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Sida Decentralised Evaluation

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In depth review of support to Local Governments in Serbia in the EU integration process

Final Report

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**Final Report
July 2014**

**Joakim Anger
Dragisa Mijacic**

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The views and interpretations expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CC	Component Coordinator
CEMR	Council of European Municipalities and Regions
ECO	Environmental Protection Officers at Cities and Municipalities in Serbia
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
GWG	Gender Working Group
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession
JEC	Joint Executive Committee
LED	Local Economic Development
LSG	Local Self-Government
NALAS	Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe
NALED	National Alliance for Local Economic Development
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PAC	Project Advisory Committee
PMCT	Programme Management Coordination Team
RBM	Results-Based Management
SALAR	Swedish Association of Local and Regional Authorities
SCTM	Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities
SEK	Swedish Currency
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme
VAT	Value Added Tax

Preface

This in-depth review of support to Local Governments in Serbia in the EU integration process was commissioned by the Embassy of Sweden in Belgrade, Serbia, through Sida's framework agreement for reviews and evaluations.

Indevelop carried out the evaluation in April - June of 2014. The independent evaluation team included Joakim Anger, Team Leader and member of Indevelop's Core Team of Professional Evaluators, Dragisa Mijacic, National Expert from the Institute for Territorial Economic Development (InTER), and Ian Christoplos who provided Quality Assurance. Sarah Gharbi was the Project Manager with overall responsibility for managing implementation and the evaluation process.

This report was circulated in draft form to the Embassy of Sweden in Belgrade, SCTM and SALAR and their comments have been incorporated in the final report.

Executive Summary

Introduction

In May, 2014 the Swedish Embassy commissioned Indevelop to carry out an “In depth review” of the Swedish “support to local governments in Serbia in the EU integration process”. The programme has been implemented by Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM) together with technical support from Swedish Association of Local Authorities (SALAR). The assignment has been performed by Joakim Anger (team-leader) and Dragisa Mijacic (Serbian local government expert).

The assignment and methodology

The team has according to the Terms of Reference (ToR) made an assessment and analysis of the achievements of the programme, a results analysis of the relevance of the programme in relation to Serbia’s EU accession and the ongoing negotiation process and an efficiency/cost-efficiency analysis of the implementation of the programme. Furthermore, the team has made an assessment of whether the methods of capacity development and transfer of knowledge could be considered as promoting sustainability.

The team has had an utilisation focused approach, and have considered the intended use and intended users of the review throughout the process. The ambition has been to have an open process giving the stakeholders an opportunity to comment on initial findings and conclusions.

The team analysed available documentation from the project (annual reports, publications, strategic plans, training material, etc.). Interviews have been carried out with key informants such as personnel from the SCTM secretariat, members of the SCTM component coordinators, a number of experts in both Serbia and Sweden, staff at the Embassy of Sweden and other key partners. In order to get feedback from a larger number of target groups, the evaluation team designed separate surveys on environmental protection, business enabling environment, gender equality and EU integration.

The context and programme in brief

Sida has supported SCTM for altogether 11 years. Between 2003-2010 the support was channelled through the UNDP office in Serbia. The focus of the first two phases of the support was to strengthen the SCTM as an organisation. In 2010, an independent review of the programme concluded that the previous phases had been rather beneficial to enhancing the capacity of SCTM. However it was also recommended that in the next phase the Swedish support should focus more on strengthening local governments in relation to Serbia’s EU accession. SCTM proposed the new phase to be

implemented in partnership with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR). The main reasons for this were, according to the assessment memo from Sida, the in-house knowledge and competences and SALAR's own experiences from Sweden's accession into the EU. During the negotiation process, a candidate country has to harmonise with *Acquis Communautaire* that is comprised of a very large number of legal acts, court verdicts and international standards. According to figures provided by SCTM, about 70% of all EU Acquis will be implemented (directly or via national legislation) at the local and regional level. In sum, the EU accession process will have a significant effect on LSG (local self-government) operations and their functionality; the current capacities of LSGs to deal with EU integrations are insufficient; allocation of resources and division of labour at the local level does not correspond with the needs associated with the EU accession process.

The programme was initially designed to last 36 months (6 months of inception period and 30 months of implementation). The overall budget amounts about SEK 32,6 million (about to EUR 3,52 million¹).

Hence the overall aim of the programme is to prepare local governments for the coming EU integration process. Principally, 3 strategies have been employed to prepare the local governments for EU accession. *a) Enhance the capacities of the local governments; b) Articulate the needs of the municipality vis-à-vis the central government/public/EU Level; and c) strengthen the capacity of SCTM to perform its role as channel between the state and the municipalities.* The programme implements activities in the following thematic areas.

These thematic areas are also equivalent to the components according to which the programme is managed. ***EU-Integration*** which is the component which has the highest priority and cuts across all components. The second component is covering ***environmental protection*** with a focus on enhancing capacities of local self-government within this sector. A somewhat separate set of activities within this component has been conducted in thematic clusters between Swedish and Serbian municipalities. The third component has been ***gender equality***; the main focus of activities within this component were threefold, enhancing both internal and external capacity, and raising public awareness on issues related to gender equality. The fourth component has been focused on “enhanced ***business climate*** at local level. The fifth component is about ***internal capacity*** focusing on the institutional, organizational and financial sustainability of SCTM.

¹ As for exchange rate June 13, 2014.

Key findings and conclusions

Relevance

Relevance in supporting SCTM and LSGs in Serbia on issues related to EU integrations is strong. Therefore, one of the most important roles of SCTM is to provide support to local self-government units in the process of their preparing for the accession of Serbia to the EU and the period following the accession. More specifically, there is an urgent need to strengthen the capacity of local self-governments to assume obligations under EU *acquis* as well as building and strengthening the capacity of local authorities in Serbia to effectively use EU funds (under IPA II). The programme started at an opportune moment, when Serbia received the status of the candidate country to EU, which was very important for SCTM to position themselves within the national structures for EU negotiation. Also, the selection of thematic areas has been assessed as largely relevant.

The current peer to peer cooperation is the first and only direct cooperation that SCTM has had. One of the main reasons for cooperating with SALAR has been that Swedish counterparts went through similar processes during the Swedish EU integration. Although it is highly relevant for the SCTM and its members to understand how the *acquis* will impact the realities of local governments in the long run, according to informants, some of SALAR's the Swedish municipalities' experiences of the EU accession process becomes less relevant with the passing of time. Therefore, SALAR have rightly also included experiences and lesson learnt from the accession of Bulgaria and Croatia. During the implementation of the programme it has sometimes been difficult to ensure that recruited experts from SALAR had the required competence, experience and time. Although a large share (8 out of 21) of the consultants used have been employed either by SALAR, SKL International or Swedish municipalities most experts contracted have presently no or little formal connection with SALAR.

Also the municipal clusters where there is direct contact with the Swedish and Serbian municipality is considered as very valuable and relevant, particularly within the areas of environmental protection (which is the areas they were set up. Moreover the cooperation between the municipalities has been relevant to gender equality challenges and as well as EU accession process.

Achievements so far

Overall, as shown in the report, this programme has led to and is about to lead to many interesting and rather important results. The partnership and the trust that has been built between SALAR and SCTM is in itself an important factor and many achievements can be attributed to the easy access to qualified municipal expertise within SALAR and Swedish municipalities. The many contact points with SALAR has led to a considerable/ change in mind-set both among civil servants and politicians on the magnitude of change and reform that has to be done (also) on the local level in order for Serbia to become members of EU.

Currently, about 1/3 of the medium term outcomes have been achieved so far in the project. Most of them relate to effects of implementing new strategies, work methods and tools etc.² However 2/3 of the expected outcomes are still to be achieved. Understandably and not surprisingly the more long term effects, which should have an effect on the beneficiaries or/and stakeholders have not been achieved two years into the project. In this summary there is only room to mention a handful of them. For example;

- The SCTM and SALAR financed and implemented *impact analyses* of the consequences of EU membership for the municipalities. SCTM selected relevant sectors to assess/analyse which has substantially helped SCTM to gain credibility which in turn has given them a better chance to advocate for municipal issues in the EU accession negotiations. The Impact Analysis and related research also formed the basis for SCTM EU strategic and policy framework, adopted at the General Assembly in December 2013, now guiding SCTM and LSGs in the negotiation and the integration process.
- The many activities within the thematic area of gender has led to that SCTM is considered as one of the few (not to say only official or semi-official organisation that speak out on gender equality issues. Their work has attracted attention of relevant national institutions (i.e. Gender Equality Directorate and the Commissioner for Protection of Equality) and other development actors working in this field, such as UN-Women, OSCE and different NGOs. SCTM has established the Network of Environmental Officers (ECO Network) that is gathering 250 representatives from 135 LSGs. Our findings clearly show that ECO Network is an important platform for networking and sharing experiences among LSG representatives, as well as for capacity building of environmental officers on various topics related to this sector.
- The fourth component focusing on promoting a more favourable Business Climate. Two types of networks have been created under this component: Network of Heads of Municipal Administrations; and the Local Economic Development Network (LED Network). Both networks have regular meetings, usually 2-3 times a year. The LED network is considered very useful by the (about 70) participants while the benefits of the networks among the heads of municipal administrations is more unclear.
- The final component of the Programme focuses on advancing capacity of SCTM and their members through enhancing their ability to generate initiatives, ownership and buy-in of development activities on local level, as well

² These refer to “medium term outcomes” in the results framework

as strengthening institutional and organisational capacity and financial sustainability of SCTM.

- The main achievements within this component include development of a strategic plan (2014-2017) that has enhanced SCTM's understanding of their role and what the organisation intends to achieve in the coming years. Also, the perspective of the new strategic plan has shifted to become much more member-oriented, i.e. what SCTM can do for its members rather than focusing on development SCTM itself (as the previous plan did)

Efficiency of programme implementation

The SALAR and SCTM cooperation has been a peer-to-peer partnership based on trust at the top level of the organisations as well as on programme management level. One of the main reasons for this is that the sister organisations speak the “same language”. Furthermore, as stated in the findings, the regular (informal) contacts and discussions between the partners on both big and small issues makes this cooperation a key factor for a responsible, effective and efficient programme management.

Another conclusion is that programme management has created a clear ownership within SCTM and also has enabled SALAR to provide expert support on specific challenges within SCTM and Serbian municipalities. Also, the joint programme management have had a clear division of roles and been conducted in a flexible way taking into account risks and changes in the context.

From an efficiency perspective, when Swedish consultants are hired as experts, costs of the training sessions normally becomes rather high, creating a high pressure that activities are efficiently performed. According to our findings the consultancy input (particular from international experts) would be more efficient if SCTM would make better preparations, including clarifying how the expert's input would achieve particular results. Furthermore the methodologies used to carry out trainings and seminars are often rather traditional and would benefit of using more inclusive and participatory approaches.

Efficiency is also about making clear priorities. As with many organisations, the SCTM priorities reflect the minds of its leaders. Hence, one conclusion in this review is that both effectiveness and efficiency of SCTM activities to large extent is dependant of the support from the top management. For example within the thematic areas such as EU accession there is a clear support and thus also value for money. In other thematic sectors such as gender equality the interest could preferably be higher among the top management. The presence of the top management (for example at key trainings, seminars or workshops) is essential since it gives further legitimacy and priority to these particularly goals.

Another important tool for making priorities is the results framework, however the many expected outcomes on different levels have apparently not been helpful in this regard. Also progress in the current results framework is to a rather high extent based

on judgements of the implementing partners and it is sometimes in the reporting difficult to see a clear link of what has been done and what has been achieved.

Sustainability

In general SCTM has, according to all our interlocutors, been significantly advanced in last decade, which can largely be attributed to Sida support dating back to 2003. During the last 15 years, SCTM staff has increased from about five to more than 50.

SCTM is in general known for provision of good quality services to its members, and represents a reliable partner to national (and provincial) government. SCTM is also perceived as reliable institution among multilateral and bilateral development agencies that are active in Serbia.

The issue of financial and organisational long term sustainability has been discussed for many years in previous phases of this support and is also one of the key issues in this project. A process been initiated through the establishment of a working group on revenue generation. However, so far no concrete results have come out from these discussions.

Recommendations for SCTM /SALAR for the last year of implementation

We recommend that

- SCTM and SALAR, for the last year, make clear priorities on which outcomes are to be specifically targeted (1-2) within each component.
- that the programme should focus more strategic results which have direct effect for their beneficiaries (e.g. the members of SCTM) or/and other stakeholders (e.g. strategic functions in the central governments).
- top management more clearly endorse key activities within all components of the programme.
- SCTM with assistance from Swedish partner (or other experts) try new more innovative methodologies of conducting seminars and trainings
- SCTM and SALAR in a more distinct way use the gender equality acquis and CEMR as an entry points and leverages to connect gender work to overall municipality reform, and obligations.
- instead of working with gender equality as a separate component, rather integrating a specific gender perspective into other main topics in a more pragmatic and innovative way.
- that SCTM and SALAR in a systematic way collect lessons learnt from municipal cooperation to be included the learnings in future relations
- SCTM and SALAR explain further and discuss with both Serbian and Swedish municipalities how their cooperation fits into the bigger picture and give concrete advice on how to organise an efficient results oriented study visits.

Preliminary recommendations for Sida and implementing partners post 2015***We recommend that***

- Sida and Swedish embassy consider to continuing support to Local governments to prepare for the EU accession. The Swedish strategy to the Balkan region also opens up for support to local government sector being key players in the EU accession process.
- that Sida further investigate how to make use of the Swedish expertise in the best possible way. Although there are apparent risks (of further complexity) to formally involve an additional partner, we recommend that the Sida consider more systematically involving other associations for local authorities from neighbouring countries. The Swedish experiences and competencies should thus be used primarily when it clearly brings added value (and is cost efficient)
- that SCTM with its partners thoroughly discuss and come up with viable options for long term financing of the organisation.

1 Introduction

1.1 THE ASSIGNMENT

In May, 2014 Swedish Embassy commissioned Indevelop to carry out an “In depth review” of the Swedish “support to local governments in Serbia in the EU integration process”. The programme has been implemented by Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM) together with technical support from Swedish Association of Local Authorities (SALAR). The assignment has been performed by Joakim Anger (team-leader) and Dragisa Mijacic (Serbian local government expert).

According to the contract with Sida, a review was supposed to take place mid-way through the project. Postponement of the review, now with less than a year left of the programme, has somewhat shifted to focus to not only including an analysis and recommendations for the last year of implementation but also give preliminary ideas about Sida’s engagement in the sector of local governance beyond this particular intervention. Hence according to the ToR the review has four main objectives/purposes:

- 1) Assessing progress towards outcomes and sustainable results
- 2) To make an assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and progress so far which could provide Programme Management (SCTM and SALAR) with input for the last year of implementation
- 3) Given the current context in Serbia, provide SCTM and SALAR with more long-term ideas and recommendations on how to develop their partnership.
- 4) To provide Sida with recommendations regarding needs and modalities for possible future support within local governance and possible ways and areas of future cooperation with SCTM (after finalizing this particular intervention).

In agreement with the Swedish embassy in Belgrade and the implementing partners, the following tasks have been performed in this review;

Effectiveness

- Assessment of the achievements of the programme results. This review has covered only the third phase of the Sida financed support to SCMT, i.e. the cooperation between SCTM and SALAR (2011-2014);
- Identification and analysis of the major management aspects influencing the achievements .

Relevance

- Analysis of the *relevance* of the programme in relation to Serbia’s EU accession and the ongoing negotiation process.

Efficiency

- Analysis of the *efficiency/cost-efficiency* of the Project, i.e. assessment whether there are more cost-efficient methods of achieving the same results.
- Assessment if the Programme management model had been cost-efficient compared to possible alternatives.

Sustainability

- Analysis the sustainability of Programme outputs and outcomes from an organizational and financial perspective;
- Assessment whether the methods of capacity development and transfer of knowledge could be considered as promoting sustainability;

1.2 THE METHODOLOGY

As a general approach the team has had a utilisation focused approach, considering intended users and intended use throughout the review. The ambition has been to have an open process giving the stakeholders comment on initial findings and conclusions. The team has used different approaches and data collection methods and as general rule tried to verify claims or statements from at least one external source. The team has analysed the available documentation from the project (annual reports, publications, strategic plans, training material etc.), as well as additional information analysis of documents provided by SCTM-SALAR's partners or other stakeholders in Serbia. Interviews have been carried out with.

Key informants such as personnel SCTM secretariat, members of the Joint Executive Committee, SCTM Members, component coordinators, a number of experts in both Serbia and Sweden, staff at the Embassy of Sweden and other key partners and donors. The evaluation team participated at meetings of the LED network and ECO-network where, of these two events, a number of meetings were organised with participants. In addition, a field visit was organised to the City of Zrenjanin, where interviews were held with representatives of local authorities and relevant municipal administration officers.

In order to get feedback from a larger number of target groups, the evaluation team designed separate surveys on environmental protection, business enabling environment, gender equality and EU integration. An additional survey was designed for mayors, who also got opportunity to provide their input on issues that are important to

the evaluation.. Surveys were placed on the online platform Survey Monkey.³ Links with questionnaires were sent out by SCTM to relevant respondents within municipal administrations that participated in project activities, as well as to mayors.

1.2.1 Limitations

As indicated in the inception report, for the third and fourth purposes of this review, the team have only been able to provide some initial ideas of possible future directions of the Swedish support. A more thorough assessment would have required in-depth assessment of the context and the different actors active in this area. It should therefore be noted these conclusions and recommendations are somewhat beyond what would be directly suggested by the evidence.

More comprehensive analysis of future Swedish support would have required a more thorough analysis of different types of modalities and options, than what has been possible within the framework of this review.

Also, an in depth analysis of management aspects influencing the achievements of the programme has been more difficult to carry out than anticipated at the outset. Such (evidence-based) findings and conclusions would, according to our view, required, that the consultants would have spent much more time making observations of the actual implementation of the activities carried out by SCTM and SALAR.

Furthermore, the unexpected event of the flooding that hit Serbia in May 2014 did, for at least two weeks' time, slow down the possibility to carry out some of the additional interviews. Also, floods that severely affected Serbia during the evaluation mission, meant that time available for responding to the surveys was rather short. Nevertheless, the response rate is sufficient and the findings from the survey have to a large extent supported and enriched the conclusions of this review.

1.2.2 The structure of the report

This report is divided into the following sections. First a background to the Sida financed programme is provided including a brief description of the main components of the programme. This section also gives the reader some guidance on the intervention logic of the programme as well as some information about the key financiers of SCTM and brief information on SCTM and the division of labour between SALAR and SCTM.

³ The survey questions are attached in annex 5. The approach and methodology is further explained in inception report attached in annex 2.

The following section provides key findings on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. Based on these findings main conclusions and recommendations are provided. The report is then concluded by a section on preliminary ideas and possible paths for future cooperation with SCTM and SALAR.

2 The programme

2.1 BACKGROUND

The Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM) is the national association of local self-governance units in Serbia founded in already during the Yugoslav era, in 1953. Hence, the members of the organisations are municipalities of Serbia. The main mission of SCTM is *advocating the interest of local authorities and strengthening their capacities* to provide municipal services to citizens.

Sida has supported SCTM since 2003. During the first phase, Sweden supported the establishment of SCTM's training centre as well as a number of capacity building activities at the local level. Building on the lessons learnt, experiences and achievements of the first phase, a new phase of the project was launched in autumn 2006. The main focus of the second phase was on internal reorganisation and capacity building of SCTM. Between 2003 and 2010 the Swedish support was channelled through UNDP's office in Serbia. In 2010, Sida commissioned a monitoring mission that concluded that the Swedish support had contributed to SCTM recognition as a professional, well organised and representative association of local governments in Serbia. The monitoring mission also proposed that the support in a third phase would be more focused on strengthening local governments in relation to Serbia's EU accession.⁴

Based on the lessons from the previous two phases, Sida responded positively to SCTM's initiative to develop a project proposal for the new phase that would be more focused on the challenges for SCTM and local governments in the Serbia's EU accession process.

The SCTM proposed the new phase to be implemented in partnership with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR). The main reasons for this were, according to the assessment memo from Sida, the in-house knowledge and competences and SALAR's own experiences from Sweden's accession into the EU.

⁴ Monitoring the implementation of capacity development of SCTM II, SKL International, 2010

Extensive discussions between partner organizations (SCTM and SALAR) resulted in a project proposal that was presented to Sida in autumn 2011. The programme was initially designed to last 36 months (6 months of inception period and 30 months of implementation). The overall budget amounts about SEK 32,6 million (about to EUR 3,52 million⁵).

The budget was separated between SCTM and SALAR, making two separate contracts between Sida and SALAR and between Sida and SCTM. SCTM's budget is SEK12.6 million, which covers operations (project management) and programme expenses in Serbia (including the cost of events, engagement of various experts, travel expenses, etc.). SALAR's budget is a bit higher, at SEK19.9 million⁶. This amount covers all activities implemented by the Swedish experts and project management as well as activities that take place outside Serbia (such as study tours internship or similar). After the inception period of 6 months, the resources allocated so far for SALAR are about SEK 8,7 million⁷ (SEK 6,3 million on fees and about SEK 2,4 million on reimbursable costs). SCTM has according to their own financial record (until May 2014) spent about SEK 2,3 million (EUR 256 000) on salaries and experts fees.⁸

2.2 THE PROGRAMME IN BRIEF

2.2.1 The organisational set up

The current programme is divided into five components, i.e. EU-accession, Environmental Protection, Gender Equality, Business Climate and SCTM Capacity Building. In the selection of the five components were, according to implementing partners and the financiers, based on the following considerations: a) the needs of the SCTM and Serbian Local Self-Governments LSGs b) the Swedish strategy for development cooperation to Serbia and c) the SALAR's comparative advantages.

The programme is implemented in partnership between two sister organizations, SCTM and SALAR. SCTM is responsible for the implementation of activities in Serbia, including financial management for that segment. SALAR is responsible for the expert support/input, organization of study tours and training outside Serbia, internships and the like.

The Programme management model includes the following entities :

⁵ As for exchange rate June 13, 2014.

⁶ This includes 3.9 million SEK in Swedish VAT.

⁷ The period is 2012-06-01 to 2014-05-30

⁸ Please note, since the total amount spent on each component is difficult to acquire in the SCTM accounting system, the calculations on the percentage of money spent on each of the components are based on salaries and expert fees only (and other costs)

The main engine for implementation of the programmes is the *Programme Management Coordination Team (PMCT)*, which has the overall responsibility to manage and coordinate the activities of the programme. The Programme has one Swedish and one Serbian programme manager. The Serbian programme manager worked full time with the programme while the Swedish programme manager allocated in average 4 days/month on the programme.

A *SCTM-SALAR Joint Executive Committee (JEC)* represents the cooperation partners and has joint responsibility for achievement of the overall Programme purpose and planned results. The JEC consists of the top managers at SALAR and SCTM and functions more or less as the board of directors of the programme as a whole.

Component coordinators (CC) are responsible for implementing activities carried out within the five/thematic areas of the Programme. Activities within the different components are coordinated by one Swedish and one Serbian CC. The Serbian counterpart takes a lead role in this work since they allocate more or less 1-1.5 full time persons per component while the Swedish CC allocate two days per month of work to this programme.

Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) provides guidance, advice and input to the Programme. PAC has no decision making role, but functions mainly as a sounding board to the programme management.

The relation between SALAR and SKL-International

The Swedish partner SALAR has a call-off agreement with SKL-International (a consultancy/daughter company fully owned by SALAR). According to this call of agreement SALAR has made call-off to SKL-International to implement the project activities with the framework of the project agreed with Sida, SKL also has full responsibility of managing the budget and are preparing draft narrative and financial reports to be approved by SALAR. However, SALAR is the contracting party in this arrangement and have all formal communications with Sida. In this review the Swedish partner is mainly referred to as SALAR, however, when there is need to make distinction between the two organisations this has been done.

2.2.2 The components of the programme

This section provides a brief overview of programme components and activities where SALAR and SCTM have allocated their resources and where they implement their activities. By no means does this present a complete description of the programme operations since the programme action contains a large amount of different activities that will not be presented here.

According to the involved parties (Sida; SCTM and SALAR) the thematic sectors have been selected based on the following criteria a) the needs of Serbian municipalities b) the needs of SCTM, b) the priorities of Swedish development cooperation to

Serbia and the c) skills and comparative advantages of SALAR (and SKL-International).

EU Accession of Serbia and its implications for Local Level Governments

The goal of this component is “strengthened involvement of local self-governments (and capacity of SCTM to support them) in the EU integration process and raised awareness of EU integrations at the local level”.

One of the main activities within this component has been to organise, structure and carry out impact analysis, i.e. how the EU accession process will affect the LSG within key sectors, in order to present the interest of LSGs in the negotiation chapters. Another main activity has been the establishment of internal supporting structures for SCTM participation in the negotiation process in order to secure that positions chosen are well anchored and consulted with Local Governments

Also, more than 200 people (mainly civil servants) participated in regional trainings on negotiations and EU funds, regional meetings on establishing EU officers and offices, regional meetings on the Framework document on impact on EU integration and membership on LSGs. Among other things a draft feasibility study on SCTM Brussels presence was elaborated. Additional activities within this component have been the development and adoption of the Framework Document (e.g. the strategic and policy framework for action) to guide LSG and the SCTM in the process of the accession of Serbia to the EU.

This component is managed by 1.5 staff from the SCTM. Out of the total funds spent on staff and expert, about 1/3 of the budget has been spent on this component. The Swedish partner assigned one component coordinator spending 2 days/months working on these issues. Until May 2014 about 38% of SALAR's budget was allocated to this component, which also includes costs of the programme manager.

Environmental protection

The goals of this component are

- a) to enhance capacities of local self-government to implement environmental laws, establishment of Serbian-Swedish partnerships on thematic cooperation to support enhanced capacities and policy dialogue of LSGs and improvement of public involvement in environment-related topics.
- b) to strengthen SCTM capacity to represent LSGs in field of environment in preparation of negotiating position for Chapter 27

The activities in these areas could be summarised as following:

One group of activities has been related to the analysis of law enforcement in the field of environmental protection at the local level, more specifically possible effects of accession on LSGs and research of current resources at local level. This provided the basis for SCTM environment policy adopted at by the SCTM Presidency December 2013.

Another group of activities has been focused on topics related to raising citizens' awareness and cooperation of local entities, and citizens' participation in planning and decision-making in the field of environmental protection.

A somewhat separated set of activities within this component has been conducted in thematic clusters between Swedish and Serbian municipalities. In this there are three thematic partnerships: solid waste management that is coordinated by Zrenjanin and Gävle; noise reduction coordinated by Belgrade and Malmö; and energy management coordinated by Niš and Växjö. Altogether 9 Serbian and 3 Swedish municipalities are involved in this partnership.

The cooperation with the Swedish municipalities functions to a large extent as separate projects within the programme. The Swedish municipalities will for the entire project period allocate roughly 95 working days/per municipality for implementing the projects, excluding travel expenses and cost for study visits in Sweden. In May 2014, about 18% of SALARs budget had been allocated to this component.

Altogether, the environmental component constitutes about 31% of SALAR's budget. For SCTM the budget allocated to environmental protection constitutes about 22% of their expenditures on staff and experts costs.

Gender equality

The overall goal of this component has been to “increase capacities of SCTM and local self-government and increased public awareness regarding **gender equality issues**”.

The main focus of activities within this component have mainly been enhance the internal capacity of gender equality issues and develop a gender equality policy paper to be used internally at SCTM and as a dialogue instrument towards the municipalities. Additional focus was put on strengthening LSGs competence and awareness through trainings organised by SCTM.

The SCTM has also established a Gender Working Group (GWG). The Working Group is composed of 16 representatives from the SCTM, municipalities, central government, NGOs and has broad expertise in gender issues.

About 1 million SEK has been allocated to this component. Until May 2014 this constituted about 12% of SALAR's budget. SCTM has 1 person working 90% on this component and together with experts about 21% of the total budget on fees and salaries has been spent on this component.

Business Climate

The main aim of this component is to have an “enhanced dialogue between private sector and local self-governance regarding improvement of relevant factors which may influence the **business climate** at local level, as well as increased awareness and capacities improved in this area both within municipalities and SCTM”.

SCTM has also elaborated a comprehensive database on the business environment that comprises more than 120 LSGs. Besides, SCTM has established a local economic development (LED) Network that includes LED offices from majority of LSGs in Serbia. Lobbying towards the central governments on issues of business climate has also been conducted. Furthermore, in cooperation with 5 LSGs, SCTM has initiated activities on (re-)establishing business councils and making them fully operational.

For SALAR this is the smallest component. So far (May 2014) less than 4% of SALAR's budget has been allocated to this component. SCTM has one advisor working 50% on this component, and about 16% of the total budget on expert fees and salaries is spent on this component.

Internal capacity building

The main focus of this component is to enhance capacities, as well as the institutional, organizational and financial sustainability of SCTM. The main activities have been focused around the following; the elaboration of new strategic plan (2014-2017), models for financial sustainability and development of SCTM as an employer organisation for municipalities around Serbia (according to the Swedish model)⁹. Activities include both capacity building sessions in Serbia as well as study visits to Sweden. Furthermore communication strategy has been elaborated and internal trainings on Results Based Management Management, leadership development, procurement rules and financial procedures were conducted.

In May about 15% (including a large bulk of reimbursable funds which mainly have been used for study visits) of the SALAR's funds have been allocated to this component. Working with this component constitutes core work of SCTM. About 10% of the total budget has been used to hire experts. Furthermore, although the salary of the programme manager is put as programme management costs, he works a large part of his time on this component.

⁹ Being an employer organisation means for example that SALAR represents all Swedish municipalities in the negotiations on salaries with the trade unions. In Sweden, particularly for the smaller municipalities, with little capacity this set up has relived them from a heavy work burden.

2.3 INTERVENTION LOGIC OF THE PROGRAMME

According to the programme document, the overall objective is ¹⁰ “to contribute to strengthening democracy, equitable and sustainable development in relation to local governance and closer ties between Serbia and EU”

As described above, the programme is rather comprehensive and constitutes activities within many different type of thematic sectors. For many persons working with different activities in the programme the links between what the different component would achieve and what the programme as whole would achieve have been somewhat unclear.

In fact, the five components of the Programme can be perceived as five different projects within one Programme.

In discussions with the programme management and with management structures of SCTM/SALAR, the evaluation team understand that the long term goal of the programme as a whole could be simplified and summarised as being, *to prepare local governments for the coming EU integration process.*

According to key staff at SCTM and the programme manager of SKL-International the following main 3 *strategies* have been employed to prepare the local governments for the EU accession process.

- a) Enhance the capacities of the local governments;*
- b) Articulate the needs of the municipality vis-à-vis the central government/public; and*
- c) Strengthen the capacity of SCTM to perform its role as channel between the EU, state and the municipalities.*

2.4 THE ROLE AND STRUCTURE OF SCTM

SCTM is an association that gathers all cities and municipalities in the Republic of Serbia.¹¹ It was established in 1953 as the association of local self-government units from Yugoslavia.¹² SCTM has a mission to “advocate the interests, provide high-

¹⁰ The goals was reaffirmed in the Inception report of SALAR/SCTM

¹¹ Although Republic of Serbia considers Kosovo as its own territory, in their membership SCTM does not include local self-government units from this territory.

¹² LSG from other Yugoslav federative units stepped out from membership after dissolution of the country during 1990s. This process has finished in 2006 when Montenegro declared independence.

quality services and supports development and advancements of LSG in Serbia through joint efforts of its members and in accordance with European standards”.

SCTM is a platform that articulates joint interests of local authorities no matter their political colour, and advocates for better status of LSG to national authorities. Therefore, SCTM is active in policy making and legislative process, providing inputs and raising awareness on the local level.

SCTM has a strong reputation within the government and its ministries, agencies and other public sector entities. There are numerous examples when national authorities, including the line ministry in charge of LSG affairs, have asked SCTM for assistance in communication and consultation with LSGs. SCTM is also asked to participate in numerous working groups for drafting legislations, programmes or other policy instruments that have influence on LSGs.

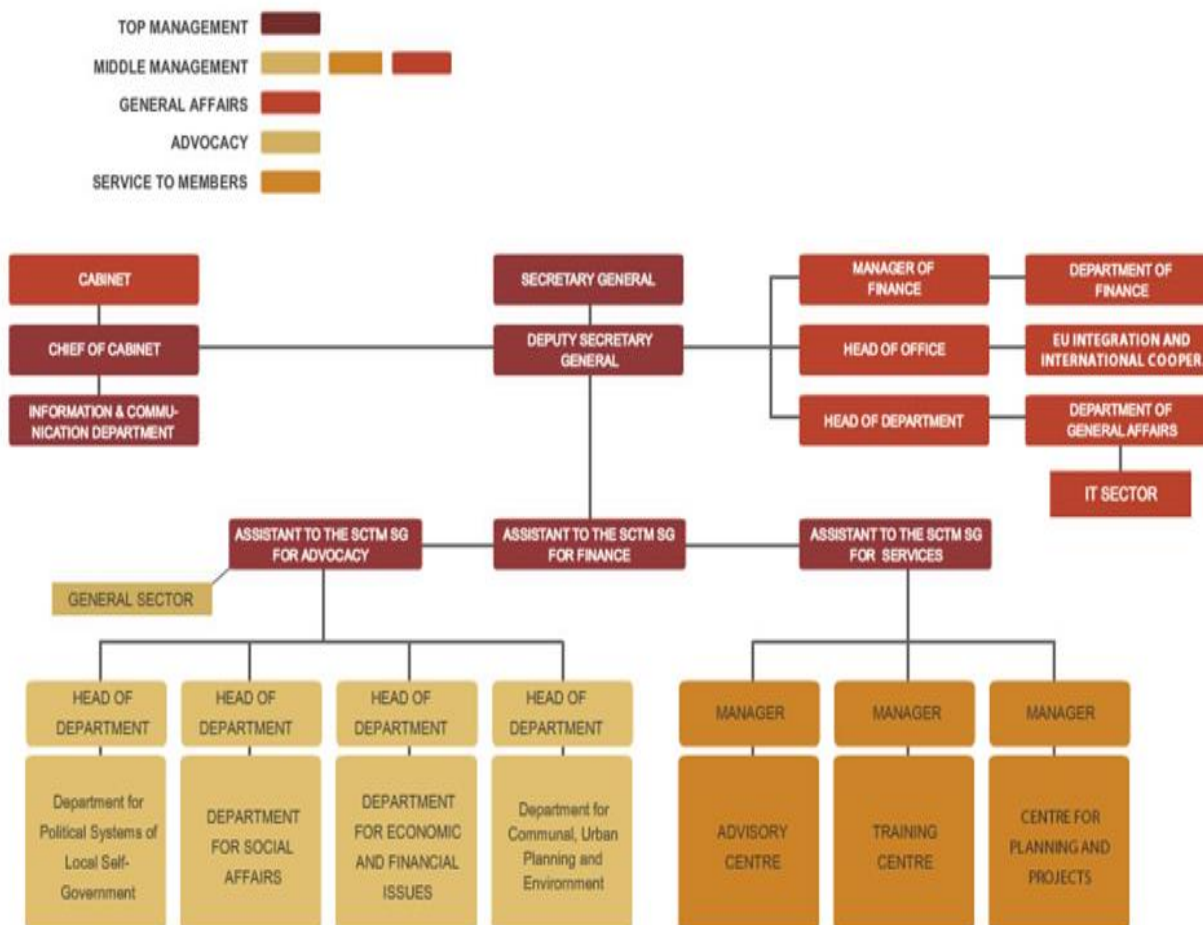
SCTM is also active in providing assistance to LSGs on numerous issues, including capacity building of local servants, preparation of development strategies and programs, creating different local bodies (i.e. Business Councils or Gender Equality Councils), etc. SCTM is also active in creating mechanisms for sharing experience between LSGs and transferring knowledge and best practices from EU countries.

The highest SCTM body is the *Assembly*, comprising representatives of all municipalities. The Assembly sits at least once a year and makes major decisions relevant to the SCTM. The Assembly elects SCTM bodies and defines strategic objectives and priority tasks of the organisation.

The *Presidency* is the executive body that governs the SCTM between the sessions of the Assembly. It consists of 24 members – representatives of towns and municipalities elected at the Assembly and the SCTM Secretary General, who is ex officio a member of the Presidency.

SCTM has eight *policy committees* covering different areas of importance for the local self-government –economic development, finance and public property; communal service and energy; education, culture, youth and sport; system of local self-government; urban planning, housing and construction; health care and social policy; environment and emergency management. The committees discuss problems in the areas under their competence, give opinions and suggest proposals aimed at improving the legal framework and conditions in respective areas they are in charge of.

The *secretariat* of SCTM consists now of about 50 fully employed persons and have grown from about a handful in last 15 years. SCTM is currently organised according to the following structure.



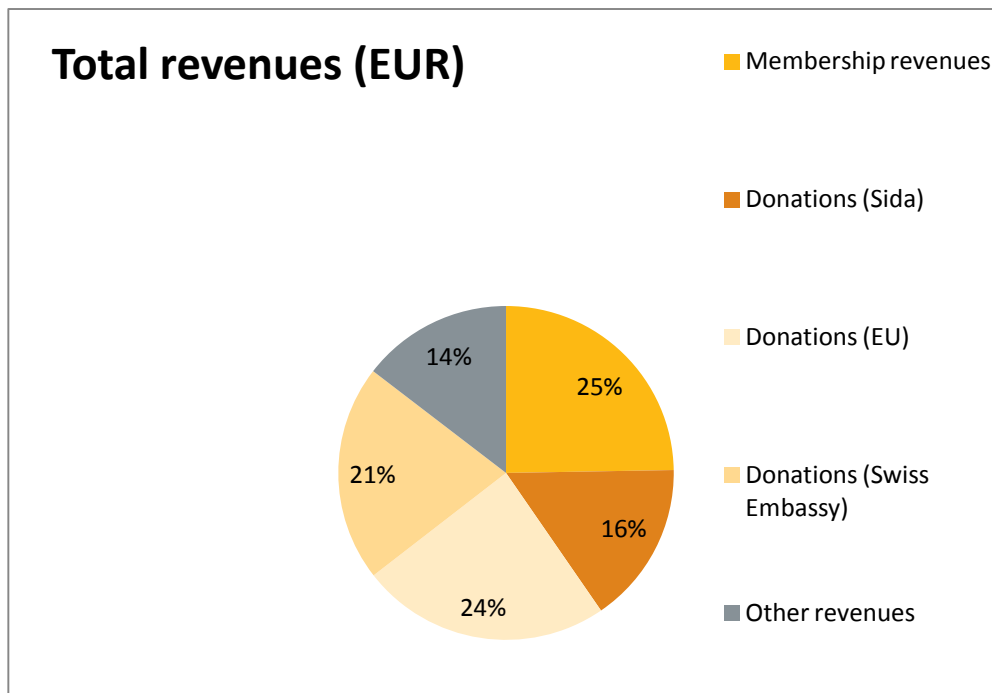
Sources of financial and technical support

Revenues 2012-13¹³

Membership revenues	1 105 556
Grants Sida)	701 120
Grants (EU)	1 077 504
Grants (Swiss Embassy)	935 707
Other revenues	651 697
Total	4 471 584

¹³ Based on the financial records from SCTM

As shown in the table below in average about 25% of the revenues derive from membership fees. About 16 % of the revenues came 2012-13 from Sida. The projects financed by EU and Swiss cooperation during 2012-2013 constituted about 24 and 21 % of the total revenues respectively. Other revenues, not included in this table come from other international donor financed projects. All in all, this entire chart clearly shows that SCTM is heavily dependent on donors financing the organisation.



As explained above SCTM formally is mainly accountable to its members. However, the financial dependence on donors means that the SCTM also is accountable to carry out activities according to agreed plans (and results framework) agreed with the donors.

3 The context of local governments in Serbia

3.1 CHALLENGES AND NEEDS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

The Local Self-Government (LSG) system in Serbia is guaranteed by the Constitution and regulated by the Law on LSG, the Law on LSG finance, the Law on Territorial Organisation, as well as by several other laws that regulate specific issues such as local elections, communal police, communal affairs, etc. There are a number of laws that regulate issues across political jurisdictions, including the local level (such as the law on public property, law on environmental protection, law on education system and many others). Issues related to the Capital City of Belgrade are regulated by a separate legislation. It is important to mention that Serbia also adopted the European Charter on Local Self-government.

Although the LSG system has been advanced since democratic changes in 2000, there is still room for improvement. Among the biggest challenges of the LSG system in Serbia is the lack of a decentralisation strategy that should provide a systematic approach in solving overlaps in vertical division of power between different tiers of government. There were several attempts to initiate work on the decentralisation strategy but that issue was politically volatile across several governments.

LSGs are also having problems with instability of the legislative framework, especially in terms of regulation of their finances (the Law on LSG finance was adopted in 2006 and changed in 2011, 2012 and 2013). Fiscal decentralization often does not follow the transfer of competencies from the national level (and, in case of Vojvodina, provincial level), which affects effective operations of cities and especially (smaller) municipalities in Serbia.

Shifting competencies to LSGs, which will happen during the EU approximation process might create a burden at the local level. At this moment, LSGs in Serbia do not have capacity to implement such a huge number of tasks and duties that will be transferred to them within this process. Therefore, besides issues related to decentralisation, the key issues related to LSGs will be strengthening their role in the process of EU integration of the Republic of Serbia.

3.2 THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND SCTM IN EU ACCESSION PROCESS

EU accession is probably the largest government transforming process that can happen in a country. During the negotiation process, a candidate country has to harmonise with *Acquis Communautaire* that is comprised of more than 37,000 legal acts, 13,000 court verdicts and 52,000 international standards.¹⁴

According to figures provided by SCTM, about 70% of all EU Acquis will be implemented at the local level or regional level either directly or through national legislation. The other figures, also presented by SCTM, says that 30% of all Acquis are focusing on environmental protection, 60% of those provisions should be implemented at the local level and that only 1-3% of local administration works on issues related to environmental protection.¹⁵ The above figures clearly show the following:

- EU accession process will have a significant effect on LSG operations and their functionality;
- Current capacities of LSGs to deal with EU integrations are insufficient;
- Allocation of resources and division of labour at the local level does not correspond with the needs associated with the EU accession process.

SCTM has been recognised by the Government of Serbia to be an important actor in the process of EU negotiations. SCTM has been included in working groups for negotiation of chapters 19, 22 and 27, while 21 out of 35 chapters are important for LSGs. Importance of including SCTM in the EU negotiation process has been recognised by LSG authorities as well, which was also confirmed by their answers on survey (that will be presented later in the report).

¹⁴ It is very difficult to define the exact number of valid legal acts in the European Union. No institution publishes official tables. These figures are taken from the website EU ABC, see <http://en.euabc.com/word/2152>

¹⁵ Those figures were presented by Ljubinka Kaluđerovic, SCTM staff, at the meeting of the ECO Network held on 12 June 2014 in Belgrade.

4 Key findings

4.1 RELEVANCE

According to the Swedish development cooperation strategy 2009-2012 (that was prolonged until 2013) the objective is “strengthen democracy and promote sustainable development in a way that improves the prospects for EU membership”. Democratic governance being a key sector for Serbia’s own national Plan for Integration with EU and thus Swedish support, the strategy states that Sweden support “an effective and democratic national government administration in the service of citizens at both the central and local level”.¹⁶

The thematic areas targeted in this support are also in line with Swedish priorities. Gender equality and natural resource management were key areas within the previous Swedish development strategy to Serbia. Although a key issue in this strategy, improved business climate was not a clear priority of the previous Swedish strategy to Serbia. However in the current Swedish strategy for Western Balkans, development of a market economy is one of the key areas.

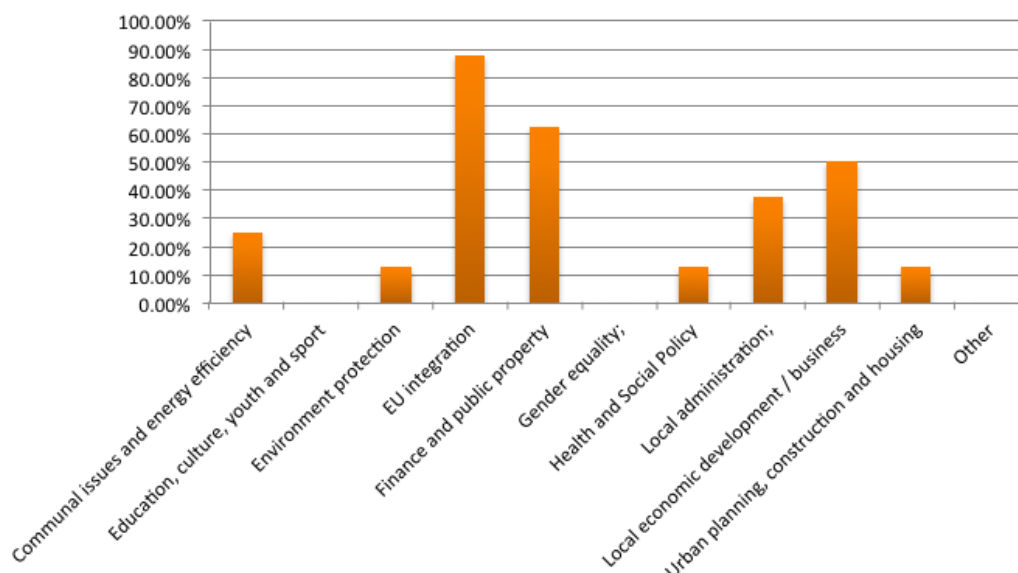
Relevance in supporting SCTM and LSGs in Serbia on issues related to EU integrations is strong. Therefore, one of the most important roles of SCTM is to provide support to local self-government units in the process of their preparing for the accession of Serbia to EU and the period following the accession. More specifically, there is a urgent need to strengthen the capacity of local self-governments to assume obligations under EU acquis as well as building and strengthening the capacity of local authorities in Serbia to effectively use EU funds (under IPA II). This programme systematically approaches those issues, aiming on increasing capacities at two levels, at the level of SCTM Secretariat and among SCTM members. The programme also came at the right moment, when Serbia was granted candidate status to become members of EU. It was very important for SCTM to position themselves within the national structures for EU negotiation.

High relevance on issues related to EU integrations is confirmed by all informants interviewed during the evaluation mission, as well as by results of the surveys with mayors and LSG staff. The mayors see SCTM support as most useful in the field of

¹⁶ See Strategy for development cooperation with Serbia, p 2-3

EU integration (see chart below). On the other hand, the survey on EU integration showed that all respondents consider SCTM involvement in EU negotiation processes as highly relevant.

Chart 1: Question: In which sector SCTM support is most useful?



Source: Results of the Survey with Mayors

Programme intervention related to environmental protection is also high. Environmental protection is an important segment of the EU accession process, and the majority of EU provisions in this field will be implemented at the local level. To share knowledge and best practices from EU member states, as well as interaction between LSGs, is therefore of great importance. In addition, solving environmental protection issues at the local level requires significant investments that exceed financial abilities of LSGs in Serbia. By this programme intervention SCTM tries to advance LSG capacities in absorbing EU funds and attracting affordable credit lines, as well as to establish structures that will work on solving environmental issues in selected thematic clusters, which are both relevant to the needs of LSGs.

Although Mayors of the local authorities usually do not consider gender equality as a hot topic, relevance of the gender equality component can also be considered as rather strong. Relevance of this component was confirmed by results of the survey on gender equality where all respondents claimed that SCTM contributed to solving issues related to gender quality in their municipality (67% responses said the contribution was high, while remaining 33% said it contributed to some extent).

An enabling business environment is one of the most pressing issues for development of private sector and job creation in Serbia, both at the national and at the local level. With the law on LSG from 2007, cities and municipalities in Serbia were in charge of creating an enabling business environment and planning and implementation of local economic development projects. This is the first time for LSGs to get competencies

related to economic development; therefore, there was a need for SCTM to support LSGs in this field. The relevance of SCTM support to issues related to business enabling and local economic development has been confirmed by results of the Survey with Mayors, who ranked this type of support in third place, right behind the support in the field of EU integrations and finance & public property (see above the chart 1).

Capacity building of the SCTM Secretariat is certainly relevant component of the Programme. There is a constant need for the SCTM Secretariat to advance their capacities in line with contemporary needs of their members for better services. There are so many transitional processes that are going on in Serbia, not only related to EU accession but to other issues such as state building, decentralization, economic transformation, etc., that highly affect the local level, therefore it is very important to have a strong organisation that will fight for interests of LSGs.

4.1.1 Relevance/Value added of the cooperation with SALAR

As mentioned in section 2, Swedish support has previously been channelled through UNDP. The current peer to peer cooperation is the first and only direct cooperation that SCTM has had, and other donors have used other modalities for their support to the organisation. According to interviews mainly with SCTM and SALAR staff the advantages with this modality are mainly the following¹⁷:

- Having gone through similar processes during the Swedish EU integration and having had responsibilities for implementing legislation gives a special legitimacy to their contribution and cooperation.
- There is a solid knowledge on issues of cooperation and a natural respect between civil servants from equivalent organisations, and the organisations to a significant extent “speak the same language”.
- If the conditions are right, these forms of cooperation can create situations where both partners have a mutual interest to cooperate in the future and provide a possible base for actor driven cooperation (without aid funds).

Furthermore, according to Swedish experts involved in the long history of SALAR, they function as a channel between the state and the municipalities as well being a hub for capacity building since 1950- and 60. They have therefore functioned as a relevant role model for SCTM. Yet the requirements look rather different today in comparison to when Sweden joined the EU. Therefore, regarding EU integration issues, SCTM rightly combines experience from SALAR with more recent experiences from Bulgaria and Croatia

¹⁷ The claimed benefits are similar to the ones that ones identified in the study Central Governments authorities in development cooperation, SADEV 2010:3

EU-integration and the realisation of the single market (which strongly affects the Local Authorities) is an ongoing process for all parts of society. Given that passed since the Swedish EU accession-process, SALAR and the Swedish municipalities and regions have matured in their understanding of the European Union and its institutions. Also, the Swedish Municipalities and SALAR itself has now a better understanding of how the present *acquis* affects the reality in which town and municipalities are active, and of how the advocacy towards the EU-institutions can be carried out. Yet, according to informants some of the Swedish municipalities' experiences of the EU accession process itself is about to become less relevant with the passing of time.

Furthermore, according to SKL-International (having the responsibility to manage activities within the programme), they try where possible to use either personnel employed by SALAR or experts employed by the Swedish municipalities. However, most of the Swedish experts have been recruited externally. Out of the 21 external international experts used on the project, 8 have been employed either in SALAR, Swedish Municipalities or SKL International. A further 8 were recruited from other countries based on the relevance of their experience for the concerned subject. Of the remaining 5 Swedish experts, 3 were used specifically towards support enhanced project management capacity (e.g. RBM).¹⁸

It should however be noted that, about 1/3 of the consultants recruited externally have recently been employed by SALAR and are now working as freelance consultants. Having a background in the organization has, according to both SALAR and SCTM, been a valuable asset giving better access relevant networks and sources of information within SALAR

One reason for this rather low involvement of SALAR staff is that the involvement requires a lot of work which could make it hard for SALAR and municipality experts to balance a 'day job' in Sweden, whilst also effectively performing a role as an international consultant. Also, working internationally with capacity development issues requires in itself expertise and competencies that, according to our interlocutors, sometimes could be difficult to find.

Within some specific areas for example RBM, leadership, environment, pricing issues, outside expertise have been contracted. In some cases Swedish experts have

¹⁸ The figures presented do not include all the SALAR and municipality expertise used during the study visits of the project.

worked in partnership with consultants from Croatia and Bulgaria as they have specific competences in the EU accession process.

According to the surveys, the best results in transferring experience from Sweden to Serbia were within components on gender equality and environmental protection. All respondents in the survey on gender equality claim either a very positive (83.3%) or somewhat positive (16.7%) experience received through cooperation with Swedish partners. In particular, the Serbian partners considered the practical application of gender equality mechanisms they saw in Swedish examples as “priceless”.

There are similar results in the survey on environmental protection where 70.6% of respondents claim very positive and 23.5% claim somewhat positive experience in cooperation with Swedish municipalities within thematic clusters.

Among comments provided to the question on usefulness of cooperation with Swedish municipalities, most emphasise transfer of knowledge on new technologies, procedures and examples in the field of thematic clusters. There is also added value reflected in initiatives of Swedish and Serbian municipalities for developing joint projects.

4.2 MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PROGRAMME SO FAR (EFFECTIVENESS)

All in all about 1/3 of the medium term outcomes have been achieved so far in the project. Most relate to effects of implementing new strategies, work methods and tools etc. The other 2/3 of the expected outcomes (medium term level) is still to surface. More long term effects relating to changes for the beneficiary groups e.g., LSGs and other stakeholders (e.g. central governments) have yet to emerge.

In this section, the highlights of achievements (outcomes) are presented. All of the achievements presented in this section have been verified by external sources¹⁹.

4.2.1 The EU accession

European integrations are definitely the most important topic in the forthcoming years, and it is very important for SCTM and LSGs to position themselves in the cen-

¹⁹ SCTM and SALAR has in their annual and progress reports described many other results. The focus of this section is however to focus on what has been achieved (outcomes) and not what has been done activities and outputs). They have also been restricted to achievements that have been verified by external sources such as governmental actors, external experts, and representatives of municipalities.

tre of happenings where important decisions are made. This Programme was designed to strengthen involvement of SCTM and LSG in the process of EU integrations, to enhance capacity of SCTM to assist its members on issues related to EU integrations, to enhance capacity of LSG to address requirements and benefits in relation to Serbia's approximation to EU and to raise awareness related to EU integration of Serbia at local level.

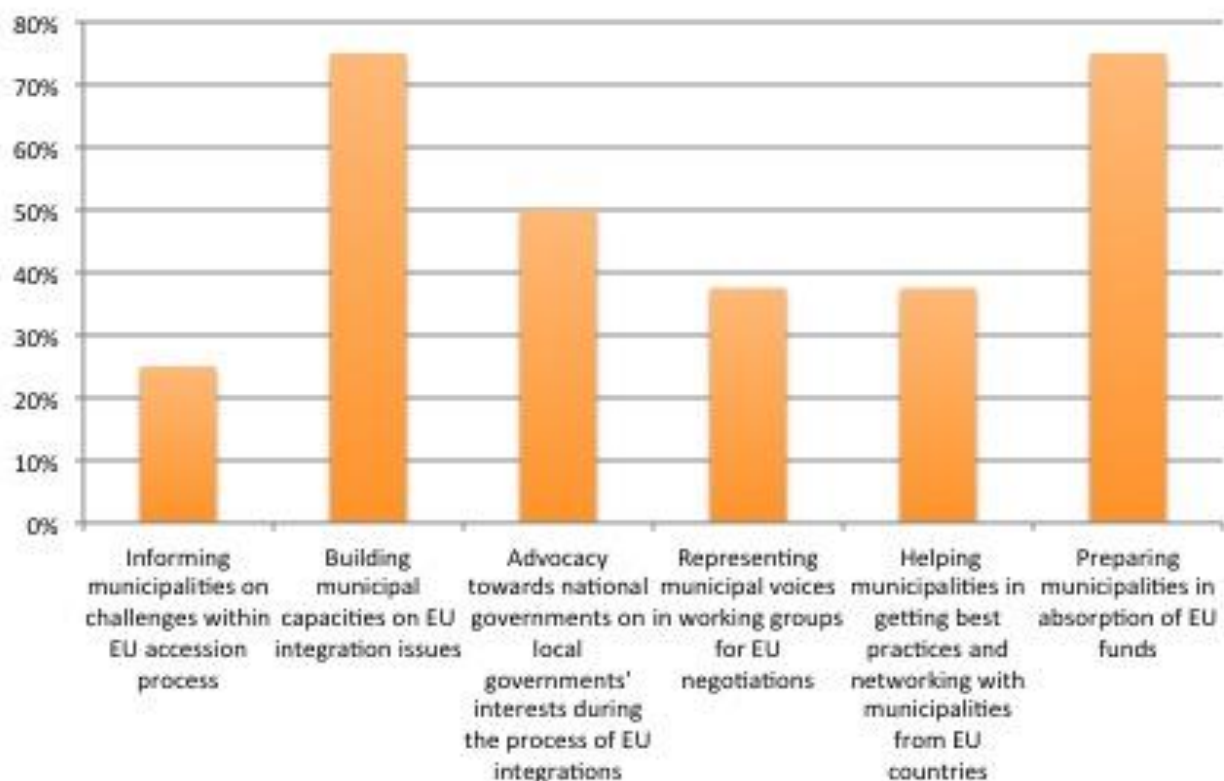
The main vehicle for creating a positive change in the component on EU integration was carrying out impact analysis of EU accession process on local authorities in Serbia in five chapters (public procurements, state aids, energy efficiency, rural development and employment and social policy²⁰). The aim of those analyses has been to make an assessment of the impact of EU accession on local authorities in 7 policy areas. The analysis showed that challenges are enormous, especially when it comes to the scale of public investments for meeting EU requirements the coming years. These types of analysis are very beneficial for LSG, and have firmly contributed to achievement of the Programme objectives and results.

Investing in these impact analyses was a clear success since they opened a door to SCTM to get a seat in all working groups of chapters that are relevant to LSGs. So far, SCTM has a seat in three negotiation chapters (SCTM has identified 21 chapters in total to be important for the local level). Serbia's Chief Negotiator was also satisfied with the quality of the analyses, as well as other government structures (i.e. the Serbian EU Integration Office, Minister in charge for EU Integration, State Procurement Office) and LSGs. Based on those analyses the Presidency will prepare different position papers. The Presidency will prepare different position papers related to different chapters that will be used as a SCTM platform during the EU negotiation process. SCTM has also been recognised as an important actor in the IPA programming process.

SCTM will also carry out a series of other activities related to EU integrations, from capacity building of LSG staff, through transfer of best practices from other EU countries to providing support in absorbing EU funds. According to the results from the survey with mayors, the most useful contribution of SCTM to LSGs are in the field of capacity building of LSG staff on EU affairs and on preparing LSGs for absorption of EU funds, followed by the advocacy initiatives toward the national level (see the Chart below). Besides, mayors that participated in the survey consider the role of SCTM in providing support to LSG during the EU integration process is seen as useful, which can also be an evidence of good SCTM performance on EU affairs.

²⁰ Also environmental issues have been analysed according to a similar methodology, but that has been done under the environment component in this programme.

Chart 2: What are the most useful activities of SCTM in regard to EU integrations?
(Choose up to 3 options)?



Source: Results of the Survey with Mayors

The Survey on EU integrations that was filled in by various LSG workers also confirmed significance of SCTM performance in this field. Among the key results that SCTM achieved through the Programme, highlights were achievements in raising awareness and capacity building within LSGs on EU negotiation process and success in getting included into the structures for negotiation.

Increased capacity of SCTM for working on EU negotiation issues were also confirmed by interviewed interlocutors from the government and by independent experts. They all claimed visible advancement of SCTM staff to deal with EU related affairs and to represent LSG interests in that process. This would be very important during the EU integration where the role of SCTM is seen as crucial, especially when it comes to coordination between national and local level. It should also be noted that SCTM thanks to the programme has supported SCTM employees to take part in different EU structures, such as Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR).

4.2.2 Gender equality

The Programme intervention in gender equality is mainly aiming to enhance capacities of SCTM, to strengthen capacity of LSGs and to raise public awareness on issues related to gender equality at the local level.

There is a body of evidence that shows a success of the Programme in regard to gender equality issues. Within the scope of the Programme, in relatively short period of time, SCTM became an organisation known for their good work on gender equality issues, which attracted attention of relevant national institutions (i.e. Gender Equality Directorate and the Commissioner for Protection of Equality) and other development actors working in this field, such as UN-Women, OSCE and different NGOs. SCTM's work on gender equality was also recognised by the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS), which gave them a leading role in their working group on gender equality.

In principle, SCTM has worked on improving capacities of LSGs to meet requirements, in different parts of Serbia. However SCTM did not cover all municipalities with technical assistance, due to limited resources.

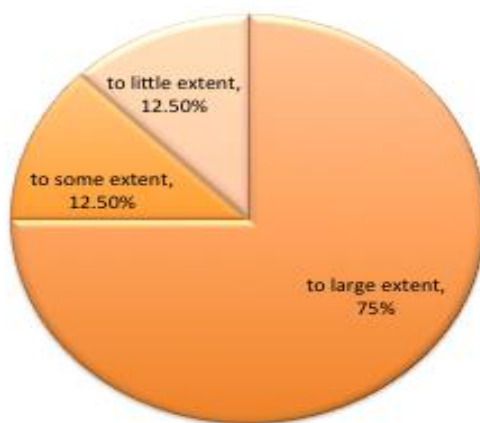
The success of SCTM work can be found in demand-driven and tailor-made approaches, which provided support based on the needs of LSGs. There is a legal requirement on gender equality that should be achieved by LSG. On the other side, LSGs in Serbia have limited understanding and technical knowledge to work on gender equality. Under these circumstances SCTM worked with local champions, LSGs that showed desire to make a positive change on gender equality issues, which was a very good approach in generating best practices.

As a direct result, SCTM has contributed to establishing Gender Equality Councils at LSGs, which acts as advisory bodies either to the Assembly or to the Executive Office, in some cases as advisory body to the Mayor as well. Besides, SCTM supported LSGs to adopt the EU Charter on Gender Equality or to prepare Local Action Plans for gender equality. SCTM also organised workshops for increasing analytical capacities for assessing impacts of local policies on gender equality by using 3R methodology. This methodology was applied within the areas of for example public administration health, social service and local economy, public procurement, legal aid and noise pollution. The Programme results in capacity building of LSG in regard to gender equality has been recorded by the survey as well, where 87.5% of respondents claimed positive influence of the Programme to LSG human resource.

Among the outputs, it should be mentioned that SCTM has set up a gender equality database, which helps LSG professionals and all interested organisations to find data, information and contacts of LSGs. SCTM succeeded in explaining that gender equality is a horizontal issue, showing on practical examples on how to make local policy more gender sensitive. Swedish experience transferred through cooperation with

SALAR was very useful in this regard. This finding was confirmed by the results of the survey on gender equality (see the chart below).

Chart 3: To what extent it was useful to get Swedish experience on gender equality?



Source: Results of the Survey on Gender Equality

SCTM organised a gender equality workshops for LSG representatives that participate in three environmental clusters and has continued to support mainstreaming of gender in the clusters.

Based on the results from the Survey on environmental protection, 88.9% of respondents from three clusters said this workshop was useful for them, especially in terms of explaining horizontal aspect of gender equality and sharing best practices from Sweden in that regard.

Through the Programme intervention SCTM has adopted an internal gender equality policy and incorporated gender equality within the SCTM strategic and action plan. However, although gender equality issues formally are prioritised within the organisation it remains to be seen to which extent these policies and manuals will be implemented.

Yet, promoting gender equality issues in Serbia is challenging since it has not been considered as a priority among other policy and development issues. As mentioned above gender equality is not currently seen as a politically hot topic in Serbia, therefore there is a lack of support from many local authorities and central governments. For instance, the new Government has abolished the Gender Equality Directorate, which was established back in 2006 with a mission to promote gender equality issues within the public administration at all levels. Those challenges are also reflected on the SCTM intervention to promote gender equality, both internally at the SCTM secretariat and externally, to their members. Hence, one of the main reasons why SCTM is perceived as champions within this area and that the results stand out is that there currently are very few actors in Serbia (beside NGOs and the International community) who are promoting these issues.

4.2.3 Environmental Protection

Environmental protection is probably the most demanding area when it comes to the EU accession process, since about 30% of all Acquis will focus on this subject. However, it can be clearly stated that vast majority of LSGs in Serbia do not have adequate financial strength or sufficient human resources to deal with overwhelming issues in the field of environmental protection.

Within the Programme SCTM and SALAR tries to enhance capacities of LSG to implement environment-related laws and improved capacities at SCTM to support LSGs in those processes; to establish Serbian – Swedish municipal partnership on thematic cooperation that will lead to enhanced capacity and policy dialogue, and to improve mechanisms at the local level for public investment in environmental protection.

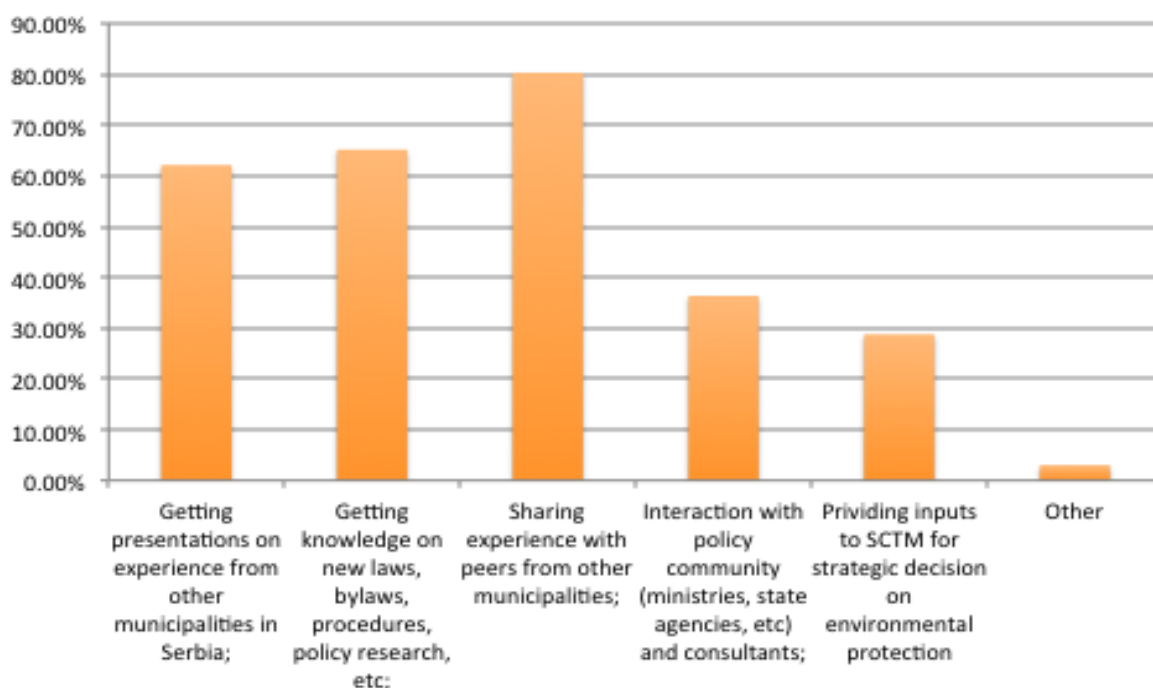
The main achievements within this component include:

- SCTM conducted an analysis on impact of implementation of main EU provisions in the environmental sector to the local level in Serbia. This impact analysis was well accepted by the Serbia's Chief Negotiator for EU accession, which further led to inclusion of SCTM to the Working Group for Chapter 27: Environment. According to SALAR and SCTM the research at local level formed an evidence based analysis later used for development of a capacity development plan for all municipalities in the field of environment. After consultations through the ECO-network and committees it also formed the basis for SCTM Environment Policy Paper adopted by the SCTM Presidency (in December 2013).
- As a part of the programme activities, SCTM has established the Network of Environmental Officers (ECO Network) that is gathering 250 representatives from 135 LSG. The ECO Network is an important platform for networking and sharing experience among LSG representatives, as well as for capacity building of environmental officers on various topics related to this sector.
- The programme also established environmental clusters that are consisted of LSG from Serbia and Sweden. Three clusters have been established: cluster on noise reduction in a form of partnership between Malmö and Belgrade; cluster on energy efficiency in a form of partnership between Växjö, Niš, Varvarin and Kula; and cluster on solid waste management in a form of partnership between Gävle, Zrenjanin, Žitište and Sečanj.

- In the end, it is also possible to confirm that the Programme activities have led to increased capacity of SCTM to support and represent LSGs in the field of environment.

Positive results in the field of environmental protection were also confirmed by the feedback received through the Survey.²¹ The survey has shown all respondents consider that their participation in meetings of ECO Network is useful for their work. The evaluation team participated in one meeting of the ECO Network and they could also hear different arguments on the importance and the usefulness of the ECO Network from the participants.

Chart 4: What you consider as the most useful benefit from the ECO Network meetings (choose up to 3 options)?



Source: Results of the Survey on Environmental Protection

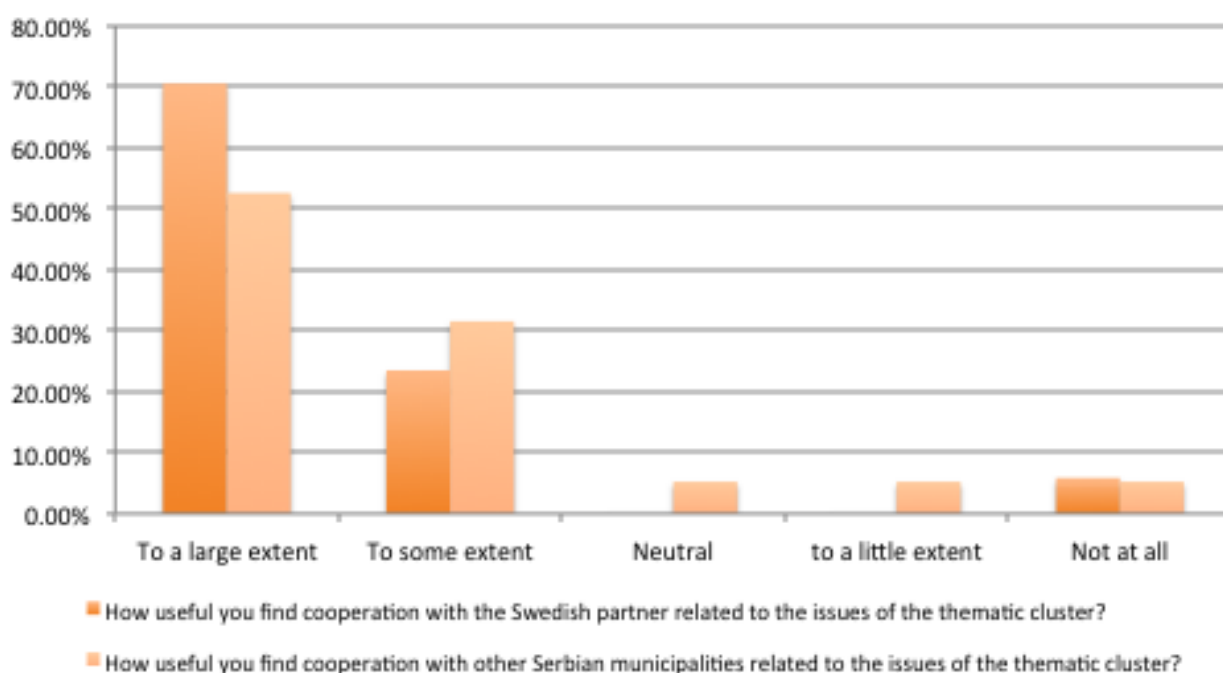
The Survey shows that the most useful result of the ECO Network is in sharing experience between environmental officers from other LSGs, followed by acquiring information on legislation and policy research, as well as getting case studies from other municipalities. The survey also captured numerous examples how interactions be-

²¹ This survey was filled by 101 representatives of cities and municipalities in Serbia, mostly environmental officers yet also assistants to the Mayors, members of the executive office and many others. The survey was structured in a way to provide information on overall cooperation with SCTM in regard to issues related to environmental protection, yet also to the issues of thematic clusters and the work of the ECO Network.

tween environmental officers contributed to solving concrete issues at the local level, which is certainly contribution to outcomes of this Programme.

Participation in the ECO Network has contributed to the advancement of human resources at the local level, which was claimed by majority of Survey respondents (77.3%). SCTM/SALAR support in establishing thematic clusters produced good intermediate results. The results of the survey shows a high satisfaction on partnerships created within thematic clusters (see chart below).

Chart 5: Results on satisfaction in cooperation with Swedish and Serbian partners within thematic clusters²²



Source: Results of the Survey on Environmental Protection

By cooperation with Swedish partners, Serbian LSGs have increased their awareness and knowledge on solving particular environmental protection issues. This cooperation was useful for creating new policy documents such as energy roadmaps, energy action plans, creating mechanisms for monitoring environmental indicators, establishing management procedures within public utilities, etc. Majority of respondents (86.7%) claim positive effects of cluster cooperation on human resource development within participating municipalities.

²² Answers are filtered in a way that only representatives of municipalities that participate in the clusters could provide feedback on these two questions.

LSGs in Serbia participating in thematic clusters are satisfied by cooperation with SCTM, emphasising the usefulness of received technical support on thematic issues, as well as support in event management, project coordination and sharing best practices and case studies. LSGs are also grateful to SCTM for creating such an opportunity to cooperate with Swedish cities and municipalities.

It should also be emphasised that many LSGs that participate in thematic clusters claims they will continue cooperation with Swedish municipalities beyond the Programme intervention. In other words, new ideas for joint project initiatives were explored between the Swedish and Serbian partners, which can definitely create spin offs and added value to the Programme. An example of this is that Swedish International Centre of Local Democracy (ICLD) recently (June 2014) approved an application for inception phase for municipal partnership between Vaxjö, Nis, Varvarin and Kula.

4.2.4 Improvement of Business Climate

The fourth component of the Programme focuses on improvement of business climate at the local level. In particular, the Programme tries to enhance dialogue and interaction between the public sector and the private sector in order to improve business environment regulatory framework, to increase capacities of SCTM and LSGs to work on improvement of the business environment and raise awareness on these important issues.

The main achievements within this component include:

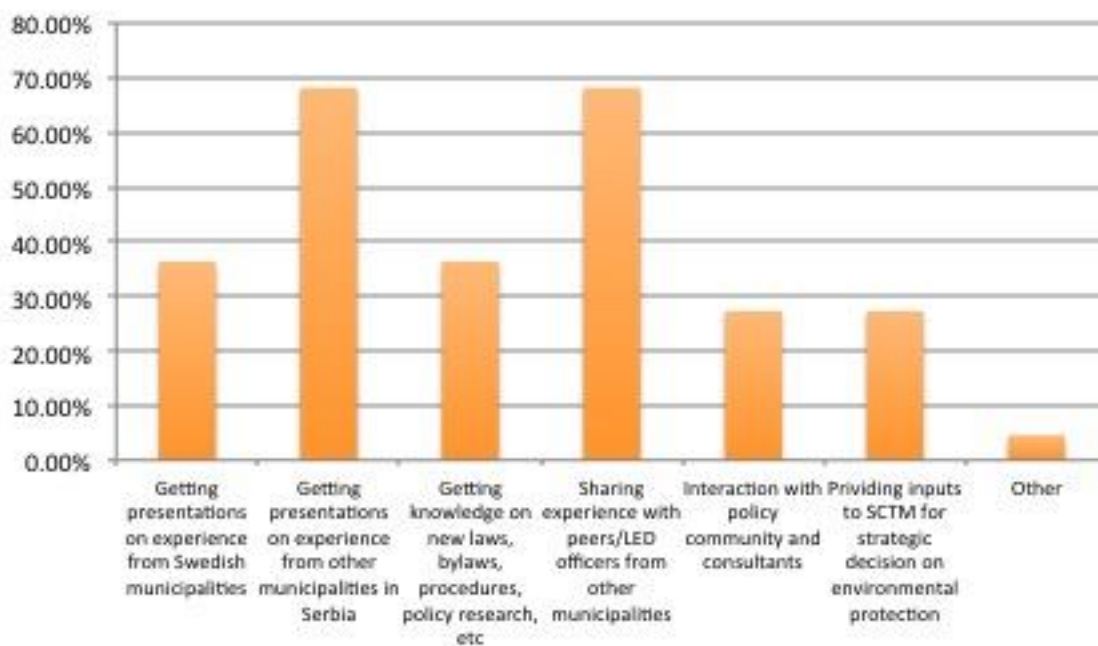
- Within the scope of the Programme activities two types of networks have been created: Network of Heads of Municipal Administrations; and the Local Economic Development Network (LED Network). Both networks have regular meetings, usually 2-3 times a year.
- The Programme has supported the development of a database on the business climate at the local level. This is a unique database in Serbia that has collected important data on well-defined indicators related to business environment at the local level.
- With the objective to establish sustainable and institutional cooperation between public and private sector at the local level, SCTM carried out a research on existing practices of such cooperation models in Serbia, created a guidelines how to establish effective business council at the local level and selected five pilot municipalities where business councils will be established with the technical assistance received through the Programme.

LED Network gathers civil servants from cities and municipalities in Serbia that works in the field of local economic development, including issues related to creation of a favourable business environment. There is a similar network established by the National Alliance for Local Economic Development (NALED), a member-based

NGO that gathers public and private actors including 86 municipalities, called the Network of LED professionals. Nevertheless, these two networks have different settings since the SCTMs' LED Network is primarily focused on advancing capacities of LSG to work on business enabling environment, while the NALEDs' Network gives more attention to cooperation between public and private actors.

The majority of LSG representatives that participated in the survey consider that their participation at the LED Network is useful for their work (95.5%). Sharing experience between municipal LED professionals and getting case studies and best practices are seen as the most beneficial contributions from participation in the LED Network (see Chart below). Besides, 72.3% of respondents claimed a positive influence of the LED Network on advancing the capacity of human resources within LSG.

Chart 6: What you consider as the most useful benefit from the LED Network meetings (choose up to 3 options)?



Source: Results of the Survey on Environmental Protection

Nevertheless, interaction during the LED Network meetings were not structured since it is left up to participants to approach each other and discuss about issues of mutual concern. Therefore, interaction between participants will be much more effective if it is organised within small (thematic) panels.²³ As already planned by SCTM, interac-

²³ Using various interaction tools that enhance communication between participants

tion between LED officers should also be enhanced through online forum discussions.

LSGs also participated in a business database, either with the process of defining indicators or with collecting the required data and sending it to SCTM. Although the database is not finished yet since all collected data should be presented in a systematic way, there are examples where LSGs or public institutions, as well as NGOs, used the database in the process of attracting foreign direct investments or creating evidence-based policy. However, the real benefit of the database will be once it becomes publicly available, either on the SCTM website or on other portals.

As mentioned before, SCTM has worked a lot on establishing institutional mechanisms for cooperation between LSGs and business community at the local level. Although this process had not been completed when the evaluation mission was carried out, there is a positive trajectory of outputs which can lead us to believe that the Programme will succeed in creating sustainable Business Councils within five selected (pilot) LSGs. SCTM approached this issue carefully and systematically, working first on the assessment of the current mechanisms for cooperation between LSGs and private sector, and by writing a policy paper with recommendation on how to establish the Business Council. It was an appropriate approach since there are no prompt solutions when it comes to full-fledged cooperation between LSGs and private sector and, since there are a lot of animosities between them.

4.2.5 Internal Capacity

The final component of the Programme focuses on advancing the capacity of SCTM and their members through enhancing their ability to generate initiatives, ownership and buy-in of development activities on local level, as well as strengthening institutional and organisational capacity and financial sustainability of SCTM.

The main achievements within this component include the development of a strategic plan (2014-2017) which has enhanced SCTM understanding of their role and what the organisation intends to achieve the coming years. Also, the perspective of the new strategic plan has shifted to becoming much more member-oriented then focused on the development of SCTM itself. Furthermore, the strategic plans have also been transformed into different action plans which indicate that SCTM also has started to think about not only what to do but also how to do it.²⁴

²⁴ The communication strategy including several substrategies (online communication, crisis communication are examples on how the strategic plan is put into practice.

The idea is that the development of strategic plan will contribute to the strengthening of SCTM's institutional and organisational capacity during 2014.

Although the current strategic plan is a clear step forward in comparison to the preceding plan it is rather complex. For example, the strategic plan contains 5 principles, 18 strategic goals and 4 strategic courses of actions, with some overlapping in-between. Besides, the 18 overall goals are not prioritised well, and include rather specific sub-goals/indicators not allowing for flexibility to deal with unforeseen changes the context (e.g. political changes or for example the flooding which most likely will affect the priorities for some of the members the coming years).

According to internal SCTM and SALAR sources there have been on-going internal discussions about a future SCTM role as an employers' organization, like the model of SALAR, which represents the Swedish LSGs in negotiations with the trade unions representing the personnel.

The programme has also supported a development of a communication strategy that include segments for online communications, crisis communication and similar. The communication strategy has, according to our findings, to some extent increased the visibility of SCTM, both towards its members and key partners as well as the general public.

4.3 EFFICIENCY OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUPPORT

4.3.1 The cooperation between SALAR and SCTM

According to our observations and interviews with staff at both SALAR and SCTM, the partnership between the two is to a large extent perceived as cooperation between peers and as being built on trust. Although it has not been possible to make a detailed assessment of all the management aspects, the cooperation is generally characterised by the following features (all essential for the efficiency of the implementation of the programme);

- According to our interviews and discussions with the key staff there is generally an open, frank and honest communication between the partners on all levels of the partnership, i.e. top management, programme managers and between the component coordinators. Also the municipal cluster co-operation is generally characterised by the same traits. For instance the programme managers and component coordinators have regular contacts (sometimes many times a day) and discussions with their counterparts on all sorts of issues that come up during the implementation of the programme.
- The SCTM leadership is, according to our findings, in the driving seat and clearly understanding the needs and possible room to manoeuvre in the

Serbian (highly political and volatile) context. According to our findings the programme management has in general been able to formulate the needs and challenges of the organisation and how SALAR could assist in meeting these challenges. According to discussions with programme management at both SCTM and SALAR the division of roles and responsibility has been clear and appropriate. SCTM is the main beneficiary and implementer of project activities whereas SALAR's (with assistance of SKL International) role has been to provide new concepts and methods based on the demands of the organisations. Furthermore, SALAR has through its network within the organisation and among Swedish municipalities, as well as internationally, possibilities to identify key experts having the specific competencies and experiences geared towards local governments and federations of municipalities.

- The narrative reporting to Sida is generally done in cooperation between the partners. Conclusions on progress are agreed in annual and semi-annual planning workshops where all component coordinators are involved. However according to our findings the results framework (that should ideally be a common platform for the discussion between the partners) is not fully understood by all key staff of SCTM (see also below). Hence, SALAR has taken on a key role elaborating and coordinating the narrative reports to Sida.

4.4.3 Efficiency of working methods of trainings and seminars

According to interviews with participants at activities performed by the SCTM, most of the meetings consist of presentations in plenum and then questions and answers. According to the interviews and survey there are more efficient methodologies to exchange ideas and capacitate staff and members. Some of our informants claim that the traditional way of having a presentation with questions in plenum makes the same group of people (middle aged often men) take a leading role in the discussions, not allowing for other perspectives to emerge.

Furthermore, as mentioned above SCTM has contracted over 90 consultants within the programme. Many of them have been involved in producing a large number of outputs in the form of databases, studies, policy documents, strategies and other working tools/manuals. Yet, according to our interviews with key staff at SCTM the next step on *who* will use the information and *how* appears in in some cases to be rather unclear, as expressed in interviews SCTM staff.

The municipality clusters

The main activities performed in the municipal clusters have been study visits to Sweden and vice versa. The study visits to Sweden have according to both Swedish and Serbian participants been rather helpful and have as mentioned above given many new ideas on how to deal with various issues.

The Serbian counterparts have visited the three Swedish municipalities 2-3 times and the Swedish partners visited Serbia 1-2 times. According to the Swedish municipalities the study visits to Serbia, during which the Serbian counterpart is responsible for organising the study visits, tend to be less results oriented, without clear goals for how the study visits will benefit the cooperation.

Another issue that has been brought up by the Swedish partners is that they have low understanding of how their municipal cooperation projects fits into the bigger picture, i.e. the partnership programme as such and the overall aim with partnership between SCTM and SALAR

Also, the bureaucracy within the Serbian municipalities have sometimes made it difficult for civil servants to have direct contact, slowing down the process with fewer exchange of experiences as a result

4.3.2 The relation between costs and time spent

SALAR (through SKL international as explained above) is allocating approximately 14 days per month on administration and technical support of the programme. The Swedish component coordinator has, according to the budget, been allocated 2 days/months while the Swedish programme manager has 4 days/months for this programme.

For the project coordinator and programme managers SCTM has about 5-6 full term employed, i.e. about 100-120 man days are spent per month on managing and implementing the project. The programme manager works full time managing activities within the programme.

Additionally, SALAR has used about 20 external experts for the programme and about 10 persons working in municipalities.²⁵ SCTM has used about 95 different experts (from SALAR and external Serbian consultants) so far in the programme.²⁶ Naturally, as main implementers of the programme activities, the great majority of the time spent on this programme has been allocated by SCTM staff and Serbian experts.

²⁵ The costs for the external experts are between SEK 5000-8000/day (EUR 550-880) all taxes included. SKL-International project managers and coordinators are, as a consultancy company, paid rates which are standard within the Swedish consultancy market.

²⁶ They are paid on average EUR 150/ day included taxes. The average cost per day for Swedish experts are about 4-6 times higher than for the Serbian experts.

From efficiency perspective, when Swedish consultants are hired as experts costs of the training sessions, normally becomes rather high putting pressure that activities are performed efficiently.²⁷ According to both SCTM and SALAR, the limited time allocated (for Swedish experts) has made SALAR and SCTM to develop routines for how external experts are engaged in the programme. For example are terms of references always elaborated for each consultancy mission clarifying the expectations and the time allocated. Also, according to SALAR most of the external experts and component coordinators have rather good knowledge about the context or/and needs of authorities such as SCTM and some experts also claim they work more than time allocated in the budget.

However, according to interviews with Swedish experts there is some room for improvement. Some of the Swedish experts stated that if the planning and preparation by the Serbian counterpart would be better, the efficiency of the trainings and other activities could be further improved.

Efficiency of implementing activities is also about making prioritisations in relation to costs. Activities promoting gender equality issues have been prioritised in the budget for input. However according to several informants, gender issues have not been a priority by the top management of SCTM, which in turn has led to a lower level of efficiency (than could be expected) within this particular thematic area. According to our informants there are several examples where gender equality issues have not been properly prioritised. In regards, for example, to the 2 day internal training session that was planned to take place early 2013, only 2 persons participated in the full training session since many of the key staff instead had to attend another meeting called by the top management. Also, other training sessions, e.g. on leadership and strategic planning which really requires the presence of the key staff to be efficient and effective (at least some part of the training) have in some cases had very few participants.

4.3.3 Follow up and reporting of results framework

The results framework of the project was developed with assistance of external consultants and follows a model where outcomes are separated into three levels.

First, 15 long term outcomes are divided among the different components. These long term outcomes are mainly about changes for the beneficiaries and stakeholders outside the sphere of control of the programme as such.

²⁷ The cost per day for SALAR is roughly 10 times higher than the cost per day for SCTM.

The second level of outcomes (which constitute the main focus of the programme) consists of 34 outcomes which mainly refer changes that are a “consequence of new methods, tools and strategies elaborated within the framework of the programme”. It is, for example, on this level where SALAR and SCTM focusing their reporting to the financier.

Furthermore, in the results framework the inception report, there are an additional 47 short term outcomes related to 55 outputs of the programme.

One overall advantage of a results framework and the introduction of a RBM system , according to several of SCTM staff, have been that staff now are focused more on what change they like to see rather than just carrying out activities. Also the discussions and reports of the last two years s have been more focused on what has been achieved (outcomes) rather than what has been done (activities). It is therefore likely that the introduction of RBM has somewhat increased the efficiency of the implementation in comparison to previous phases. Also, this way of thinking has also affected the SCTM work with their own strategic plan that has been inspired by RBM principles.

Still, the current results framework as such is perceived as overly complicated and not fully understood by the some of the key staff SCTM. It has for example been mentioned that outcomes should be fewer and more focused; some key expected outcomes would require clearer (and preferably) quantifiable indicators. As in most similar development cooperation projects, progress in the current results framework is to a rather high extent based on judgements of the implementing partners.

4.4 SUSTAINABILITY OF THE ORGANISATION AND RESULTS

In general SCTM has, according to all our interlocutors, significantly advanced in the last decade, which can largely be attributed to Sida support dating back to 2003. As mentioned above, during the last 15 years, SCTM staff has increased from about 5 to 52 fully employed today.

SCTM is in general known for provision of good quality services to its members, and represents a reliable partner to national (and provincial) government. SCTM is also perceived as a reliable institution among multilateral and bilateral development agencies active in Serbia.

The issue of financial and organisational long term sustainability has been discussed for many years and was one of the hot topics during the last phase of the Swedish support that was channelled through UNDP. One of the expected outcomes in this project is also that SCTM becomes “increasingly financially self-sustainable” and

SCTM and Swedish experts have had lengthy discussions on how to increase the own funding of the organisation.

Although members to a large extent pay their membership fees to SCTM as shown above, only about ¼ of the revenues derive from the members, the rest are incomes from international donors. For many years (in previous phases) and also within this programme, there have been many discussions with staff in SCTM and SALAR on the establishment of an SCTM daughter company and exposure to other forms of income-generating activities at SALAR. However, so far no concrete results have come out from these discussions. SCTM claim that they need more time to review and discuss options with its members. Although considered as a key issue for the future financial sustainability of SCTM, for unclear reasons, it has been left out in the new strategic plan.

The sustainability of results is difficult to assess at this point. Nevertheless, according to all our interviews with key staff at SCTM, the many contact points with SALAR has led to a considerable/ change in mind-set both among civil servants and politicians on the magnitude of change and reform that has to be done (also) on the local level in order for Serbia to become members of EU. It should also be underscored that many results are rather vulnerable, particularly within the gender component and some results also very much depend on the political winds that are currently blowing in the country.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

This section contains two parts. Based on findings the first part is focused on conclusions and recommendations directed towards SCTM and SALAR to be implemented in the last year of the programme, i.e. until June 2015. The second part we provide some initial ideas on how the support to local governments could be developed after the contract between Sida, SALAR and SCTM has been concluded. These ideas are mainly based on: a) current political, social and economic context in Serbia, b) findings and conclusions from the cooperation between SALAR and SCTM as well as the c) current Swedish strategy to Western Balkans (2014-2020). Needless to say, these preliminary ideas need to be further discussed and assessed before any decisions are taken.

5.1 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS DIRECTED TOWARDS SCTM AND SALAR

The cooperation between SCTM and SALAR is based on trust and is generally efficiently implemented

As a general rule, an honest and open communication and working relation is the best prescription to achieve efficient use of funds. Also an adequate level of trust between partners is often an indispensable component of efficient implementation of any development project.

One overall conclusion of this cooperation is that the SALAR and SCTM cooperation has been a peer-to-peer partnership based on trust at the top level of the organisations as well as on programme management level. As mentioned in the report the main reasons for this is that the sister organisations speak the “same language” and understand each other better than what would be the case with other types of partners. Also, the fact that the Swedish partners have their own experiences of EU accession and experiences of how to relate with EU institutions gives this partnership a particular legitimacy. Furthermore, as stated in the findings, the regular (informal) contacts and discussions between the partners on both big and small issues make it a key factor for a responsible and efficient programme management.

Another conclusion is that programme management has created a clear ownership within SCTM and also has enabled SALAR to provide expert support on specific challenges within SCTM and Serbian municipalities. Also the programme management (particularly on the SALAR side) has been conducted in a flexible way, taking into account risks and changes in the context. Hence, the map (i.e. strategies) to reach the goal has in several cases been changed according to the context and challenges the programme have faced rather than opposite (i.e. trying to match the realities to the

map). These are signs that the programme management has a mature way in dealing with risks and contextual factors (as well as inherent challenges of Results Based Management) that most programme managers are facing in development programmes.

Yet some work methods on capacity development could be more efficient.

Although we can conclude that the cooperation largely is carried out in an efficient way there is room for improvements when it comes to efficiency of implementing trainings and seminars. As shown above, the methodology is rather traditional. We **recommend** that SCTM/SALAR, with assistance of SKL-International (or other experts), try to apply more innovative methodologies for capacity development. More specifically, using tools that improve exchanges of experiences could for example be more goal oriented discussions in smaller groups.²⁸ This will most likely be perceived as more inclusive, and give more people the chance to give their input to different processes.

The relevance of the Swedish financed Programme is high, but for the last year of implementation it needs to more focused on some key outcomes

One overall conclusion of this review is that the programme has very clearly put EU accession as top priority for SCTM the coming years. Although the EU accession agenda has been promoted for many years, the involvement of SALAR and the activities carried out together have further emphasised the importance of the EU accession agenda overriding all of the activities. We can also conclude that the Sida funded Programme is in line with the current strategic plan.

Overall, as shown in the report, this Programme has led to and is about to lead to many interesting and rather important results. Yes, as also mentioned about 1/3 of the medium-term outcomes have been achieved so far. Most of them relate to short-term effects of implementing new strategies, work methods and tools etc. However 2/3 of the expected outcomes are still to be achieved. Understandably and not surprisingly the more long-term effects on the beneficiaries or/and stakeholders have not been achieved 2 years of project implementation.

²⁸ There are many types of methods to use to create more inclusive process, for example world café, speed dating, ability spotting, 4 corners, Delfi etc.

The programme is a very large and complex intervention, encompassing many different sorts of activities involving several hundred civil servants and politicians at SCTM and at LSG.

Since the Programme is so broad and include numerous different expected outcomes within each component area, we **recommend** that SCTM and SALAR make clear priorities on which outcomes are to be specifically targeted (1-2) during the last year within each component. We further **recommend** that the programme should focus more on strategic results which have direct effect for their beneficiaries (e.g. the members of SCTM) or/and other stakeholders (e.g. strategic functions in the central governments). Although somewhat outside the current results framework another option could be to divide the results into the three main strategies²⁹ mentioned in the section 2 and identify few easy accessible (2-3) indicators for each of the five different components.

Clarifying the links between what is done in components and how it will support the programme to contribute to the overall aim will help SCTM and SALAR to make the prioritisations as well as report to Sida and other stakeholders. The principle of “more for more and less for less” could be applied making prioritisations, i.e. more resources on areas that have been successful and where the likelihood for sustainable change are large and less or no resources where the expectations for changes are less. The updated list of priorities in the last year of the Programme of course needs be discussed also with the financier of the programme.

Some of the components need clearer support from the top leadership of the SCTM

As with many organisations, priorities of SCTM reflect the minds of its leaders. Hence, one conclusion of this review is that both effectiveness and efficiency for SCTM activities, to a large extent, coincide with the support from the top management. For example, within a sector such as EU accession, promoting the interests of LSGs towards the central governments should be promoted as there is clear support and thus also value for money. In other thematic sectors such as gender and internal capacity development, the interest could preferably higher among the top management. The presence of the top management (at least to some parts of key trainings or workshops) is essential since it gives further legitimacy and priority to these particularly goals. The evaluation mission could confirm from various sources that although

²⁹ Enhance the capacities of the local governments b) Articulate the needs of the municipality vis-à-vis the central government/public; and c) Strengthen the capacity of SCTM to perform its role as channel between the state and the municipalities

the policies have been formally approved, gender equality is not considered as a top priority issue within SCTM.

Furthermore, given the relative high costs of using international experts, it is essential that different types of study visits and training are more clearly endorsed by top management as they are key activities of the Programme.

This also applies at the local level. There is a need for stronger support of local authorities to the Programme activities, especially in the field of gender equality.

Although gender equality issues are currently not prioritised politically in Serbia, SCTM has not taken full advantage of using the gender equality acquis as leverage to promote the issues

Although about 15-20 % of the total budget has been invested into gender equality, the results that have been achieved are rather vulnerable. One overall conclusion is there is currently a low understanding in the organisation of how a gender perspective is applicable. A better understanding would provide better insight to how to achieve the overall goals and strategies of the municipal development/services. Based on interviews and contextual understanding of Serbia, one conclusion is that gender equality is understood by particularly the older generation as a discrimination issue, and mostly related to equal laws, etc. Although we understand that a more active and challenging approach to gender issues also evokes resistance at SCTM itself and in the municipalities, there is an urgent need for a more manifest and distinct support for gender at local decision making levels and also within the SCTM.

As in many other candidate countries, gender equality has not been a prioritised issue in Serbia. The “*Acquis Communautaire*” comprising all Treaties of the European Union to be implemented as a full EU member, also covers equal opportunity and equal treatment legislation. It is especially strong on employment. In order to reach full membership EU candidate states are therefore also obliged to adopt the EU Acquis on gender equality. The Equal Opportunity Acquis basically requests EU candidate countries to adopt “the existing body of Treaty provisions, directives, and European Court of Justice Decisions on equal pay, equal treatment, and maternity and parental leave”.

One conclusion in this review is that the programme has not fully taken advantage of using the gender equality Acquis as entry point in the Gender equality policy paper, the Acquis is the law on which the mandate and responsibility of the municipalities in relation to national gender equality laws lays. A large number of municipalities in the EU member states have endorsed a gender strategy (CEMR), SCTM has started to use this as a base for developing their own gender action plan, and this is very relevant and should be further strengthened.

We therefore **recommend** that SCTM and SKL in a more distinct way use the gender equality Acquis and CEMR as an entry points and leverages to connect gender work to overall municipality reform, and obligations. In addition, experience of introducing

gender perspectives in organisations, shows that using practical examples, based on organisational context issues provides a useful bases for discussing and concertizing what gender perspective can add in better decision making material, new information and solutions to general development. Other donors have supported gender analytical work at municipal level (e.g. UN Women .) for example in Voivodina, cooperating with them and also using their analytical work can be useful in discussing the relevance of gender equality in relation to municipality services, and by so building commitment and understanding of the relevance of gender perspectives on municipality services. We also suggest that instead of working with gender equality as a separate component, to integrate a specific gender perspective into other main topics in a more pragmatic way. Not treating it as a separate issue, instead describing what issues to work with and letting them be part of the work under other areas.

The clusters of Swedish –Serbian municipalities have had a tough start and need more support from experts on development

The idea of including Swedish municipalities in this programme is generally interesting and gives some real flesh to the programme as such. Yet, the cost of their involvement is considerable and constitutes about 18% of the total SALAR budget.

However, the municipalities are not specialists in development and Swedish municipalities have some but limited experience to working in a different cultural context. Implementing Sida support often requires that the support should be designed according to the policies and modalities of Swedish development cooperation. Nevertheless, as clearly shown in the survey, the cooperation has been very much appreciated showing leading to concrete achievements at the municipality level.

One conclusion is that municipal clusters have been perceived (at least by the Swedish and Serbian municipalities) as separate projects within the programme. The municipalities have been told and read about the other components but their work has not been integrated in other components and not so much even in other activities of the environmental component.

We recommend that SALAR and SCTM support the involved municipalities on *how* to make the municipal cooperation more efficient, for example when carrying out study visits. Hence, we **recommend** that SCTM and SALAR more clearly explain to both Serbian and Swedish LSGs how their cooperation fits into the bigger picture and give concrete advice on how to organise an efficient results oriented study visits. We also, **recommend** that SCTM and SALAR in a systematic way collect lessons learnt from municipal cooperation to be included the learning in future relations.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS AND PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS POST 2015

In comparison with the countries joining the EU during mid-00 (e.g. Romania and Bulgaria), the requirements for Serbia (such it was also for Croatia) are much stricter. This means for example that the regulations (Acquis) need to be implemented before

membership could be accepted (it is thus not good enough that the laws have been adopted).

According to both external experts and representatives from the central government, there is still a rather low knowledge level about the needs and challenges for the Local Governments in this process, i.e. many of key stakeholders understand that the accession process will be challenging for the local level but very few decision makers have an overview and knowledge of what will be the actual and concrete consequences. The impact analysis which SCTM started to carry out in some key sectors is in this sense a very important tool to reveal the true challenges.

If the EU-accession goes according to plans (and Serbia becomes a member of EU 2020), the pressure and strain on municipalities will be huge in the coming years. Particularly the years 2016-2019 will be crucial in this respect. The overall relevance of this project is hence extremely high and will most likely increase the coming years. Although support to SCTM is not an end in itself, our overall conclusion is that SCTM or equivalent organisations will be even more crucial the coming years to prepare and capacitate local governments for the EU accession process. One underlying assumption of the Swedish support to all Western Balkan countries including Serbia is that the EU accession continues.

Given that the EU -accession continues according to plans we **recommend** that Sida and Embassy of Sweden consider the continuation of support to SCTM and local governments to prepare for the EU accession. The Swedish strategy to the Balkan region opens also up for support to local government sector being key players in the EU accession process.

Regardless of the fact that SCTM has significant results in increasing their internal capacity, which can largely be ascribed to this and previous Sida interventions, there is a need to continue with investments in human resources, both at managerial and technical level. Nevertheless, Serbia is a country under economic and political transformation with unfinished process of state building, where SCTM has an important role to play. All surveys and interviews with LSGs and external actors have shown that SCTM should continue working on improvement of their technical knowledge on specific issues, including topics covered by this project (EU integration, environmental protection, and business climate and gender equality). Therefore continuous advancement of SCTM capacity is both necessary and desirable.

SCTM will most likely, as a natural hub of LSGs, have a key role in this process also after the Swedish support has ended. Although enhanced competencies and capacity of local governments also is a responsibility of the central government, it is not unlikely that SCTM at least, temporarily and partly will take on more of an active role training of civil servants and politicians on the changes that need to be done in order to implement the relevant acquis.

Swedish experiences needs to be complemented with more recent experiences of EU accession

This programme has shown that Swedish experiences of running a sustainable association/federation for local authorities are still valid in the Western Balkans. However, considering that Sweden became member of EU in 1995 the direct experiences of challenges for the municipalities are starting to become somewhat obsolete. In the future SCTM and particularly the LSG themselves need to be more exposed by more recent experiences from for example, Croatia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria or Romania, and perhaps the Baltic countries.

As described above, per working hour, the cost for involving a Swedish partner is rather high. Hence, in order to be justified it really needs the Swedish support to bring an added value to the programme.

Sida has over the last years involved and recruited more expertise also from the region; however it appears to still be difficult to find the adequate resources in neighbouring countries that could work and manage a development programme according to Sida standards. Also SCTM claims that the Swedish experiences are relevant and there are still many things to learn from both the work of the municipalities and SALAR itself.

Yet, if Sida decide to carry on supporting in accordance with the current set-up we **recommend** that Sida further investigate how to make use of the Swedish expertise in the best possible way. Although there are risks (i.e. that the programme becomes even more complex) to formally involve an additional partner, we **recommend** that Sida and the implementing partners to consider to more systematically involving other associations for local authorities from neighbouring countries. As a general rule the Swedish experiences and competencies should be used mainly when it clearly brings added value (and is cost efficient).

Financial sustainability of the organisation will be a crucial issue the coming years

If the challenges of the municipalities are taken seriously, most likely EU (under IPA II) and perhaps other donors will consider SCTM as one of the key players for the EU accession process which is not unlikely to lead to increased external funding. In fact one risk that both Sida and SCTM already are aware of, is that SCTM risks expanding too much the coming years and will have difficulties to find its proper/true size and functions after becoming members of the EU.

Yet in the long run financial sustainability of the SCTM will be a key issue and absolutely crucial for the both SCTM and for the donors that are funding the organisation. Even now, SCTM is grossly over dimensioned in relation to the capacity of the members to finance.

As a consequence, the legitimacy of the SCTM is very much depended on that they provide services dependent on donors' funding. Most likely, the members would not

pay their membership fee to such extent if it would not be for the services they get (with donors funds).

This could then be a vicious circle where new funds could hurt the sustainability of the SCTM in the long run. There is a huge risk that the members start to consider the services provided by SCTM as “free of charge” since someone else is paying which will create more difficult problems further ahead. Therefore it is important that SCTM start to foster a culture where the members are paying at least symbolic fees for the services and when the economy grows stronger steadily increase the charges.

If SCTM temporally take on or is given a more active role in the training of civil servants on the implementation of the EU legislation, it will be crucial to separate between the *core functions* of the SCTM and activities which specifically are about capacity building of civil servants within LSG. Preferable these activities should be managed by a temporal flexible organisation (e.g. consultancy company) that easily could grow and shrink (or even be dismantled) according to the demands and needs.

6 Annexes

6.1 ANNEX 1 – TERMS OF REFERENCE

6.1.1 Background

Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM) is the national association of local self-governance units in Serbia. Founded in 1953, SCTM is an organization dedicated to developing local self-government, advocating the interests of local authorities, strengthening their capacities to provide services to citizens and their mutual cooperation. As defined in the strategic plan for the period 2011-2013, vision of SCTM is “institutionally strong and viable association of towns and municipalities that contributes to a reasonable and effective local self-government in democratic and European Serbia”. SCTM promotes dialogue between local and central government, supports international cooperation of towns and municipalities and serves as a key point in flow of information on issues of importance to local self-government.

Sweden started to support SCTM back in 2003. Our previous cooperation was divided in two phases and focused on capacity building of SCTM, and more specifically its Secretariat. During the first phase, Sweden supported establishment of SCTM’s training centre as well number of capacity building activities at the local level. Building on positive experiences and significant achievements of the first phase, a new project was launched in autumn 2006 with the main focus on internal reorganization and capacity building of SCTM, drafting of several strategic documents and implementation of certain components of the Public Administration Reform Strategy at the local level. This project was finalized in July 2010. Towards the end of the project, a monitoring mission was commissioned by Sida with the main task to assess achievements of project goals and outcomes and to provide forward-looking perspective and give recommendations on possible continued support. Monitoring mission concluded that previous phases of Swedish support have contributed to SCTM’s recognition as professional, well organized and representative association of local governments. Within the second phase of support, following key outcomes have been reached: 1) Capacities of SCTM strengthened, new functions developed and institutionalized and 2) through capacity development assessment and specific training programs, several components of the Serbian Public Administration Reform Strategy were implemented (within the area of decentralization). The monitoring mission proposed continued support to the SCTM (third phase) that would be more focused on strengthening the local governance sector in terms of Serbia’s EU accession process. Starting from these proposals and the overall positive experience from previous two phases, Sida responded positively on SCTM’s initiative to develop a project proposal for the new phase that would contribute to Serbia’s EU approximation through stronger democracy on local level and equitable and sustainable development within the local governance sector. The SCTM proposed new phase to be implemented in partnership with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) mostly because

of in-house knowledge and competences and its own experiences from Sweden's accession into the EU. Extensive discussions between partner organizations (SCTM and SALAR) resulted in a project proposal that was presented to Sida in autumn 2011.

Following results were envisaged in the project proposal:

- 1) Strengthened involvement of local self-governments (and capacity of SCTM to support them) in the EU integration process and raised awareness of EU integrations at the local level.
- 2) Enhanced capacities of local self-governance to implement environmental laws, establishment of Serbian Swedish partnerships on thematic cooperation to support enhanced capacities and policy dialogue of LSGs and improvement of public involvement in environment-related topics
- 3) Increased capacities of SCTM and local self-governance and increased public awareness regarding gender equality issues.
- 4) Enhanced dialogue between private sector and local self-governance regarding improvement of relevant factors which may influence business climate at local level, as well as increased awareness and capacities improved in this area both within municipalities and SCTM.
- 5) Enhanced capacities, as well as institutional, organizational and financial sustainability of SCTM.

The project was designed to last 36 months (6 months of inception period and 30 months of implementation). The overall budget amounts 32 653 250 SEK. SCTM is responsible for the implementation of project activities in Serbia whilst SALAR assists in knowledge transfer, organization of 'external activities' such as study tours and internships.

The implementation of the project started in December 2011 after signing of agreements with SCTM and SALAR respectively. First six months of the project's activity period were used for development of detailed activity plans, setting the implementation structure, adjustments of the results matrix and clarifications in terms of division of roles and responsibilities – fine-tuning of the management model. Towards the end of the Inception Phase, general elections took place in Serbia (May 2012). Elections were then followed up by number of 'adjustments' of coalitions at the municipal level (in order to make them follow 'pattern' agreed at the level of the Republic). This had rather negative effects on the functioning of local governance and pace of implementation of activities (regular work of municipalities and project activities). First Annual Progress Report was submitted to Sida in January 2013. Having in mind above mentioned circumstances, first of all the fact that it actually covered period of six months of effective implementation (after the finalization of the inception phase), project partners were able to report only at the level of outputs and short-term outcomes. At the Annual Review Meeting all three partners concluded that the implementation mechanism functions well and that time during the first year was spent on analyses, preparations, building and strengthening of networks and beginning of implementation of activities that were ready to be launched.

The Second Annual Progress Report provides information on significant progress of the project during 2013. Large number of short-term objectives has been achieved in all five project components. SCTM and SALAR report that 'all components have

progressed well towards reaching medium-term objectives whereby approximately 1/3 of the medium term objectives have been reached and many more are well on their way to achievement'. Sida's comments on the report but also overall progress of the project were very positive. As the project enters into its final (third) year of project implementation and having in mind that already two cycles of elections took place during its activity period (May 2012 and March 2014) a need and possibility of extending the project (no-cost extension) was discussed during the Annual Meeting. SCTM and SALAR proposed a period of additional six months to be approved in order to allow sufficient time for the implementation of all activities and reaching sustainable results. In principle, Sida agreed with this proposal, final decision to be taken after receiving official request and justifications from agreement partners.

At the beginning of the cooperation, all three parties have agreed that an **In-Depth Review** of the project shall be carried out during 2013. The Review shall summarize obtained and expected results in relation to the results matrix, and contain an analysis of any deviation there from. Having in mind the overall development of the project, positive assessments of performance of project partners as well as broader context (political processes, turmoil) Sida's view was that the in-depth review should be carried out in the final year of project implementation so the purpose would be two-fold: 1) assessment of the progress and 2) forward looking approach - presenting recommendations to Sida regarding needs and modalities for possible future support (after the finalization of this contribution).

6.1.2 Purpose and Objective of the Review

Purpose of the review is to safeguard the use of Swedish Government funding and ensure efficient implementation of the project. The Assignment is expected to assess progress towards projected outputs and outcomes and probability of reaching sustainable results once the project is finalized.

The review has following main objectives:

- Provide an in-depth assessment of the achievements of the project results as outlined through the inception report.
- Analyse relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. Special emphasis shall be put on project's relevance for Serbia's EU accession and the ongoing negotiations process.
- Evaluate sustainability of outputs and outcomes reached so far and give recommendations regarding possible improvements to be incorporated in the last year of project implementation (providing that the no-cost extension is approved, the project will last until the end of June 2015).
- Based on the assessment of project achievements, appraisal of SCTM's capacities and assessment of needs that will arise from and during the EU negotiation process, give recommendations to Sida on needs and possible ways and areas of future cooperation with the association.

6.1.3 Scope and Delimitations

The review mission shall collect and analyse reports and documents with the main focus on project documentation and reports produced by SCTM and SALAR. The consultant is expected to visit Belgrade to discuss the project with the representatives

of the SCTM, selected municipalities, SALAR (interviews with SALAR representatives may also be organized in Stockholm) and Embassy of Sweden. Meetings and interviews shall cover other stakeholders such as other donors and international organizations (EU, SDC/SECO, GIZ), Serbian organizations and institutions (e.g. Gender Equality Directorate, Serbian European Integration Office). The information gathered and analysed shall cover:

- Relevance of the project vis-à-vis the needs and priorities of the local governance in Serbia, with the main focus on EU integrations.
- Organizational aspects and institutional development within SCTM.
- Achievements as compared to overall and annual targets.
- Transfer of knowledge and development of competence within SCTM.
- Efficiency and cost effectiveness – are there more cost effective methods of achieving the same results? Could the same results be produced with smaller amounts of inputs/resources or could the same input/resources produce a larger output?
- The sustainability of project outputs and outcomes, both from an organizational and financial perspective.
- Assess the programme management model with emphasis on its effectiveness and efficiency.
- The degree to which extent the project has taken into consideration possible external and internal risks. What efforts are being made to minimize the effect of unforeseen risks that have arisen during implementation?

6.1.4 Organisation, Management and Stakeholders

SCTM gathers all cities and municipalities in Serbia – it is a member-based organization. The highest SCTM body is the *Assembly*, comprising representatives of all towns and municipalities. The Assembly sits at least once a year and makes major decisions relevant to the SCTM. The Assembly elects SCTM bodies and defines strategic objectives and priority tasks of the organisation. The *Presidency* is the executive body that manages the SCTM between two sessions of the Assembly. It consists of 24 members – representatives of towns and municipalities elected at the Assembly and the SCTM Secretary General, who is ex officio a member of the Presidency. SCTM has eight *policy committees* covering different areas of importance for the local self-government – economic development, finance and public property; communal service and energy; education, culture, youth and sport; system of local self-government; urban planning, housing and construction; health care and social policy; environment and emergency management. The committees discuss problems in the areas under their competence, give opinions and suggest proposals aimed at improving the legal framework and conditions in respective areas they are in charge of.

SALAR represents all of Sweden's 290 Municipalities, 18 County Councils and two Regions. The Association strives to promote and strengthen local self-government and the development of regional and local democracy. SALAR advocates the interests of its members and offers them support and services. It raises issues, acts vigorously and works to shape public opinion. Its mission is to provide Municipalities and County Councils with better conditions for local and regional self-government, and its vision is to develop the welfare services and quality of life. SALAR has established forums and work methods that develop the commitment, interest and participation of its members and the general public with respect to a wide range of social issues.

Project is implemented in partnership between two sister organizations. After assessing possible implementation modalities Sida, in consultation with SCTM and SALAR, concluded that the most adequate one is to have SCTM responsible for the implementation of activities in Serbia, including financial management for that part and SALAR responsible for the expert support/input, organization of study tours and training outside Serbia, internships and similar.

The Programme management model includes the following components:

- A SCTM-SALAR Joint Executive Committee (JEC) representing the co-operation partners and with joint responsibility for achievement of the overall Programme purpose and planned results.
- A Programme Management Coordination Team (PMCT) with the responsibility to coordinate the management of the Programme activities as defined in the Programme Activity plans.
- Component coordination by focal points/coordinators for the thematic areas of the Programme – through pairs of coordinators per each component nominated from both sides
- Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) providing guidance, advice and input to the Programme.

6.1.5 Approach and Methodology

When carrying out the assignment, the consultant shall be guided by objectives of the Swedish Development Cooperation Strategy and relevant SCTM's strategic documents such as SCTM's Strategic Plan, Business Plan and Roadmap for the preparation of local self-government units for the EU integration process and other policy documents. The review will use methodologies and techniques as determined by the specific needs for information required for the fulfilment of assignment objectives. Consultants are expected to analyse all relevant information sources, such as project document, reports, strategic documents produced within the project as well as documents that may provide evidence on which to form opinion. Interviews with key personnel from participating organizations, local and central government officials shall be used in collecting relevant data for the review.

6.1.6 Time Schedule

The assignment is planned to start at the beginning of May. Dates for the visit to Belgrade (one week) shall be coordinated with the Embassy in Belgrade SCTM and SALAR.

6.1.7 Reporting and Communication

Draft report shall be submitted to the Embassy of Sweden, SCTM and SALAR for comments. The report shall include an executive summary, which should be self-explanatory and should include summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations. A draft report shall be submitted within 15 days after the mission has been carried out. Within two weeks of receiving comments on the draft report, a final version of the document shall be submitted to all stakeholders – printed and electronic versions.

Contact person at the Embassy of Sweden in Belgrade is Ms. Snezana Vojcic, programme officer (snezana.vojcic@gov.se).

6.1.8 Resources

The review shall be carried out by a team consisting of two consultants. In total, 20 days are planned (per consultant) for the review.

The assignment will be offered to Sida's framework consulting company who is expected to submit a proposal and estimation of assignment costs.

6.1.9 Team Qualification

Consultants are expected to be experienced in performing evaluations and project reviews of various types. It is preferred that the consultant is familiar with implementation of policies at the local level and role of local governments in the EU accession process.

The consultant is expected to have the following skills and experiences:

- At least 5 years' experience in the monitoring and evaluation of development assistance projects and programmes.
- At least 5 years working in or with EU accession or candidate countries.
- Experience in providing technical assistance in the area of change management is preferable.
- Very good knowledge of written and spoken English.

6.1.10 References

- Strategy for Development Cooperation with Serbia, January 2009 – December 2012
- Support to Local Governance in Serbia in the EU Integration Process (Project Document)
- Inception report, July 2012
- The First Annual Progress Report, February 2013
- The Second Annual Results Progress Report, December 2013
- The EU Progress Report for Serbia 2013
- Europeanization revisited- Master thesis, January 2014
-

(Additional documents and further references shall be provided by Sida programme officer in agreement with the consultant.)

6.2 ANNEX 2 – INCEPTION REPORT

Assessment of scope of the evaluation

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the inception report is to clarify the purpose of the assignment, propose an approach to focus the in-depth review and suggest methods and concrete data collection tasks required to answer the review questions.

This inception report is based upon initial review of documentation (for a list of reviewed documents see annex 2). It is also based on introductory discussions (by telephone and Skype) with Snezana Vojsic, the responsible programme officer at the Embassy of Sweden, Vladimir Jovanovic, Program Manager at Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM), Annakarin Lindberg, responsible programme manager at SKL-International, as well as Gabriel Werner, contact person at the International Office of SALAR.

As stated in the first response to the ToR of the review, we consider this assignment to be straightforward. The inception report is therefore rather brief and covers the following sections:

- Very brief background information on the programme and the intervention logic of the project. This section also includes the main findings from other studies and evaluations.
- A brief discussion on our understanding of the scope of the assignment and the *evaluability* of the questions in the ToR.
- A proposed methodology including how we propose to collect data as well as a list of informants to be interviewed by the evaluators.
- In annexes we include a list of people that we plan to meet, a draft outline of the draft report, type of questions to different respondents and draft questions for the planned survey.

The assignment will be performed by Joakim Anger (Team Leader) and Dragisa Mijacic (Serbian Local Government Expert). The evaluation team welcomes any comments and suggestions that can improve the focus and particularly the usability of the evaluation.

BACKGROUND

Sida has supported SCTM in three phases since 2003, two completed and one on-going. Between 2003 and 2010 the Swedish support was channelled through UNDP's office in Serbia. In 2010, Sida commissioned a monitoring mission³⁰ that concluded that the Swedish support had contributed to SCTM being recognised as a professional, well organised and representative association of local governments. However, the monitoring mission also proposed that the support in a third phase would be more focused on strengthening local governance in relation to Serbia's EU accession process, and that SALAR would be a natural partner for the third phase of the support.

Thorough discussions between Sida and the partner organizations (SCTM and SALAR) resulted in a programme proposal that was presented to Sida in autumn 2011.

The following results were envisaged in the programme proposal:

- 6) Strengthened involvement of local self-governments (and capacity of SCTM to support them) in the **EU integration process** and raised awareness of EU integrations at the local level;
- 7) Enhanced capacities of local self-government to implement **environmental** laws, establishment of Serbian-Swedish partnerships on thematic cooperation to support enhanced capacities and policy dialogue of LSGs and improvement of public involvement in environment-related topics;
- 8) Increased capacities of SCTM and local self-government and increased public awareness regarding **gender equality issues**;
- 9) Enhanced dialogue between private sector and local self-governance regarding improvement of relevant factors which may influence **business climate** at local level, as well as increased awareness and capacities improved in this area both within municipalities and SCTM;
- 10) Enhanced **capacities**, as well as institutional, organizational and financial sustainability of SCTM.

The 5 projected results are divided into equivalent components (EU –accession, environmental protection, gender equality, business climate and SCTM capacity building) with two managers (one Swedish and one Serbian) responsible for implementing activities carried out within the five components.

³⁰ Monitoring the implementation of capacity development of SCTM II, SKL International, 2010

The programme was initially designed to last 36 months (6 months of inception period and 30 months of implementation). The overall budget amounts about SEK 32,6 million.

SCTM is responsible for the implementation of activities in Serbia whilst SALAR assists in knowledge transfer, organization of ‘external activities’ such as study tours and internships.

UNDERSTANDING OF THE INTENDED USE AND USERS

As a general rule, Indevelop always strives to have a utilization focused approach in our evaluations and reviews. An essential component of such approach is to understand the expectations as well as the intended use and users of the in-depth review/evaluation. In the contract between Sida and SALAR an “in-depth review should have been carried out during 2013”. In communication (e.g. minutes from annual meeting) between the parties this review is referred to as a Mid-Term Review (MTR). Yet, the postponement of the review, with less than a year left of the Programme has somewhat shifted expectations to *also* include an analysis and recommendations beyond this particular intervention.

Based on the ToR and initial interviews with key stakeholders we understand that the assignment has four main objectives/purposes:

- 5) Assessing progress towards outcomes and sustainable results as well as ensure the efficient implementation of the programme (the accountability perspective);
- 6) To make an assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and progress so far which could provide Programme Management (SCTM and SALAR) with input for the last year of implementation, i.e. analysis of whether the programme is focusing on the right issues and if they are been implemented in the right (most efficient) way (a learning perspective);
- 7) Given the current context, provide SCTM and SALAR with more long-term ideas and recommendations on how to develop their partnership. Since few independent reviews have been carried out of equivalent partnerships, SALAR and SCTM also anticipate that the review could provide lessons learnt on approaches and working methods to be used also in other partnerships;
- 8) To provide Sida with recommendations regarding needs and modalities for possible future support within local governance and possible ways and areas of future cooperation with SCTM (after finalizing this particular intervention).

Limitations

Conclusions and recommendations related to the first and second objectives will be firmly based on analysing the partnership between SCTM and SALAR and answering the questions of the ToR anchored in a contextual analysis of needs and priorities of the EU integration process, current trends of the reform process of local government and the decentralisation process in the country including the recent Swedish strategy for the Western Balkans.

For the third and fourth purposes the team will be able to provide some *initial ideas of possible future directions* of the Swedish support, as well as SCTM and SALAR's possible role and contribution in such endeavour. However, it should be underscored that a more comprehensive strategic review and needs assessment of Swedish support looking at the future within the sector of local governance, would require a more thorough analysis of the context and different types of modalities, than will be possible within the framework of this review.

UNDERSTANDING THE SCOPE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

As stated in the first proposal, in general we find the evaluation questions of the ToR to be clear and feasible to a large extent. To clarify expectations of the assignment, the objectives (in section 2) and scope and delimitations (in section 3 of the ToR) have been merged and reformulated into specific tasks. Please note that the proposed evaluation tasks have been slightly rephrased and merged to fit within the OECD/DAC³¹ criteria:

Effectiveness

- Assess the achievements of the programme results. This analysis will focus on achievements in relation to overall and annual targets. This review will cover only the third phase of the Sida financed support to SCMT, i.e. the cooperation between SCTM and SALAR (2011-2014);
- Identify and analyse the major management aspects influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives of the Project.

Relevance

- Analyse the *relevance* of the programme in relation to Serbia's EU accession and the ongoing negotiation process. The assessment of the programme will

³¹ In accordance to the framework agreement with Sida on evaluations and results framework

focus on relevance vis-à-vis the needs and priorities of the local governance in Serbia (with the main focus on EU integration).

Efficiency

- Analyse the *efficiency/cost-efficiency* of the Project, i.e. assess whether there are more cost-efficient methods of achieving the same results.
- Assess the programme management model had been cost-efficient compared to possible alternatives.

Sustainability

- Analyse the sustainability of programme outputs and outcomes from an organizational perspective;
- Analyse the sustainability of programme outputs and outcomes from an financial perspective;
- Assess whether the methods capacity development and transfer of knowledge could be considered as promoting sustainability;
- Analyse to which extent the programme has taken into consideration possible external and internal (management and organisational related) risks. Assess whether efforts have been made to minimize the effect of unforeseen risks that have arisen during implementation?

See proposed action plan in the Section 4 for further information on how these tasks will be carried out.

Relevance and evaluability of evaluation questions

EVALUABILITY: KEY CONCERNS

As pointed out in the initial proposal, the most challenging part of this assignment will be to make an adequate assessment of *effects* (on the outcome level) and of cost efficiency. Other issues in the ToR are perceived as relatively straightforward.

When assessing achievements (effectiveness)

As stated in the initial proposal assessment of effectiveness and outcomes is inherently difficult. After reviewing the programme documents we foresee three fundamental and generic challenges, the so called “effect problem”, “the attribution problem”, and “lack of proper baseline data”. The *Effect problem* refers to the difficulty to assess the counterfactual reality (what would have happened if the interventions had not been implemented). The *attribution problem* refers to the difficulty to be certain to what extent the intervention contributed to the measured changes. Most interventions do not have clear-cut *baseline data* (reference situation) that makes it rather challenging to measure change and carry out an outcome or impact assessment. Yet, some guidance baseline data would be accessible, the survey that SCTM carried out in 2010 on topics survey to topics of EU, environmental protection and gender equality. Also, some of the expected and reported outcomes of the Program are, as in many capacity development projects, based on judgment of the programme partners. Evidence or/and objectively verifiable indicators are, as often in this type of projects, missing. Yet, with these methodological constraints in mind, we need to find a meaningful way to assess which effects the programme has had on the surrounding environment. See section 3.3 on specific questions to be answered.

Understanding a Theory of Change (intervention logic of the Project)

When reviewing the Programme Document, as well as the Inception Report of the Project, there are some sentences that need to be further clarified in order for us to fully understand the intervention logic of the Project. For example, according to the Programme Document, the overall objective is formulated as follows: “*to contribute to strengthened democracy, equitable and sustainable development in relation to local governance and closer ties between Serbia and EU*”. The objective seems rather vaguely formulated and it is also a bit difficult to understand exactly how the programme can contribute to strengthen democracy *in relation to local governance* and closer ties between Serbia and EU.

Furthermore, under the section for intervention logic in the Inception Report of the Programme it is stated “*SCTM is expected to improve its outputs (strategic and policy*

documents, publications, analytical systems, tools, information material, etc.) to such extent that the role of Local Self-Governments and SCTM in the EU integration process are strengthened, and that SCTM work regarding EU integration, environmental protection, gender equality, business climate and its own capacity building results in better outcomes at a local level, and in national policy dialogue and enhanced international relations; thus contributing to the overall objective through increased organisational effectiveness”. This rather long sentence also needs to be clarified and broken up into pieces in order to be fully understandable.

Hence, we suggest clarifying the intervention logic of the programme together with the partners during the first field meetings. It will also be necessary to better understand how the main five components were selected, and how they complement each other.

Proposed approach and methodology

OUR GENERAL APPROACH

In order to strengthen the utilization of this evaluation we will work in a participatory manner, meaning that we will engage in dialogue with SCTM-SALAR, the Embassy of Sweden and other stakeholders. The inception report should be used as a basis for this dialogue.

The approach of this evaluation is to seek to triangulate findings and analysis wherever possible, so as to provide an evidence base as robust as is feasible. This will be addressed through literature review, mapping of potential stakeholder interviewees and use of appropriate tools.³² Thus, points raised in one discussion or document will be discussed in other interviews and checked in other documentation. For instance, the views and conclusions of SCTM interviewees regarding contribution to results will be checked against those of other stakeholders (triangulation and methods will always be done with due attention to confidentiality and appropriateness). Individual views and statements will not be attributed in the report.

DATA COLLECTION AND REVIEW

This assignment integrates different approaches and data collection resources. They are adapted to the various types of informants and data and are selected on the basis of what the review team believes is necessary to approach the assignment and to collect adequate information. The team proposes to incorporate a mix of data collection methods.

- **Analysis of the available documentation.** Further analysis of relevant documents provided by the Embassy of Sweden, SCTM and SALAR (annual reports, publications, strategic plans, training material etc.), analysis of documents provided by SCTM- SALAR's partners or other stakeholders in Serbia.
- **Interviews.** Interviews with *Key informants* will constitute a major source of information for this evaluation. We will interview persons working at SCTM

³² The OECD-DAC definition of *triangulation* is: "The use of three or more theories, sources or types of information, or types of analysis to verify and substantiate an assessment. Note: by combining multiple data sources, methods, analyses or theories, evaluators seek to overcome the bias that comes from single informants, single methods, single observer or single theory studies."

secretariat, members of the Joint Executive Committee, SCTM Members, staff at the Embassy of Sweden and other key partners and donors. We will also organise a study visit to at least 2 municipalities where we are going to discuss the results of the Project. We also plan to meet independent experts in the fields covered by this intervention, as well as auditors and consultants that have been working with SCTM in the recent past. The interviews will be semi-structured and at least covering the themes indicated in Annex 2.

The team intends to use different interview techniques, depending on the type of information that needs to be collected.

- *Tête-à-tête interviews with key staff.* This method will be used primarily with TGNP leadership;
- *Tête-à-tête interviews with key stakeholders/boundary partners.* This includes e.g. duty bearers such as representatives from institutions/organisations that SCTM tries to influence or works with (such as Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Ministry of Agriculture and Environment, Serbian Agency for European Integration, Gender Directorate, Local Governments, Donors etc.).

Selection of municipalities to be visited / meeting municipal representatives in Belgrade

The team proposes either to conduct a field visit to at least one municipality, or to visit municipal representatives in Belgrade, at the Local Economic Development Network Meeting. In case the Embassy/SCTM-SALAR prefers that we carry out the field trip to the local self-government, here are the proposed criteria for selecting municipality:

- That the interventions have been implemented during the whole period;
- That the municipalities have been involved in activities with the different components;
- Practical/logistic considerations.

See Annex 2 for a list of possible persons to meet.

Survey We will also plan to send out a web-based survey to representatives from all municipalities in Serbia. The survey will be designed and tested during the field mission to Serbia and discussed in details with representatives of SCTM-SALAR. In order to get an acceptable response rate, it will be crucial that the questions are few, clearly formulated and that we target the correct persons at the Municipalities. The specific questions and methods for carrying out the survey need to be further discussed with the responsible SCTM-SALAR staff. Most likely, we will send out two sets of questions; one for 9 municipalities that have been largely involved and benefited directly from

programme and one for the others that indirectly been involved in the programme

PROPOSED EVALUATION MATRIX (WHAT AND HOW)

Evaluation questions/tasks	Data collection (methods and sources)
<i>Effectiveness</i>	
Assess and analyse the achievements of the programme with focus on results on outcome level	The assessment will take its departure from the Inception Report of the programme (2011) which specifies expected outcomes and outputs within each of the five components of the project. The assessment will be made by comparing expected and reported achievements (by SCMT-SALAR) with our findings. We foresee that our findings on this question will mainly originate from a) the proposed survey to municipalities and b) interviews with personnel working at SCTM and SALAR as well interviews with representatives from the 3 Swedish and 9 Serbian municipalities specifically involved this Project. To further substantiate the answers from the personal interviews and survey we will interview independent actors/researchers and representatives from the Serbian government and international community The team anticipate that the following specific questions will be answered • Progress toward achievement of the stated objectives, desired results and planned activities • How have outputs and activities to date underpinned progress toward the ‘programme purpose’ and objectives? • What have been the outcomes to date – both positive and negative? • How do these compare to the original desired results and outcomes? • What lessons have been learned and applied? • What activities – to date and planned – will underpin desired changes relating to EU integration, gender equality, environment protection, business climate and SCTM capacity building? • What are the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of objectives and milestones

	How does this bode for completion of the rest of the programme against objectives and desired outcomes?
Identify and analyse how the management model influences the achievement (or non-achievement) of the objectives)	This will be assessed mainly through interviews with the representatives from the Programme management team (PCMT) well as focal point/coordinators for thematic areas. Also the Joint executive committee (JEC) as well as the Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) will be consulted. The survey is also expected to provide input on this question.
Relevance	
Analyse the <i>relevance</i> of the programme in relation to Serbia's EU accession and the on-going negotiation process. The assessment of the programme will focus on relevance vis-à-vis the needs and priorities of the local governance in Serbia (with the main focus on EU integrations).	This analysis will take its departure from the Swedish strategy for development cooperation with Serbia (2009-2012) and analyse the relevance in relation to actual needs of local governance in Serbia to continue with the EU integration process. This assessment will be based on existing literature as well as interviews with stakeholders, donors and independent experts on local governance reform and decentralisation. Specific questions to answered will for example be - Relevance and accuracy of projects' 'theory of change' - Do programme objectives adequately address the problems to be solved? - Are programme objectives and the <i>raison d'être</i> of the programme still valid given contextual changes? - Does this programme fill gaps/meet needs that other programmes do not address adequately?
Efficiency	
Analyse the efficiency/cost efficiency of the Project, i.e. assess whether there are more cost-effective methods of achieving the same results. Assess the Programme management model had been efficient compared to alternatives	We have a rather patchy picture of the specific costs related to the different clusters of activities. Yet, based on the material we have, we propose (as explained above) that the analysis of cost will mainly focus on management and operational efficiency. This task will mainly be assessed through interviews and discussions with representatives from the JEC, PMCT and PAC as to what extent the management of these or other responsible institutions are acting to make their work more efficient. Also, the current management models would be compared to other possible set ups. We foresee that the review will focus on the following set of questions: - Has implementation been carried out in a timely, streamlined and cost-effective manner? - Has management been professional, thorough and accountable? - Has budget execution and channelling of funds been efficient and timely?

	• Have procurement processes delivered the best ‘value for money’? • How has actual delivery compared to original timelines? • Have efficiency controls and indicators been adequate? • Could the same or similar results have been achieved more quickly and at less cost using other approaches? • Do managers have sufficient flexibility, within programme design, to adopt more cost-effective approaches?
Sustainability	
Analyse the sustainability of programme outputs and outcomes from an organizational and financial perspective	This assessment will mainly be based on interviews with the members of the SCTM as well as the survey sent out to all the members. Also, discussions and interviews with the Ministry of Local Governance and International Community will provide input to this assessment. Specific questions to be answered will for example be • What are prospects and conditions for successful delivery of the planned activities and achievement of the desired results given? • Identifying factors of sustainability of the project’s activities, results and delivery mechanisms • Longer-term financial sustainability of SCTM (assessing collection rate from members and prospects of financing from other sources)
Assess whether the methods of capacity development could be considered as promoting sustainability.	This task will mainly be based on a discussion with SALAR on choice of their methods and activities as well as discussions with SCMT and questions to LGA of the appropriateness of the methods of transfer of knowledge and capacity building activities. More specifically the following questions will be answered; • Are approaches and specific methods of transfer of knowledge/capacity development up-date given experiences and lessons learnt from other studies/research?
Analyse to which extent the programme has taken into consideration possible external and internal (management and organisational related) risks. Assess how management has dealt with unexpected events.	Taking into consideration that it is “easy to be wise in hindsight” this task will be carried through interviews with the management of SCTM and SALAR as well as external stakeholders. Focus will be on analysing how SCMT and SALAR have worked to minimize the effects to minimize the effects of unforeseen risks during the implementation of the Project.

	For example the following questions will be answered • How has the team managed challenges during the implementation of the project? • What options and approaches have proved to be most appropriate and effective?
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THE PROCESS AHEAD

1. Conclusion of the inception period

Based on feed-back from the Embassy of Sweden, SCTM and SALAR on this inception report we will make the last adjustments for the field visit.

2. Proposed preliminary schedule for the field visit (12-16 May) in Serbia

Date	Location	Activity
Sunday		Arrival to Belgrade
Monday	Belgrade	10:00 – 12:00 Embassy of Sweden 12:00 – 13:30 Break 13:30 – 15:30 SCTM Meetings with: Dorđe Staničić- SCTM Secretary General Zorica Vukelić- Deputy Secretary General- The National Program Director Vladimir Jovanović- Program Manager 15:30 – 16:30 Nikola Tarbuk- Assistant to Secretary General for Advocacy Aleksandar Bučić- Assistant to Secretary General for Finance Ivan Milivojević- Assistant to Secretary General for Services, Manager of Training Center
Tuesday		09:30- 11:00 Component 4- Slađana Grujić, Ružica Arandjelović Ilić, Jelena Mihajlović Tanasijević 11:00 – 12:30 Component 3- Rozeta Aleksov 12:30- 14:00 Break 14:00- 15:30 Component 2- Miodrag Gluščević 15:30 – 17:00 Council of the Government for Gender Equality (GE Directorate does not exist as of the recent formation of the Government)- Jasna Vujacic
Wednesday	Belgrade	10:00 – 11:30 Serbian office for EU integration 12:00 - 13:30 Component 5- Aleksandar Popović, Vladimir Jovanović 13:30 – 14:30 Break 14:30 – 16:30 Component 1- Aleksandra Milić, Ivan Božović, Igor Pucarević
Thursday	Belgrade or field trip to inner Serbia	10:00 – 13:00 Network of LED (interviews with some municipalities representatives) or

		15:00 – 16:00	field visit to a Municipality in Serbia Possible meeting with representative of one line Ministry
Friday	Belgrade	9:30- 10:30 11:00- 12:30 12:30 – 13:30 13:30- 15:00	Meetings with representatives of donors (EU or SDC/SECO) Meeting with independent expert on EU Break Wrap up- SCTM and/or Embassy of Sweden
Saturday			Departure to Sweden

- 3. Additional interviews** Also, the team foresee that Dragisa Mijacic will be able to make additional and complementary interviews with key local government representatives outside of Belgrade; which municipalities that will be targeted will be decided during the field visit.

As noted in annex 3, the team will make additional interviews with representatives of Swedish municipalities (Gävle, Malmö and Växjö) that have been involved in the programme. Furthermore, consultants based in Stockholm and elsewhere working with the different components will be interviewed on the phone or in person.

4. Conducting a survey

The proposed survey (covering all the municipalities) will be tested during the field mission and send out to the municipalities the following week, i.e. after May 19.

5. Reporting and presentation

A draft report will be delivered to the Embassy of Sweden (electronically) by June 16. There is an option that the draft of the report could be presented by using Video Conference System, at the Embassy of Sweden and at Indevelop in Stockholm. Written feedback from the Embassy of Sweden, SCTM-SALAR on the draft report is expected not later than June 23. The final report will be submitted not later than 30 June 2014.

6.3 ANNEX 3 – DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Sida Development Cooperation Strategies:

- Results Strategy for Sweden's Reform Cooperation with Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey
- Strategy for Development Cooperation with Serbia, January 2009 - December 2012 (extended for 2013)

Monitoring the Implementation of Capacity Development of Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM) II, August 2010

Project related Documents;

Agreements (contracts):

- Agreement between Sida and SALAR
- Agreement between Sida and SCTM

Project Reports:

- Inception Report
- 2012 Annual Progress Activities Report
- 2013 Annual Progress Activities Report
- 1st Annual Review Meeting (2014)
- 2nd Annual Review Meeting (2014)

SCTM Annual Reports

- 2012 Annual Report
- 2013 Annual Report

SCTM Strategic Plans

- 2003-2008 Strategic Plan
- 2008-2010 Strategic Plan
- 2011-2013 Strategic Plan
- 2014-2017 Strategic Plan

SCTM Action Plans

- 2011 Action Plan
- 2012 Action Plan
- 2013 Action Plan
- 2014 Action Plan

List of SCTM Projects;

Internal decision to have a secured seat for the less represented sex on the SCTM Presidency

A table with share of grants in SCTM revenues;

A number of SCTM publications in the field of Gender Equality, produced by the project;

A number of SCTM publications in the field of Environmental Protection, produced by the project;

A number of SCTM publications in the field of Business Environment, produced by the project;

A number of SCTM publications in the field of EU integrations, produced by the project;

Helena Lagerholm, Europeanization revisited - Master Thesis, January 2014

6.4 ANNEX 4 – INFORMANTS INTERVIEWED

People interviewed

The Embassy of Sweden:

Torgny Svenungsson, Head of Development Cooperation,

Snezana Vojcic, Programme Officer

Thomas Nyström, Programme Officer

SCTM:

Dorđe Staničić- SCTM Secretary General

Zorica Vukelić- Deputy Secretary General- The National Program Director

Vladimir Jovanović- Program Manager

Nikola Tarbuk- Assistant to Secretary General for Advocacy

Aleksandar Bučić- Assistant to Secretary General for Finance

Ivan Milivojević- Assistant to Secretary General for Services, Manager of Training Center

Aleksandra Milić, Component 1:

Ivan Božović, Component 1:

Igor Pucarević Component 1:

Miodrag Gluščević, Component 2:

Rozeta Aleksov, Component 3:

Sladana Grujić, Component 4:

Ružica Arandelović Ilić, Component 4:

Jelena Mihajlović Tanasijević, Component 4:

Aleksandar Popović, Component 5:

Vladimir Jovanović, Component 5

Ministries / Public Agencies

Jelena Spasić, Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government

Saša Mogić, Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government,

Jasna Vujacic, Council of the Government for Gender Equality

Component Coordinators and Swedish experts

Tommy Holm, component 1,

Fredrik Lundqvist, component 3,

Ryan Knox, component 5,

Marie Kaufman, expert component 5

Representatives from Serbian municipalities

Filip Mitrović, Chairman of the Municipal Assembly, Pančevo,

Duško Radišić, , Deputy Mayor, Zrenjanin

Radivoj Milošević, Deputy Director, Pećinci Development Agency

Branislav Milosav, RRC Banat, City of Zrenjanin

Ana Vijatov, RRC Banat, City of Zrenjanin
 Jelena Rikalo, City of Zrenjanin
 Olivera Radić, City of Zrenjanin
 Bojana Božić - ECO Network, Bečej

Swedish municipalities

Annika Lundqvist, Director international dept., Municipality of Gävle
 Roland Zinkernagel, Environment Dept., Unit for city Municipality of Malmö, development and
 Anders Lundgren, environmental coordinator Municipality of Växjö

Others

Jelena Bojović, NALED
 Petar Vasilev, Swiss Development Cooperation
 Vladimir Pavlović, Belgrade Open School - Expert on EU affairs

6.5 ANNEX 5 – SURVEY QUESTIONS

Mayors

Municipality:

Sex:

- How often you cooperate with SCTM? Please explain.
- What are the most important contributions received by SCTM (up to 3 options)?
- In which sector you find SCTM support most useful (up to 3 options)
- How important is the role of SCTM in supporting municipalities for transitional processes of EU integrations? Please explain.
- What are the most useful activities of SCTM in regard to EU integrations (up to 3 options)?

Business Climate

Municipality:

Sex:

- What is the nature of your cooperation with SCTM in regard to building business enabling environment in your municipality?
- Do you participate in the work of the Local Economic Development Network (LED Network) that is established by SCTM?

- How useful you find participation at the LED Network meetings?
- What you consider as the most useful benefit from the LED Network Meetings (up to 3 options):
- To what extent the participation of the LED network contributed to capacity building of human resources in your municipality related to issues of business enabling?
- Please note this question does not reflect only on advancement of your personal capacities yet to capacities of other municipal officers engaged on issues related to business environment.
- Is there an example where participation at the LED Network contributed to the business enabling in your municipality (i.e. when you have used knowledge gained or established contacts to generate a development change in your municipality)? Please explain.
- Please recommend how to improve the SCTM work of the LED Network
- Do you participate in creation of the database on business environment at the local level, which is initiated by SCTM? In which way you have contributed to establishing of the database? What will be the key benefit of this database? Please explain.
- What would you recommend SCTM to improve its performance on the database?
- Does SCTM supports your municipality in creation of a Business Council?
- Did your municipality have the business council in the past? If yes, please explain why there is a need to re-establish the business council at your municipality?
- What goal your municipality would like to achieve by establishing the Business council? Please provide a brief explanation.
- To what extent you find useful the SCTM support in establishing the business council at your municipality?
- What would you recommend SCTM to improve its performance on providing technical assistance in establishing sustainable business councils in Serbian municipalities?
- Please describe the most significant results achieved by the support received by SCTM in regard to business enabling environment.
- What would you recommend SCTM to improve its performance on business

enabling environment at the local level?

- What would you recommend SCTM to improve its performance on European integration issues?

Gender equality

Job title:

Sex:

Municipality:

- What is the nature of your cooperation with SCTM in regard to gender equality?
- Please provide titles of all activities organized by SCTM related to gender equality you/your municipality participated in?
- What are the key issues related to gender equality in your municipality? Please explain.
- To what extent the project action contributed to capacity building of human resources related to issues of gender equality?
- To what extent it was useful to get Swedish experience on gender equality that was provided by SCTM/SALAR?
- Please describe the most significant results achieved by the support received by SCTM. Please explain.
- What would you recommend SCTM to improve its performance on gender equality?

Environmental protection

Job title:

Sex:

Municipality:

- What is the nature of your cooperation with SCTM in regard to environmental protection in your municipality?
- Does your municipality participate at the Environmental Clusters established through the work of the project implemented by SCTM?
- In which Cluster your municipality participate in?
- Please provide titles of all activities that your municipality participated within the thematic cluster.

- To what extent it was useful the workshop on links between gender equality and environmental protection?
- How do you assess cooperation with other municipalities within your cluster?
- To what extent you find useful a cooperation with the Swedish partner related to the issues of the thematic cluster?
- Please list the key benefits from cooperation with Swedish partners
- Did cooperation with Swedish partners create opportunities for spin offs / additional cooperation beyond the project action of SCTM. Please explain.
- To what extent you find useful cooperation with SCTM related to the professional issues of the thematic cluster?
- To what extent SCTM activities contributed to capacity building of human resources related to issues of your thematic cluster. Please note this question does not refer only to your capacity advancement, yet
- What are the most important benefits received by SCTM regarding the issues of the thematic cluster? (choose maximum 3 options)?
- What are the key results achieved within SCTM support to thematic clusters in the field of environmental protection?
- Please recommend how to improve performance on work of the thematic clusters? Do you participate in the work of the SCTM Eco Network?
- To what extent you find useful participation at the Eco network meetings?
- What you consider as the most useful benefit from the Eco Network meetings (up to three options):
- To what extent participation in the ECO Network contributed to capacity building of human resources in your municipality in the field of environmental protection?
- Please note this question does not refer only to your capacity advancement, yet also of other municipal employees that are working in the field of environmental protection.
- Is there an example where participation at the ECO Network contributed to the business enabling in your municipality (i.e. when you have used knowledge gained or established contacts to generate a development change in your municipality)? Please explain.

- Please recommend how to improve work of the ECO Network.
- Please describe the most significant results achieved by the support received by SCTM in regard to environmental protection.
- What would you recommend SCTM to improve its performance on environmental issues?

EU Integration

Job title:

Sex:

Municipality:

- What is the nature of your cooperation with SCTM in regard to impact of EU accession to the local level?
- What do you think about SCTM initiative towards national authorities to be included in negotiation process for EU accession?
- To what extent you consider it is important for SCTM to participate in the work of EU organisations that gathers local authorities: Council of European Municipalities and Regions and the European Committee of Regions?
- To what extent you consider important for SCTM to organise training courses on topics that are important for the EU accession process?
- To what extent you consider important for SCTM to organise training courses on topics that are important for absorption of EU funds and programs?
- What do you think about SCTM initiative towards municipalities to establish institutional mechanisms
- What is your attitude on initiative that SCTM and municipalities jointly establish an office in Brussels?
- Please describe the most significant results achieved by the support received by SCTM in regard to EU Integrations. Please explain.
- What would you recommend SCTM to improve its performance on EU integrations and impact of the EU accession process to municipalities in Serbia?



In depth review of support to Local Governments in Serbia in the EU integration process

In May 2014 the Embassy of Sweden in Belgrade commissioned Indevlop to carry out an "In depth review" of Sweden's "Support to local governments in Serbia in the EU integration process". The programme has been implemented by Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM) together with technical support from Swedish Association of Local Authorities (SALAR). The assignment has been performed by Joakim Anger (Team Leader) and Dragisa Mijacic (Serbian local government expert). The overall aim of the programme is to prepare local governments for the coming EU integration process. Overall, the relevance in supporting SCTM and LSGs in Serbia on issues related to EU integrations is strong. Also, the selection of thematic areas has been assessed as largely relevant. Furthermore, the programme has so far resulted in many valuable outcomes that are potentially valuable for SCTM itself and for Serbian municipalities. The programme has largely been implemented efficiently but would benefit from stronger focus on some key objectives of the support. One of the main challenges ahead for SCTM and its partners/donors is the financial sustainability of the organisation, i.e. how to increase SCTM's own incomes (through membership fees from its members or in other ways) to be able to finance the services of the organisation.

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