 June and will last until 13 July 2018. Implementation of the activity will start in Q3 of 2018.

Output 2.2:**CSOs capacitated/supported to implement community based projects benefiting excluded groups**

- 2.2.1 Two Public Calls for support to CSOs and to local governments have been published on 20 June, and will last until 3 August¹⁹. In order to present Public Calls, four informative sessions were held with 82 representatives (52 women and 30 men) from 20 LSGs and 42 CSOs²⁰. The total value of both calls is 420,000 EUR with grant maximum value of 14,000 EUR per project. Four more information sessions will be held in early July, and the implementation of projects will begin in Q4 2018.

Output 2.3**Support LGs in developing capacities and mechanisms to provide effectively the excluded citizens' access to their rights and entitlements**

- 2.3.1 Consultations and preparation of recommendations for modification of activity 2.3.1 are in progress, and will be submitted to the PSSC for consultations and approval by the end of 2018. Preparation and commencement of implementation is planned for 2019.

Output 3.1:**Institutional framework for gender equality at the local level strengthened and implementation of local gender equality policies enhanced**

- 3.1.1 Preparation of questionnaires for implementation of the institutional status assessment and of the existing capacities of LSGs and GEMs, as well as availability of local action plans that will serve as the basis for detailed planning in this activity is in progress. Further preparation and commencement of implementation is planned for 2019.
- 3.1.2 Preparation and commencement of implementation is planned for 2019, based on findings from snapshot assessment.

¹⁹ Call for Proposals ToRs and criteria available on the following link: <http://www.swisspro.org.rs/konkursi/javni-pozivi>

²⁰ Overview of held info sessions is available in Annex VI

5. Management and Finances

5.1. Programme Sub-Steering Committee

The Programme Sub-Steering Committee (PSSC) was established in the Inception Phase and is composed of the following representatives:

- Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government (MPALSG)
- Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs (MLEVSA)
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

In addition to these institutions and PSSC voting members, the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM) will play the role of non-voting members, and they will prepare and facilitate PSSC meetings²¹. This mechanism promotes national ownership over the Programme and enables the involved institutions to steer the implementation, monitor the progress and contribute to decision making.

Pursuant to the PSSC ToR and Programme Document, PSSC meetings will be held semi-annually, more often if necessary. The first PSSC meeting is planned for September 2018, upon the submission of the Semi-annual Report where progress of Programme implementation, coming activities and recommendations for selection of projects within the two Public Calls will be presented.

The PSSC and its members will participate to the Annual Programmes Coordination Committee (PCC), which will be tasked to coordinate and synchronise the complementary activities in the two Programmes – the EU funded EU PRO and the Swiss funded – Swiss PRO.

5.2. Resources and budget

During this period, the focus was on the establishment of core Programme team²², which was completed by 10 April 2018 by contracting seven team members in total, and by defining Programme Team member's roles and responsibilities.

All financial and administrative records are maintained in accordance with the UNOPS rules and procedures, and relevant monitoring system has been established. A tax exemption procedure for the programme funds has been established, enabling payment of invoices without VAT. The first instalment of USD 1.9 million was effectuated in February 2018.

The budget remains eligible for the Programme Action. Despite the proposed modifications of the activities, there will be no deviations from the planned funds for the implementation of activities and planned outcomes of the Programme.

5.3. Assumptions and Risks

Swiss PRO has established a risk management system with two main elements: Risk Management Strategy²³ defining the techniques, standards and processes to be used in identifying and assessing risks, as well as planning and implementing risk responses, and the Risk Register, which will be used as a record of all identified risks and their status.

²¹ The Programme Sub-Steering Committee Terms of Reference is available in the Annex VII

²² Swiss PRO Organigram is available in the Annex VIII

²³ Available at UNOPS

The initial assumptions were further analysed through regular monitoring and evaluation of events that might influence the Programme, in meetings with national and local stakeholders. The analysis showed that the identified assumptions will probably remain the same: Serbian Government remains committed to and strongly supports the public administration reforms, Serbia and the Programme area remain stable and European integrations continue, key actors have expressed interest and actively participate in implementation of activities.

When it comes to risks, it was also confirmed in this period that identified contextual, programme and institutional risks remain relevant, in particular risks such as: low capacities of beneficiary LSGs excessive burden on LSGs during the Programme implementation, and lack of understanding of the concept of good governance by decision-makers. During the Inception Phase, the Programme made additional efforts to better communicate programme interventions and opportunities for programme beneficiaries.

The Programme will make specific efforts to continue cooperation and coordination of activities with all relevant stakeholders and to monitor progress, in order to avoid overlapping, and enable synergy and identification of potential modifications of the intervention during the programme.

6. Communications and Visibility

The Programme Communication Strategy²⁴ that identifies specific objectives, approach and tools to facilitate advocacy, behavioural change and community support, target audiences and messages framework was prepared in consultations with the SDC and SCTM representatives and inputs obtained from the LSGs during the info sessions. The implementation of the Strategy will go in line with all Programme activities to support the change of perception and actions of the local stakeholders in order to fulfil the Programme objectives. Templates for the letterhead, Power Point presentations and email signatures were also prepared. Factsheet with the key information about the Programme was developed in Serbian and English.

The Swiss PRO logo was developed and accepted by the donor, while the key promotional materials were produced: 620 notebooks, 500 folders, 500 plastic pens, four roll-up banners, 1,000 factsheets and 500 paper bags. The development of the Graphic Style Book was initiated and should be completed in July 2018.

Presentation of the Programme during March and April 2018 generated ten positive media reports in regional and local media.

The website www.swisspro.org.rs was design, developed and launched in June 2018, while the Programme Facebook and Twitter accounts were established and populated with content.

The media clipping agency was engaged and commenced with providing the media reports daily. The translating and proofreading services company was contracted, while two on-call Graphic Designers and web-designers were engaged.

Communication and Outreach Plan for promotion of two Public Calls was prepared and implementation included the design and printing of leaflets, preparation and dissemination of four media

²⁴ The Communication and Visibility Strategy is available in the Annex IX. All visual material is available with Swiss PRO.

announcements generating 40 positive reports in national, regional and local media and promotion through the posts on Facebook and Twitter.

7. Lessons learned and Recommendations

Through the consultation process with national institutions and LSGs, several recommendations for Programme approach modifications are enabled. In order to further contribute to improving the effectiveness and relevance of the Programme, the following lessons learned and recommendations should be considered:

- Small and underdeveloped municipalities with a limited number of employees do not recognise excessive need for the establishment of CAS as they provide these services to citizens through the existing administrative capacities. On the other hand, bigger towns and municipalities have already established a kind of CAS. The recommendation derived in the consultations pertains to piloting of this activity in up to five LSGs with ethnically different population, which belong to IV degree of development and do not have sufficient capacities, but have recognised needs for this kind of support. Such an approach would not affect defined programme indicators that would include the excluded population. Additionally, funds allocated to CAS activities would be directed to a modified approach and further utilised to address the needs of excluded groups.
- The Programme made efforts to avoid overburdening of potential beneficiaries while informing them about the Programme objectives and activities, which was particularly important taking into account also the activities of complementary EU PRO Programme. From the aspect of coordination and communication with similar beneficiaries, it is specifically important to streamline communication towards the beneficiaries to make it targeted, measured and planned, and long-lasting, with certain adjustments to the expected goal. This will be crucial for successful and fruitful meetings with local beneficiaries, including also the selected local decision-makers – all within efforts to achieve political commitment and support to programme activities and processes. This would require the development and application of a certain set of information channels and tools.
- The Programme should make continuous efforts in coordinating the activities and interventions with other institutions and organisations, bearing in mind the possibilities to establish synergy and complementarity.
- Special efforts should be directed towards ensuring the continued participation of national institutions in monitoring implementation of the Programme and ensuring vertical coordination and cooperation between state administration bodies and LSGs. Such an approach will serve as a basis for strengthening the capacities of state institutions, as well as the coherence of interventions with national strategic and legislative frameworks.