

Support to the Road Sector in Latvia

1993–1996

Anders Markstedt

**Department for Central and
Eastern Europe**

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**Sida Evaluation 96/32
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FOREWORD

This evaluation report was written under a contract between Sida and KM International by Mr Anders Markstedt. It is based on a two week fact finding mission, visiting in turn Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The author is indebted to the staff in the Road Administrations of these countries who provided much of the information and would like to particularly thank Mr Juri Riima of the Estonian Road Administration, Mr Andris Veiss of the Latvian Road Administration and Mr Vytutas Timukas of the Lithuanian Road Administration for organizing my visits on short notice.

For practical reasons and according to the Terms of Reference the results are presented in three separate reports. I have however taken the liberty to copy sections between the reports in order to economize on writing time and to make it possible to read each report separate from each other. My apologies to the readers who may read all three reports where my advise would be to concentrate on the findings section which is the most country specific.

I would also like to thank the Road Administration staff for their valuable comments on the first draft of this report and the consultants at SweRoad for providing insight in many of the problems associated with the implementation of the technical assistance described in the report.

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0. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Following new priorities set by the Swedish Parliament a large part of the foreign assistance is now directed towards the neighbouring countries across the Baltic Sea.

Part of this support is allocated to the transport sector and it has been concluded in earlier evaluations (Bruzelius 1993) that this support has been very constructive and has given value for money. This evaluation concerns the BITS support to the road sector from 1993 up to date.

The BITS/Sida support to the road sector in the Baltic states has been ongoing from 1991 onwards. During this period the recipient countries have experienced a rapid transformation from a socialist economy towards a democratic society based on a market system. To support this process the governments are becoming increasingly involved with international financing institutions. Also on the Swedish side there have been changes as BITS now is part of the new Sida organization. There is also considerable experience gained from the completed and ongoing projects which have been approved for the Road Sector in the Baltic states. In view of the ongoing changes Sida decided to undertake a review and evaluation of the achievements to date of the road sector support and to that end signed a contract with KM International to carry out the evaluation.

In broad terms the BITS/Sida support has aimed at improving the capacity of the Latvian Road Administration (LRA) by supporting LRA's effort to transform the management system and by assisting in building up a training capacity. It has also aimed at technology transfer within road and bridge maintenance. The Swedish inputs have consisted in providing consultants to assist in carrying out the programmes and also paying for study tours.

Specifically the Project LVA0501 "Road Management and Maintenance Programme for the Latvian Road Department" allocated SEK 334 000 towards training activities for top and middle management and for a workshop for four educators.

The Project EST1031 "Training and Consultancies on Road Management and Maintenance" (SEK 1 590 000) was a continuation of the first project as it was also directed toward top and middle management and towards improving the training capacity of the LRA. In addition a fourth component consisted of study tours to Sweden which focused on road maintenance.

Findings

The evaluation of the two projects reveals the general impression that the projects have been well received. This is particularly relevant for the training activities which have been timely and focused on important management issues. However, it is also noted that the implementation has deviated from the original plans partly because of coordination with other projects and partly because of difficulties in mobilizing resources on the Latvian side. A negative aspect is that the build up of training capacity has not been implemented as envisioned.

The components which are of the character studies are limited to the strategy document produced with top management under the first component of the second project. It summarizes very well the issues facing the LRA. Specified goals for 1995 and 1996 activities were formulated and training needs were identified.

The most recent project was scheduled to be completed before the end of 1994. However, most of the training activities were not carried out until the spring 1995. The delays are due to several factors but mainly in difficulties to find times which are mutually possible for the LRA and the consultants. When courses have been postponed it has been on the request by the LRA.

The LRA is expressing high satisfaction with the training programme and there are many individual examples of staff who have been able to directly make use of their new knowledge.

The Latvian government has formulated transport policy in the "National Transport Development Programme up to the Year 2010" and has streamlined procedures for project approval. Future technical assistance will need to be based on these policies. In discussions with the Deputy Minister of Transport in Latvia, three priority areas for technical assistance were mentioned. One is to improve the quality of road management and construction. The second one is to improve management and organization. The third one relates to the new democratic institutions and information management.

Further challenges ahead for the LRA relates to the World Bank funded Latvia Highway project which will require sufficient manning of the project implementation unit. Also traffic accidents must be reduced.

The development in the Baltic states is rapid. Once a project is identified it is therefore important that it is swiftly moved into the implementation phase so as not to render the new efforts obsolete.

A major constraint is that each new foreign assisted project is taxing the limited human resources in the road administration. In future projects various solutions to increase capacity must therefore be discussed with the Government, e.g. substituting LRA staff for local consultants or using IT-technology.

In order to achieve a more efficient and timely implementation the agreements signed should follow Sida guidelines and be clear on time schedules and reporting requirements. The Latvian project director should also be provided with more guidance regarding his or her role in the implementation.

Future technical assistance in the form of training should be of the character "training of trainers". The Agreement should be specific on what is expected to be delivered at the end of the training, e.g. teachers' aids, overhead slides, calculation examples etc. in the Latvian language. Local consultants and institutions should increasingly be involved.

There is one lesson of a general nature to be learnt. To ensure timely project performance in an environment with understaffed local input and competing foreign assisted projects, more time must be devoted to project preparation and monitoring.

A general observation based on the impressions from all Baltic states is that projects which grow out from a mutual understanding between the two parties are more likely to be successfully implemented. On the other hand, projects which in the end may have the greatest impact are those which rose from a lengthy and difficult process of discussions and hard work by all parties involved in the project.

1. PROGRAMME CONTEXT

1.1 Introduction

The collapse of the former Soviet Union and the resulting independence of the Baltic states created a new situation for Swedish bilateral aid. Following new priorities set by Parliament a large part of the foreign assistance is now directed towards the neighbouring countries across the Baltic Sea. For the period 1995/96 to 1998 the Parliament has budgeted SEK four billions to be directed towards assisting the transforming economies in Eastern and Central Europe. Highest priority are given the three Baltic States, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and the north-western part of Russia. The Swedish parliament specifies four goals for this assistance. The co-operation should

- promote a mutual security platform
- strengthen a culture of democracy
- support a socially sustainable economic transformation
- support an environmentally sustainable development

A little less than half of the total support is under the responsibility of Sida. For the 18 month budget year 1995/96 Sida distributes SEK 725 million of which SEK 313 million is for technical assistance and institutional development.

1.2 Project History

The support to the road sector in the Baltic states originated as a general support to all the three countries. This was executed through a contract with SweRoad which carried out a training programme containing courses and study tours. Participants were mostly from the road administrations in the respective countries. The evaluation of this early support is outside the scope of this report but it was generally concluded in a 1993 review of BITS-financed transport and communication projects in the Baltic states by Mr Nils Bruzelius that:

"...the assistance, generally, has been very constructive and has given value for money. The assistance appears to be greatly appreciated by all the parties concerned....The Swedish assistance appears to have been particularly meaningful when focusing on institutional development issues, including general organizational and staff development aspects."

The last statement was applicable to the BITS support to the road sector which was ongoing at the time of the Bruzelius report. The project included a training programme for the top level management focusing on organizational and management issues and efforts to build up the Latvian Road Administration's (LRA) capacity to manage staff training. In addition, training of middle managers from the central level and from the districts focused on specific technical questions. SweRoad proposed a continuation of these training activities but the proposed programme came to be somewhat modified in order to include the recommendations put forward in the Bruzelius report. In the new version which was the basis for BITS Decision 94-03-21 more emphasis was put on developing a strategy document for the road sector and also to focus on building up a training institution.

This project and the preceding one are the only ones evaluated in this report. Latvia has thus received less BITS assistance in the road sector compared to the other Baltic states. The two projects were budgeted for about SEK 1.9 million. A list of the projects evaluated is included in the Terms of Reference in Appendix 6.3.

1.3 Description of the projects

A more thorough description will be found in the chapter describing findings. In broad terms the projects have aimed at improving the capacity of the LRA by supporting LRA's effort to transform the management system and by assisting in building up a training capacity. It has also aimed at technology transfer within road and bridge maintenance. The Swedish inputs have consisted in providing consultants to assist in carrying out the programmes and also paying for study tours. There is no significant equipment component.

The expected effect of the programme, was a strategy document for the road sector, an improved ability by LRA staff to handle foreign assistance, development plans for traffic safety and maintenance and establishing a training centre in the LRA. On a more general level the effect was a transformation of the LRA organization and procedures to better adapt to a market system and western technology.

In assessing the impact of these inputs it must be pointed out that the Swedish support is only part of an overall effort by the Latvian government, with the assistance of the donor community, to increase the efficiency of the LRA and the quality of highway maintenance and construction activities. What Latvia has accomplished in a few years is impressive and in this process of change the Swedish programme has without doubt been supportive. In some cases the effect can be directly attributed to the BITS financed programme, for example in cases where individuals have been able to apply new ideas from the training directly to their work. However, in most cases it is not possible to establish clear linkages between activities carried out by the BITS programme and the institutional changes which have indeed been implemented. In summary, we have difficulties measuring what the situation would have been if the Swedish support had not taken place.

2. EVALUATION

2.1 Reasons for the evaluation

A rapid build up of foreign assistance in a country which has previously been isolated from the world economy is always connected with risks. It will normally take time to adjust, from the donor side to understand the particular conditions in the country and from the recipient side to learn all the intricacies of each one of the international financing institutions. For this reason it is important that both parties monitor the foreign financed projects so that early mistakes can be quickly corrected and so that the recipient country achieves maximum benefit from the substantial resources allocated to these projects.

Each international financing institution (IFI) has its own set of rules for project follow up and evaluation. Usually, the evaluation report is a joint effort between the institution and the recipient government agency. Knowing this, it should be mentioned that the Swedish foreign assistance has been re-organized whereby SIDA, BITS, Sarec and SwedCorps have been forged into one institution, Sida. Previously each one of these organizations had its own system for project monitoring and for involving the recipient country in the project. The technical assistance to the Baltic States was formerly handled by BITS. The BITS procedures for project monitoring did not necessarily coincide with those of former SIDA. There was a rationale behind this as the BITS support was targeted to countries further ahead in the development process which therefore have capacity to do much of the monitoring on their own. Again, with the merger of the foreign assistance into the new Sida the different approaches to project monitoring are expected to be synchronized.

BITS/Sida has been providing support to the development of the road sector in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania since 1991. The first projects were however not country specific. By the end of 1995 the country support implemented through SweRoad as sole consultant comprised nine completed or ongoing projects at a total cost of about SEK 13 million. In the context of the total Sida support to the Baltic states this may not be very significant. It also reflects the relatively low priority the new Governments in the Baltic states initially were attaching to the road sector as they were faced with more pressing problems relating to transforming the newly formed states from centrally planned one party states to democratic market economies. However, there is a growing awareness that a functioning infrastructure is an important element in developing the economy. Concern has also been raised by financing institutions, such as the World Bank that sufficient resources are not allocated to maintain the existing infrastructure which constitutes a significant investment which the countries inherited from the former Soviet Federal Government.

Against this background the Swedish technical assistance was in a position to make a significant contribution in assisting the Governments in making the most efficient use of the limited funds. This is particularly the case as Swedish support was mobilized quickly after independence and because the projects were directed towards building up the capacity of the National Road Administrations in the respective countries. Efforts were directed towards helping the management to prepare for the new situation and to enable staff to draw from experiences in the Swedish Road Administration. As has been pointed out elsewhere the Baltic states have made impressive headway in transforming their economies. At the same time, the Governments now have several years of experience in the management of foreign assistance. As a consequence, the context in which new Sida projects may be formulated has changed and most certainly the involvement of the recipient Governments is expected to increase.

It is in view of this changing scenery that Sida needs to take a fresh look at their current programmes in the Baltic states. There is also a considerable experience gained from the completed and ongoing projects and this knowledge is expected to influence the country strategies now being formulated by Sida.

With the purpose to summarize this information, Sida decided to undertake a review and evaluation of the achievements to date of the road sector support and to that end signed a contract with KM International to carry out the evaluation.

As formulated in the Terms of Reference for the consulting services the purpose of the study is to evaluate the relevance, impacts, cost-effectiveness, sustainability and effects of the Swedish support so far provided to the road sector in the Baltic States. The ToR are attached as Appendix 6.3.

2.2 Methods

Following the ToR the evaluation is based on interviews with persons who have been directly involved with the project or who else can provide background information. The other sources of information are written reports, statistics and project documents. A list of persons interviewed is found in Appendix 6.1 and a list of documentation in Appendix 6.2.

Before the visit to Riga, the Consultant investigated all the Sida project files and talked briefly with the Sida staff. After studying the relevant documents a meeting was arranged with a SweRoad representative in Stockholm and the SweRoad Project Director was contacted by telephone before and after the visit to Latvia.

In Latvia the Consultant visited the Latvian Road Administration, LRA, the Ministry of Transport and the Swedish Embassy. Information was gathered in scheduled interviews and the printed material which was available, some in English and some in Latvian was collected.

On the return to Sweden the Consultant received some additional information from the SweRoad Project Director. The Consultant also took part in a meeting at Sida with representatives for the World Bank regarding the planned Highway Project.

The draft report was submitted to the consultants and the road administration and comments were integrated with the final report.

The Terms of Reference were made available in advance to all persons interviewed. During the interviews the Consultant used a pre-determined set of questions but also tried to be responsive to what had been prepared by the interviewee. It could be argued that a more formalized approach could have been used with questions and forms submitted in advance. However, that would most probably have placed a greater burden on the staff in Latvia, would have delayed the report and does not invite to a dialogue as now became the case. The draw back is that the data and the picture may not be as complete as would have resulted from a stricter evaluation procedure as for example stipulated by the World Bank (Project Completion Reports). Also in contrast to World Bank procedure, the Sida evaluation does not include the recipient agency's evaluation of the Sida performance.

2.3 Limitations of the evaluation report

This report is written with the overall ambition to provide a tool with which future support to the Road Sector in Latvia can be made more efficient in all phases from project identification, through project formulation, in the execution and implementation of the project and in the project monitoring. In other words; to do the right things in the right way and in a way that allows the parties involved to measure the results. In a much more limited sense it can be read as a review and critique of the completed and ongoing technical assistance. Also, such critique must be interpreted with care. First, as has been previously mentioned it is not easy to establish cause - effect relationships. Secondly, as has been argued above, the more significant parts of a project may be the most difficult ones and therefore have the poorest performance. In short, there is no added score for the difficulty of the project. Thirdly, if a poor performance can be measured it is often hard to establish which institution is the culprit. Among the parties involved, Sida, SweRoad and the Government Agencies, each may be equally to blame.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Background Description of the Road Sector in Latvia

3.1.1 Introduction

Before independence responsibility for the road network was shared between the central State Plan (State Planning Organization) in Moscow and the republican road administrations. The republican road administration was basically a maintenance organization and all investment decisions were made in Moscow. The road network consisted of federal roads, republic roads and local roads. About a third of the funds for construction and maintenance of the republican roads came from federal funds made up by a mix of budget appropriations and road user charges. The federal roads were fully financed over the federal budget.

It is apparent that the loss of the former federal level of government demanded significant changes in the new independent Baltic states. First entirely new Ministries had to be created. Secondly federal assets had to be transferred to the new independent states. Thirdly, the countries had to make up for the loss of revenue from the federal funds. Fourth, new legislation had to be enacted. Fifth, institutions had to be adopted to a market economy.

Although there are differences among the Baltic states in the way these changes have been implemented it is also clear that the process has gone fast and that the transformation has been by and large successful. The most difficult problems remaining in Latvia are connected to funding and to the process of privatization.

Road Administration Structure

The Latvian Road Administration (LRA) is managing all public roads in Latvia and is a government organization under the Ministry of Transport. Within the MOT the Road Department is responsible for policy within the road sector. Traffic safety is handled by the Road Safety Administration. Between the LRA and the Road Department of MOT there is co-operation although it is sometimes difficult to distinguish where the lines of authority are drawn. This effects project formulation where LRA and the Road Department may at times have diverging opinions.

The LRA was established on 15 April 1993. It has since been re-organized twice, in June 1994 and most recent in January 1995. The present structure, shown in Appendix 6.4 includes a central road administration headed by a Director General and a total staff of about 50. At the regional level there are 26 State Road Management Units, each with a small staff of 2-3 people. Implementation of maintenance work is by contract agreements with the LRA controlled Road Maintenance Enterprises or with private contractors. The 11 state road construction enterprises have been privatized through management buy-out. Also, the 26 asphalt plants have been privatized.

Under the LRA is also the Road Research State Non-profit Organization, which undertakes technical studies on behalf of the LRA. The state owned materials laboratory carries out about 10-20% of materials tests for road works. Design work can be contracted to a private consulting firm (Road Project) or carried out by the Technical University.

As shown above, the LRA staff is quite limited. The LRA is aware that the number of staff are not sufficient given the size of the road network. Comparisons have been made with the road administrations in the Nordic countries and the conclusion is that the LRA is understaffed. However, given the overall macroeconomic situation there are no plans to increase the staff. There is hope that the new organization will be more effective and the efforts are therefore concentrated towards making the new organization work. The expressed policy is to achieve higher quality with less people.

The LRA is responsible for about one third of the total road network representing the state roads. Of these 1 600 km are classified as main roads, 5 400 km as class I roads and 13 500 km as class II roads. Paved roads make out 38% of the state road network. The non-state roads make up the remainder, about 40 000 km. These are lesser roads which are not funded under the MOT budget.

An assessment of the quality of the state road network based on visual inspections has been done by the LRA Road Maintenance Division. Especially, the lower class roads receive poor rating. There is also a tendency of deterioration of the higher class roads as the percentage of roads which receive the highest ratings (very good or good) dropped from 46% in 1994 to 39% in 1995. The PHARE/WB financed study of the road networks in the Baltic States concluded that the Latvian road network is in worse condition than in the other Baltic states. A Danish soft loan is providing for the implementation of a pavement management system (PMS) and preliminary work is carried out on about 1500 km of state roads and Riga streets to be completed in September this year. It is expected that this study will give more information about the deteriorating road network.

The LRA is carrying out regular traffic counts. Traffic figures decreased drastically at independence with as much as 50%. This reflects the decrease in economic activity in Latvia but also reductions in transit traffic to other former Soviet Union (FSU) countries. Heavy traffic also decreased because of lower industrial output. In contrast light traffic is rapidly increasing due to market mechanisms contributing to larger trading activities. Traffic volumes are typically 1 000 - 2 000 vehicles per day on the trunk roads with higher figures close to Riga.

A specific Latvian problem is that a large number of construction projects had to be abandoned at independence due to the loss of federal funds from the FSU. Many of these projects were funded based on planning principles in the FSU which are no longer valid. The LRA has expressed interest at the planning system being used in Sweden, i.e. based on principles of efficiency, environment and regional equity. In lieu of strong planning principles there is considerable time devoted by LRA top management to evaluate political proposals for road investments.

The disappearance of federal funds from FSU meant that the LRA budget was curtailed at independence to about one tenth the preceding years'. Since the initial dip, the budget is growing and is now about 50% of the pre-independence level. An important factor has been the existence of a road fund which is estimated to generate about LVL 31 million for the state roads. About 50% of the road fund goes to the road system, the other half is absorbed by the general budget. This share is further split into 70% for state roads and 30% for municipal roads. The road fund is supported from a variety of transport related taxes and fees, the most important one being an excise tax on fuel. This tax was recently increased by a decision in Parliament and is presently LVL 0.10 per litre as part of an overall effort to harmonize legislation to the European Union. That tax is planned to increase with LVL 0.02 per year up to a level of LVL 0.20. This would mean that early in the next decade, the funding level would be back to the pre-independence level.

In order to maintain 20 446 km of state roads, LRA receives about LVL 21 million this year excluding the EBRD project. Of this amount about 35% is used for routine maintenance, 50% for periodic maintenance, 10% for construction and 2% for management. Winter maintenance is about half the budget for routine maintenance. The LRA is estimating that the annual requirement for maintenance is about LVL 50 million per year, i.e. three times the present level.

The organization reflects the focusing on maintenance rather than new construction. Construction projects are more or less limited to major rehabilitation projects carried out with foreign assistance. To benefit the ongoing EBRD/JEXIM Jelgava bypass and road rehabilitation project, a project implementation unit (PIU) has been formed under the responsibility of the new position of Production Director. The PIU will also be used for the planned World Bank financed Highway project. The implementation of the EBRD/JEXIM project is involving about 20 private contractors. The shortage of funds otherwise limits the amount of construction work which can be given to the private sector. For maintenance work about 20-30% is given out for tendering and private contractors execute 10-20% of maintenance work. The LRA policy is to develop the domestic private contracting industry and the existing industry has been active in searching work abroad and in rejuvenating their fleets using among others German credits. The Road Builders Association today counts about 30 members.

3.1.2 Legal Framework

Since independence Latvia has made remarkable progress in developing a legal system suitable for a democratic market economy. Similarly to the other Baltic states, the legislators went back to the old legislation in existence between the World Wars when the Baltic states enjoyed a short period of independence. This legislation is gradually modernized and for much of the legislative work European and in particular Nordic countries have served as models.

The laws adopted by Parliament will normally give the power to the line ministries to issue regulations and guidelines. The Road Law of Latvia was adopted in March 1992. After that, the LRA has issued a regulation for protection of the public roads under the Road Law. Legislation and regulations are published regularly in "Autoceli, Officiala Dala". The legal framework is considered adequate by the LRA but it is admitted that the rules for land acquisition based on the 1934 Civil Law is obsolete and need to be revised to prepare for future investment projects. The present legislation requires that tendering procedures have to be used for all contracts on state supplies when the amount is larger than LVL 2000. This figure, however, is subject to change in the future.

3.1.3 Donor Support

Donor support to the Road Sector in Latvia is limited. The only current major project is the EBRD/JIXEM Road Project. In the pipeline is the World Bank funded Highway Maintenance Project with an IBRD component of USD 20 million, the Kuwait fund USD 20 million, Latvian State funds contributing USD 15.5 million, PHARE and bilateral the balance for a total of USD 62 million. The European Union through its PHARE programme is financing technical assistance to the Ministry of Transport, Department for Strategic Planning. The unit maintains a data base of all projects in the transport sector.

The major bi-lateral donors contributing to institutional development are Sweden, Denmark and Finland. The ongoing EBRD/JEXIM road Project also supports institution building with three studies, road user charge study, road maintenance re-organization study and an asphalt pavement study. These studies have recently been awarded to consultants and will be completed this year. Consultants have also been appointed for a PHARE funded "Master plan for maintenance and development of road network and traffic safety programme."

The LRA has developed a good co-operation with the road administrations in the Nordic countries. In the Ministry of Transport Multi-Indicative Programme for 1996-1999 the support from the Finnish and Swedish Road Administrations is estimated to be about LVL 340,000. Latvia is also supporting the NordBalt project put forward by the Finnish Road Administration which is seeking PHARE funds to develop co-operation between the Nordic Road Association and the Baltic Road Council.

Latvia has also benefited from multi-country programmes directed at all the Baltic states. One example is the BITS financed RTM and ORM courses in road maintenance and management administered by SNRA and SweRoad. Another example is the PHARE support for Via Baltica projects including information systems to improve traffic safety.

3.1.4 The Role of BITS/Sida support in the Road Sector in Latvia

The BITS/Sida support although small in the overall context has been significant in terms of technical assistance targeted for institution building. From the point of view of the LRA staff the BITS/Sida support stands out because it made it possible to introduce them for the first time to western technology and terminology. Part of the Swedish support has been directed at top management and it has been possible for LRA staff to have peer discussions at the highest levels. Such training can not be effective unless there is respect and understanding both from the Latvian side and the Swedish side and after some initial difficulties this was achieved. Given the positive comments received from the LRA top management, the management training and discussions about organization may stand out as the part of the technical assistance which may have had the most profound effect on the LRA. The training activities also have connections with many of the other technical assistance programmes. As such, the BITS/Sida projects have been central for the development of the Latvian Road Administration. It is also significant that the World Bank is seeking co-financing from Sida for their Highway Project.

3.2 Project review and Evaluation

3.2.1 LVA0501 Road Management and Maintenance Programme for the Latvian Road Department.

Review

As part of the early support to the three Baltic countries, SweRoad had carried out a number of training activities in Latvia. It was felt that these courses should continue in order to assist the LRA to adapt to the new market system and support the efforts to change to a more western style of working.

Seminars were to be given to the top management to assist them in developing a management system in tune with the demands of the new market economy. The training activities geared to the middle management aimed at showing how better quality could be obtained for construction and maintenance activities.

Evaluation

Project Identification

The project responded to needs identified during the implementation of the general BITS/Sida support to the Road Sector in the Baltic states which consisted of courses and seminars in 1992.

Project Formulation

The project was formulated as a second phase of the activities which had been carried out in 1992. However, following recommendations by a BITS funded consultant who evaluated the 1992 programme, the 1993 second phase was split into two parts where only the first part received funding. The reduction was substantial as only SEK 334,000 of SEK 2.8 million were allocated to the first part which was a direct continuation of the 1992 programme. In mid 1993 another consultant evaluated the programme and subsequently the implementation of the second phase was postponed. There is no reporting requirement in the agreements.

Project Implementation

The problems in project implementation as viewed by LRA staff related to insufficient local financing and a lack of feed-back from the participants. In 1993 five seminars with SweRoad were recorded by the LRA for in total 16 days.

Project Monitoring

Within LRA, this project was monitored by the Foreign Relations Division of the LRA. Records are kept on all foreign consultants visiting the LRA. It was not possible to establish how project monitoring was done. Given the limited staff available at the LRA it is doubtful that project monitoring receives high priority. The lack of reporting requirements does not facilitate project monitoring.

Project Evaluation

The training courses have generally been well received.

3.2.2 LVA0502 Training and Consultancies on Road Management and Maintenance.

Review

Following the evaluation report presented by Mr Bruzelius in 1993 the LRA and the SweRoad consultants reformulated their proposal for continued technical assistance. The new proposal was submitted to BITS on March 10th. The main difference from the 1993 proposal was that the support included a study of the road sector together with the top management of the LRA which would result in a strategy document. However, this idea was presented already in the 1993 proposal although at that time it was only given as an example of possible projects. The second component, training of middle management was very much reduced from the original proposal. The third component was to develop the training capacity of the LRA. The fourth component included study tours in Sweden focusing on maintenance. The budget for the project was SEK 1.6 million.

Evaluation

Project Identification

The project was in essence formulated in 1993. The re-formulation resulted in a much more focused project proposal at a reduced budget. It also required less input from the LRA staff which is important given the lean organization.

Project Formulation

The project was formulated based on the four components. Objectives, activities and outputs are sufficiently described. However, an additional output to be considered is course packages to be used by Latvian trainers, i.e. a focus more on training the trainers. The output could also have been described as what the participants are expected to know after the courses rather than what courses will be given. There are no reporting requirements nor requirements for course evaluations as recommended in Sida guidelines.

Project Implementation

The project was not sufficiently understood by the LRA at the start of the project. More specifically, the participants were not restricted to top level management for the first component. However, after the consultant explained the objectives, the matter was resolved. The activities have been carried out according to the programme with the exception of the third component. The first visit for that component was made by the Swedish training expert and a work plan presented. However, the LRA felt that the training programme had a low priority because there were no funds to implement it. Furthermore, there is no LRA staff available to execute a training programme. Subsequently, the LRA has opted to delete this component.

The first component was carried out during 1994 and the second component mainly in the first half of 1995. The study tour took place in June 1995 with a larger than planned number of participant due to the SNRA providing funds for the on the job training in the spring 1995, thereby reducing the cost of the project.

Project Monitoring

Within LRA, this project was monitored by the Foreign Relations Division of the LRA. The SweRoad consultants have produced a progress report with documentation of the activities carried out.

Project Evaluation

The general impression is that the consultants have done more and beyond what is required by the agreement. This is witnessed by the progress report which is not required by the agreement but which summarizes the activities up to mid 1995. The first component has resulted in a strategy document which was presented in January 1995 and which has been well received by the LRA. It summarizes very well the issues facing the LRA. Specified goals for 1995 and 1996 activities were formulated by the top management. The document also identifies specific training needs and suggests areas for further technical assistance. However, the document has not received any official status.

The second component, training of middle management had more participants than planned and included three courses. These have been very practical and attending to direct needs. One example is the course given in procurement of road maintenance which became urgent after the re-organization of the LRA. The study tour was expanded to include 20 staff rather than 10 as planned. The two week programme focused on areas which are relevant to LRA such as gravel road maintenance, bridge maintenance and weather information systems, and contracting of maintenance.

The project was scheduled to be completed before the end of 1994. The first draft on the report on the first component was presented in January 1995, i.e. only slightly delayed. Most of the training activities were not carried out until the spring 1995. The delays are due to several factors but mainly in difficulties to find times which are mutually possible for the LRA and the consultants. When courses have been postponed it has been on the request by the LRA.

The LRA is expressing high satisfaction with the training programme and there are many individual examples of staff who have been able to directly make use of their new knowledge.

3.3 Major issues

A positive view of the BITS support

Among the Baltic States, the Latvian Road Administration has received the least amount of BITS funds. Similar projects to the two BITS projects evaluated in this report have also been carried out in Estonia and in Lithuania. In contrast to these countries however, BITS has not supported activities in Latvia related to projects funded by credits.

The training activities carried out through the BITS support have been well received. The Swedish support has been perceived by the recipient agency, LRA, as a continuous stream of training activities and it has been of less concern what project and which funding supported the activity. A number of positive factors characterize the Swedish support.

The first courses laid the groundwork for much of the technical assistance later provided by a range of international financing institutions. These training activities came at a time shortly after independence when the staff needed to be introduced to the western terminology.

Secondly, the LRA needed to reorganize road maintenance towards relying on contract procurement rather than force account units. In this respect, the Swedish support was particularly valid, as the SweRoad experts had first hand experience from the recent major re-organization of the Swedish National Road Administration.

Thirdly, the LRA has been successful in recruiting staff members who will benefit from the training and who will have the power to spread the new ideas in the organization.

Limited human resources is the bottleneck

The experience from credit financed projects is limited to the highway rehabilitation project financed jointly by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the Japanese Export Import Bank (JEXIM) and the Latvian Government with one third each. This project has been well organized within the road administration with a sufficiently staffed project implementation unit supported by a Finnish consultant.

Still, lack of human resources will remain a bottleneck for expanding the LRA activities. The small LRA with about fifty employees of which only twenty are engineers will find it increasingly difficult to cope with the demands from the international financing institutions and at the same time reform the present management system and substitute FSU procedures for western systems of procurement and quality assurance.

There is however a potential for subcontracting LRA work to private firms or Government institutions. One example is the National Transport Development Programme which is a 600 page report produced by a working group composed of about fifty specialists representing the Transport Ministry administrations, transport companies, organizations as well as scientists and experts.

Indications are that training courses have been effective.

It is not possible to measure the cost-effectiveness of training courses. There are however indicators that the BITS supported training has been effective. Firstly, the training has been put into use. For example the top management has benefited from the Swedish experience in re-organizing the Swedish Road Administration when they have carried through their own re-organization. However they have been forced to do it with much less resources and at considerably shorter time than in Sweden. Secondly, staff participating in the BITS training programme have advanced in the organization. Thirdly, evaluations by participants, when carried out, have been positive. Fourthly, it is believed by top management to have been effective.

One issue raised in the Bruzelius report is whether it would be cost-effective to co-ordinate technical assistance between the Baltic states. This issue has been discussed with the senior staff of the Road administrations in all the three states and it is generally concluded that in practice this is hardly achievable. There is no reason to expect more co-ordination between the Baltic States than which will be found between for example the Nordic countries. However, institutions are in place for informal exchange of ideas such as for example the Baltic Road Council. A proposal is also under way to obtain PHARE support for a closer cooperation between the Baltic Road Council and the Nordic Road Association.

Another area of concern for the donor community is the co-ordination between the financing institutions. In this respect, PHARE has assumed a role and in Latvia the PHARE programme provides for one expatriate consultant with the Ministry of Transport Department for Strategic Planning. All foreign financed projects in the MoT must first be approved by this Department. There are programmes for Public Investments as well as for technical assistance. For technical assistance and project preparation it is also deemed important to determine the likelihood of funding the implementation.

In the road administration all projects are monitored by the Foreign Relations Division. The division is active in project preparation and has assumed a co-ordinating role. A consequence is that ongoing projects appear to be well fitted together. As a result, the BITS financed Road Administration Strategy Document is likely to have more impact in Latvia than in the other Baltic states.

Transport Policy must form the basis for project identification

An important issue is project identification and the process for initiating and screening projects. While it is understandable that much of the initiatives in the past have been from external forces it is now expected that Latvia puts itself more in the drivers' seat. A good basis is provided by the National Transport Development Programme up to the year 2010. This Programme states that:

"The key goal of the National Transport Development Programme is to ensure the planned development of the efficient transport system in order to satisfy the constantly growing demand of the national economy and people for quantitative and qualitative transport that demonstrates safety, firm guarantees and reasonable costs."

Of particular interest for the road sector are the strategic guidelines:

- maintenance and development of transport infrastructure corresponding to the established quality standards;
- establishment of transport corridors;
- integration of traffic networks, construction of access roads and interlinkage of ports and stations;

- co-operation with the neighbouring countries and integration into the European transport system;
- increase in traffic safety;
- establishment of environmentally friendly transport system and improving of hazardous goods transportation;
- development of transport statistics and information infrastructure;
- perfection of transport legislation and institutional regulations;

Based on the overall policies in the above programme the LRA need to develop a long term plan including institutional development and investments. In this respect the BITS support has been particularly helpful and the consultants have presented a strategy document based on the findings from the top level seminars. This document, although quickly becoming obsolete, also gives some suggestions for technical assistance and training which may be suitable for financing from foreign donors.

In discussions with the Deputy Minister of Transport in Latvia, three priority areas for technical assistance were mentioned. The first one relates to improving quality of road maintenance and construction. The second one is to improve management and organization. The third one relates to the new democratic institutions and information management formulated as follows. The Road Administration need to be able to motivate its decision and to provide accessible information to the political institutions and to the public. This problem is most accentuated in Latvia where the roads are in a worse condition than in the other Baltic states. If the LRA can not argue successfully for funds to maintain the present road network, the invested capital will deteriorate quickly and become subject for costly rehabilitation.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since independence in 1991 The Latvian Road Administration has been in a stage of transition where the former Soviet institutions are transformed to suit the demands of the evolving market economy. Clearly, this is a step by step process and the LRA has identified and made considerable progress in the priority areas of financing, organization, management, legislation and quality assurance. The BITS focus on institutional support has been well tuned to support the Latvian staff and the training activities carried out by the consultants have been well received.

There are however still challenges ahead and some of these deserve mentioning. Firstly, the re-organization whereby the former 26 districts have been divided into small (2-3 staff) district administrations responsible for procurement and supervision, and with implementation carried out by separate enterprises. Construction and maintenance activities will require support activities from the central level in order to function as envisioned. Secondly, in addition to the ongoing EBRD financed rehabilitation project a World Bank credit will become effective next year for the Latvia Highway Project. The implementation of the various components will require sufficient manning of the project implementation units. Thirdly, while there have been major changes in the management system since independence the LRA would like to take the process further and introduce "management by objective" and identify and train the future managers. Fourth, with more taxes and fees going into the road fund, the LRA has to develop liaison with the political level and develop information systems which show how the funds are being used and what benefits are obtained. Fifth, traffic accidents are by all accounts at an unacceptable level and strong measures must be taken to curb these trends.

Certainly, there is scope for continued foreign assistance to support the Road Administration which is facing these challenges. As recommended in the Bruzelius report such support should be based on the needs of the LRA and each proposal should require a well prepared project document according to the guidelines of respective financing institution.

In planning future technical assistance the Government should also assess some strategic questions.

- How will the Regional and Municipal levels of road administration benefit from technical assistance?
- How can technical assistance be obtained in areas which require long term commitment, e.g. traffic safety?
- What is an appropriate mix of long term and short term Consultants?
- How can the Government and its institutions develop its capacity to prepare and implement technical assistance projects?

In view of the difficulties in establishing a training institution in the LRA, it is recommended to study the experience of the Estonian Technical Centre.

If Sida decides to continue its involvement in the road sector in Latvia, there are some specific recommendations below regarding the project identification, project formulation, project implementation and project evaluation.

Project identification should be tied to the existing efforts by the Latvian government to formulate policy and programmes. In this respect dialogues at the Ministry of Transport level may be more appropriate than identifying projects at the road administration level. Latvian policy documents, such as the National Transport Development Programme are important for identifying priority areas. However, it must be recognized that at the LRA level the priorities may be different than those at the Ministry level and it is important that differences are resolved before the final formulation of the project.

The development in the Baltic states is rapid and projects quickly become obsolete. It is therefore paramount that once the project is identified the project moves quickly into the implementation phase. In the formulation process, related projects financed by other institutions must be identified and the co-ordination arrangements clarified. The PHARE supported Department for Strategic Planning at the Ministry of Transport is the co-ordinating agent of all foreign assistance to the transport sector and should therefore be an important dialogue partner in the formulation phase.

It must always be recognized that a major constraint is that each new foreign assisted project is taxing the limited human resources in the road administration. The macro-economic strategies puts a cap on government staffing. Therefore it can be difficult for the road administration to live up to the expectations in the project documents. Alternatively, staff will be pulled from their main activity to support the project or to take part in training. Sida should therefore discuss with the government various solutions such as circumventing the cap on staffing, using local consultants, increasing the share done by foreign experts or increasing the efficiency by staff using for example IT-strategies.

The major problem in project implementation is delays. In order to achieve a more efficient and timely implementation, the agreements signed should be more clear on reporting requirements and time schedules. The Latvian project director should be provided with more guidance regarding his role in the implementation.

Evaluation procedures should be formulated so that these are spelled out in the agreements on which the implementation is based. If possible, performance indicators should be identified in the agreements. The consultants should be aware of the evaluation procedures so that they allow sufficient time and also produces the documents which will be needed by the evaluation team.

While initial training has had the character of "eye-openers" introducing the road administration to new insights, future training will be less general and more of the character training of trainers. This re-orientation will require that training provided includes complete sets of training materials including teacher's aid, overhead slides, calculation examples etc. all in Latvian language. The agreements should be specific on what is expected to be delivered at the end of the training. Consultants should also be encouraged to co-operate with local consultants and institutions. A higher quality of the training activities will be reflected on the cost of the courses.

More care should be given in naming the projects. The same project name and ID number should be used by all parties. Confusion is created by the same project named differently in the agreement the LRA is signing with the consultants on one hand and in the confirmation letter from BITS on the other. Adding to the confusion, SweRoad is also carrying out preparatory work for the World Bank, BITS multi-country training (RTM course) and activities financed directly by the Swedish Road Administration. While this may have several advantages regarding coordination, continuity and flexibility it makes project monitoring difficult. The impression given during the evaluation mission was that the LRA Foreign Relation Division is focused on the individual activities rather than the projects. Sida should consider more comprehensive programmes and not rule out the use of long term consultants. Sida should also consider giving more training to the project directors in project implementation.

5. LESSONS LEARNED

The fact that BITS technical assistance was mobilized very quickly after independence is a major factor why it has been well received. Not only did this create a goodwill, it also provided an open field for targeting the most important needs. The fact that the Swedish Road Administration had recently gone through a period of re-organization and changes created an excellent background for discussing important institutional issues with the Latvian Road Administration.

The environment for technical assistance is being transformed as more and larger projects are coming on line. An effect is that BITS financed activities are increasingly being delayed as the capacity of the road administration has to be shared between the foreign assisted projects.

As a result Sida will be required to devote more time to project preparation and project monitoring than in the initial post-independence period.

A general observation is also that activities where there is a common understanding between BITS and the LRA about the need for the activity is fairly easily implemented. However, it is also possible that these changes would have come about even without the Swedish support albeit later. However, in areas where this mutual understanding has not existed from the beginning but grown out of a sometimes lengthy and difficult process of discussions and hard work by both the LRA staff and the Consultants, the impact has most likely been more profound. Examples of the latter kind is the training of top management which started out with different views on how it should be carried out but has resulted in management training having among highest priority.

From the point of the donor support it is therefore a choice between low-risk activities with less impact or high-risk activities with higher impact. As shown in the above the BITS support to the Road Sector in Latvia has included both.

6. APPENDICES

6.1 List of persons interviewed

14/5	Andris Veiss	Manager, Foreign Relations Division	LRA
20/5	Martins Dambergs	Specialist, Foreign Relations Division	LRA
20/5	Valdis Lauksteins	Technical Director	LRA
20/5	Aleksandrs Konosevics	Deputy State Secretary	MoT
20/5	Vigo Legzdins	Deputy Director/Manager of Foreign Investment and Credit Division	MoT
21/5	Michel Pochard	Deputy Head of the PMU	MoT/PMU
21/5	Gints Alberins	Manager	LRA/PMU
21/5	Hannu Heinikainen	Technical Advisor	LRA/PMU
21/5	Andris Lapsins	Deputy Director General	LRA
21/5	Olafs Kronlaks	Director General	LRA
21/5	Roland Nilsson	Counsellor/Deputy Head of Mission	Embassy of Sweden

6.2 List of references

6.2.1 General

"Transport and Communications in the Baltic States
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Final Report, Nils Bruzelius, November 4, 1993.

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"Institutional Support to the Road Sector, Top Level Management Development", Final Report, SweRoad/BITS, January 1995.

"Institutional Support to the Road Sector, Top Level Management Development, Medium Level Management Training, Internal Training Capacity Strengthening, On-the-Job Training and Study Visits", Progress Report, SweRoad/BITS, July 1995.

"Nordbalt Project", The 1995 Phare Partnership Programme.

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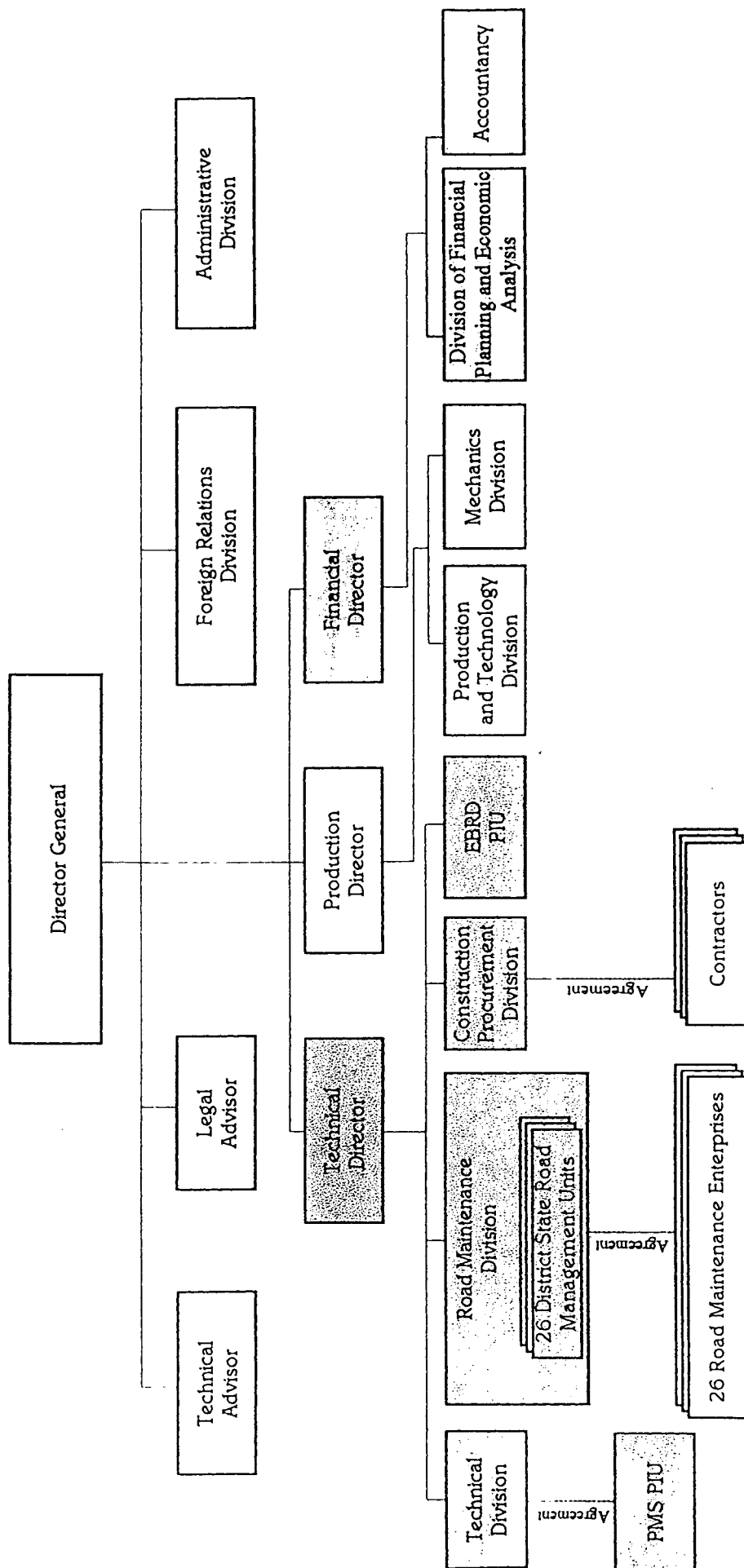
6.3 Terms of Reference

See overleaf.

6.4 Organization

See overleaf.

Chart of Latvian Road Administration



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Evaluation of BITS/Sida's Support to the Development of the Road Sector in the Baltic States

Background

BITS/Sida has been providing support to the development of road sector in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (the Baltic States) since 1993. The lead Swedish consultant has been SweRoad AB. By the end of 1995, the support implemented through SweRoad had come to comprise nine projects at a total cost of approximately SEK 13 million. A complete list of projects is found below.

The recipients of this aid have been the Ministries of Transport and the national Road Administrations in the respective countries. The overall aim of the projects has been to provide institution building assistance to the Road Administrations in each one of the three Baltic countries.

In view of the large number of projects to the development of the road sector in the Baltic States, Sida has decided to undertake a review and evaluation of the achievements to date. To undertake this evaluation, Sida intends to recruit an independent consultant (the Consultant). These terms of reference will guide the work to be performed by the Consultant.

Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation exercise is to evaluate the relevance, impacts, cost-effectiveness, sustainability and effects of the Swedish support so far provided to the road sector in the Baltic States.

Scope of work

The scope of work will include, but will not necessarily be limited to, the following:

1. A brief background description for each country concerning road administration, comprising i.a. the current institutional structure, current legal framework, other donor's support etc;
2. Identify the role played by BITS/Sida's support within the overall development of the road sector in the three countries with regard to institution building and the development of the sector at large;

3. Review each of the projects funded so far by BITS/Sida, identify their specific roles, their objectives, and any performance indicators specified for the projects. Evaluate the projects against these roles, objectives and performance indicators; and
4. Identify major issues with regard to the execution of the BITS/Sida support, the manner in which it has been implemented both with respect to the provision of technical assistance services and the arrangements and absorptive capacity on the sides of the recipient countries including the efficiency of the concerned institutions in the Baltic States and in Sweden. Assess the cost effectiveness and the sustainability of the support provided.
5. Provide recommendations for the future and discuss lessons learned from the activities.

Method of work and reporting

To collect the required material, the Consultant will review relevant policy and project related documentation at Sida and make a visit to SweRoad. He will then visit Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius for approximately 10 days for fact finding. The visits should be made before 10 June, 1996.

After the visits to the three capital cities, the Consultant will submit first draft reports to each of the Baltic counterparts concerned and to SweRoad for their review. After having received the counterparts' and SweRoad's comments, draft final reports for each country will be submitted within five working days to Sida. A final report, including findings for each country and conclusive assessment, is estimated to be presented to Sida no later than 28 June, 1996.

All reports should be written in English. The reports should be outlined in accordance with Sida Evaluation Report - A Standardized Format (Annex A, Evaluation Manual for Sida) with a comprehensive Newsletter Summary in accordance with the enclosed guidelines (Annex B). Furthermore, the Sida Evaluation Data Worksheet (Annex C) should be filled in and returned to Sida. The final report should be presented in two copies as well as in a diskette version.

Undertakings

The Consultant will be responsible for practical arrangements in conjunction with the missions to the Baltic States and other visits. Sida will make available or cause to make available all written material (reports, project preparation documents, project completion reports, etc.) deemed to be of relevance to the evaluation exercise by the Consultants and Sida.

List of projects to be evaluated

Completed projects:

Estonia:

EST0711 SEK 306 000 Decision 93-03-12
Training programme in the road sector

Latvia:

LVA0501 SEK 334 000 Decision 93-03-12
Road management and maintenance programme for Latvian Road
Department

Lithuania:

LTU0321 SEK 181 000 Decision 93-01-22
Adaption of the Lithuanian norms for road- and bridge building,
prestudy

LTU0351 SEK 342 000 Decision 92-02-12
Training program in the road sector

On-going projects:

Estonia:

EST1031 SEK 1 799 500 Decision 94-06-14
Institutional support to the Estonian Road Administration

EST1041 SEK 4 671 000 Decision 94-08-02
Road Network Study

Latvia:

LVA0502 SEK 1 592 000 Decision 94-03-21
Training and consultancies on road management and maintenance

Lithuania:

LTU0352 SEK 1 733 000 Decision 94-05-06
Institutional support to the Lithuanian Road Administration

LTU0353 SEK 2 552 000 Decision 95-06-28
Continued institutional support to the Lithuanian Road
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The report is also available in Portuguese
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- 96/5 Democratic Development and Human Rights in Ethiopia. Christian Åhlund
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- 96/7 Avaliação do Apoio Sueco ao Sector da Educação na Guiné Bissau 1992-1996. Marcella Ballara, Sinesio Bacchetto, Ahmed Dawelbeit, Julieta M Barbosa, Börje Wallberg
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- 96/9 Building Research Capacity in Ethiopia. E W Thulstrup, M Fekadu, A Negewo
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- 96/10 Rural village water supply programme - Botswana. Jan Valdelin, David Browne, Elsie Alexander, Kristina Boman, Marie Grönvall, Imelda Molokomme, Gunnar Settergren
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- 96/11 UNICEF's programme for water and sanitation in central America - Facing new challenges and opportunities. Jan Valdelin, Charlotta Adelstål, Ron Sawyer, Rosa Núnes, Xiomara del Torres, Daniel Gubler
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- 96/12 Cooperative Environment Programme - Asian Institute of Technology/Sida, 1993-1996. Thomas Malmqvist, Börje Wallberg
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- 96/13 Forest Sector Development Programme - Lithuania-Sweden. Mårten Bendz
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- 96/14 Twinning Programmes With Local Authorities in Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Håkan Falk, Börje Wallberg
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- 96/15 Swedish Support to the Forestry Sector in Latvia. Kurt Boström
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- 96/16 Swedish Support to Botswana Railways. Brian Green, Peter Law
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- 96/17 Cooperation between the Swedish County Administration Boards and the Baltic Countries.
Lennart C G Almqvist
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- 96/18 Swedish - Malaysian Research Cooperation on Tropical Rain Forest Management. T C Whitmore
Department for Research Cooperation, SAREC
- 96/19 Sida/SAREC Supported Collaborative Programme for Biomedical Research Training in Central
America. Alberto Nieto
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Tefera, Amsalu Negussie
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- 96/31 Support to the Road Sector in Estonia. Anders Markstedt
Department for Central and Eastern Europe



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