

UNIVERSITATEA BABEȘ-BOLYAI CLUJ-NAPOCA
FACULTATEA DE STUDII EUROPENE
Școala Doctorală Relații Internaționale și Studii Europene

Abstract

THE SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAM
A Sustainability Analysis of the Swiss Contributions to Romania

Coordonator științific:
Prof. univ. dr. Mircea Brie

Student-doctorand:
Christian Bergmann

Cluj-Napoca
2025

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1. Introduction

The need to evaluate government-sponsored economic interventions and recently implemented social programs has become significantly stronger. Switzerland's obligation to evaluate government-funded programs is codified in several sources. One is Article 170 of the Federal Constitution of 1999.¹ Another source is the Federal Act on the Federal Assembly (Parliament Act, ParlA) of December 2002 (issued in January 2024).

Justification of the Project

The first reason for this thesis is *accountability*. This highlights the need for a comprehensive sustainability analysis of the SRCP, leading to the second reason for this thesis: *integration*. Understanding a program's long-term impact is crucial, which leads to the third reason for this thesis: *sustainability*. The SRCP, as its name suggests, concerns two countries: Switzerland and Romania. The author of this thesis was born in Romania, grew up in Switzerland, and eventually became a Swiss citizen. This leads to the fourth and final reason for this thesis: *affiliation*.

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is organized into seven chapters:

Chapter 2. Research Methodology and Sources of Documentation. Chapter Two presents the methodology of the thesis. *Chapter 3. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework* is divided into two parts; 3.1 presents evaluation from a broader theoretical point of view and 3.2. presents the theoretical framework of Switzerland's relationship with Romania and the European Union. *Chapter 4. Presentation of the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Program and initial content analysis.* The chapter presents the SRCP and a content analysis. *Chapter 5. Sustainability Analysis Results.* Here, we present the results of the sustainability analysis process. *Chapter 6. Discussion, Contribution, and Improvements.* In this chapter, we discuss the contribution and present improvements.

Chapter 7. Conclusion. Chapter 7 is divided into three subchapters; one examines if the purpose of the thesis was fulfilled and whether the objectives were reached; the other discusses the research questions and the hypotheses and relates them to the results obtained. The thesis concludes with some final thoughts.

¹ *Bundesverfassung der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft*, 1999, (issued January 2008), Artikel 170 Überprüfung der Wirksamkeit, p. 50. Available in English: www.fedlex.admin.ch. Accessed November 2024.

2. Research Methodology and Sources of Documentation

The thesis relies on several data-gathering methods. However, content analysis and the survey, by means of a questionnaire, are the most prevalent.

The research topic is the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Program and its eight thematic funds. This chapter focuses on the thesis's conduct and the sources used.

2.1. Purpose of the Thesis

This thesis aims to conduct a sustainability analysis of the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Program after its conclusion in 2019. The analysis took place in 2023, and four years without foreign funding will provide us with reliable data to conclude the sustainability aspect of the implemented projects.

2.2. Objectives

We tried not to overdo the objectives and focused only on a few feasible ones. This helped us to ensure that we reached them and secured the high validity and reliability of the whole thesis.

Objective 1: Analyze the theoretical background of the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Program based on well-known International Relations theories.

Objective 2: Present a comprehensive description of the SRCP and conduct a content analysis.

Objective 3: Conduct a sustainability analysis of each thematic fund. This will provide better insight into the SRCP's long-term impact, help in future fund allocation decisions, and make recommendations regarding procedural implementations to improve each thematic fund's sustainability.

Objective 4: Highlight existing improvements in bilateral relations between Switzerland and Romania, Switzerland and the European Union, and Romania and the European Union.

2.3. Expected Results

Based on the thesis's objectives, we must discuss some expected results before depicting the hypotheses. The results are not policy-, institutional-, or organizational-based, so we do not expect any relevant policy or institutional change.

We believe in the overall functioning of the SRCP. We do not expect the thematic funds to reach their goals; we expect an achievement level of less than 50%. We also believe the majority of the implemented projects, especially those not supported by government institutions, will score low on sustainability. We believe the SRCP improved the relations between Switzerland and Romania. Our pessimistic attitude emerges from the somewhat negative reputation of Eastern European countries in the West—a bad reputation, not in general but in particular, especially when efficiently managing foreign funds. We couldn't hide a certain bias towards the beneficiary due to unfortunate events during the last 34 years.

2.4. Research Guiding Questions and the Hypotheses

The next step is the conceptualization of the hypotheses. Therefore, we formulated four research guiding questions:

- *Did the program or intervention work?*
- *Did the implemented measures achieve the intended goals?*
- *What type of implemented projects are still operational?*
- *Did the SRCP improve the bilateral relations between Switzerland and Romania?*

If we look at the first question: *Did the program or intervention work?* We notice it concerns the basic functioning of an intervention, measured by specific parameters like efficiency, effectiveness, or sustainability.

The next question: *Did the implemented measures achieve the intended goals?* This is the most challenging question to answer. We cannot isolate the SRCP's effects on the change in Romania's socio-economic situation. The problem lies within the wording of the program goals.

The third question: *What type of implemented projects are still operational?* This question deals with the project's sustainability and management. Sustainability is a broad concept in our case; we will address it in the evaluation concepts chapter.

The last question: *Did the SRCP improve the bilateral relations between Switzerland and Romania?* In this case, we are dealing with relations between institutions. We will not aggregate the question on an overall international relations level; we consider that to be too trivial. We will check for each involved institution and draw a conclusion based on our findings.

We can formulate our set of four hypotheses (H 1-4) derived from the research questions:

H₁. *The Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Program did work at an operational level.*

H₂. *The set goals of the Swiss-Romanian-Cooperation Program were achieved at a high degree (>66% success rate).*

H₃. *The majority of the implemented projects lacked sustainability. Less than 50% are still operational, and only the ones managed by government institutions are still active.*

H₄ *The SRCP contributed to improving the bilateral relations between Switzerland and Romania.*

2.5. Analysis of the Sources

We will present and discuss the sources used in each chapter relative to its objective, distinguishing between primary and secondary sources according to the chapter.

For *Chapter 3.1. Evaluation. Theory and Concepts*. This chapter is based on an in-depth presentation of evaluation, its theories, and its concepts. To present the subject, we consulted only secondary sources, which means only *scientific journal articles* and *books* about evaluation. For *Chapter 3.2. Theoretical Framework of the Swiss-Romanian Relations*. Chapter 3.2 discusses the theoretical framework underlying the relations between Switzerland and Romania. Therefore, we consulted again *scientific journal articles* and *books* about International Relations Theory.

For *Chapter 4. Detailed Presentation of the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Program*.

This chapter presents and describes our object of interest, the SRCP. It also deals with content analysis. Therefore, we consulted primary sources emitted by the Swiss Government. The *Framework Agreement between Switzerland and Romania* helped us again, and for the first time, the *Annexes* to this framework were also used.

For *Chapter 5. Sustainability Analysis Results* we used data from very different sources most come from our sustainability analysis.

2.6. Research Methods

This thesis is primarily a qualitative analysis with only a small amount of quantitative elements present. To achieve the thesis objectives, we considered four types of data analysis methods. Almost all thematic funds were surveyed completely; only two funds had a sample survey.

In most cases, the survey questionnaire was preferred. Additionally, we applied document analysis together with the questionnaire and, in very few instances, an interview. Eight projects were analyzed by on-site observation. The quantitative techniques were reduced to simple frequency counts. We did not conduct any further statistical data analysis due to the nominal scale level of the data, which would have made it impossible.

To better illustrate the research methods and their application, we include **Table 1** with all eight thematic funds and the method used to analyze them.

Table 1. Methodological Matrix

Thematic Funds	Basic Population	Surveyed Population/Objects	Research Tool	Analysis Method	The aim is
<i>Overall SRCP needs</i>	The needs assessment conducted by the SRCP organizers: SDC, SCO, and NCU	The SDC in Bern, the NCU in Bucharest, and the SCO in Bucharest. Complete survey	3 structured survey questionnaires	Document Analysis	To analyze the overall methodology of the needs assessment
<i>Health Issues Fund</i>	4 projects implemented in different medical fields; 1 project implemented in 7 locations; SIB from Basel and SIB partner from Bucharest	All 5 projects: 4 standardized survey questionnaires for the four medical projects; seven standardized survey questionnaires for the seven project managers and seven observation protocols. Additionally, two questionnaires for the SIB and the SIB partner. Complete survey	4 standardized survey questionnaires for the project responsible; One standardized survey questionnaire and observation protocol for the seven locations; Two standardized survey questionnaires for the SIB and its partner.	Document Analysis and observation.	To analyze the impact the 4 improvements had upon the medical field; To analyze the impact the 7 interventions had on the target population of the 7 locations

Thematic Funds	Basic Population	Surveyed Population/Objects	Research Tool	Analysis Method	The aim is
<i>Sustainable Energy Action Fund (SEAF)</i>	6 projects, 5 implemented in 5 cities, 1 project implemented nationally	In total 12 interventions in 5 cities, 1 intervention nationally. Evaluation Report from Romania. Complete survey	Non-formal telephone discussion with 1 project manager.	Document and data analysis from the 5 city administrations and the European Energy Award Association from Switzerland	To check the sustainability of the implemented projects.
<i>Security Fund</i>	19 projects implemented nationally	1 survey questionnaire for the SIB from Geneva, two reports from the European Commission on the situation of Romania, Evaluation Report from Switzerland	Survey questionnaire	Document analysis	To compare the reported results from the evaluations with the development in Romania, data provided by the reports from the EU Commission. An attempted long-term impact assessment of the thematic fund.
<i>Inclusion of Roma and Other Vulnerable Groups Fund</i>	5 projects implemented in 5 different cities	5 survey questionnaires for the projects: 2 project managers, 3 SIBs, 3 SIB partners; Roma Report for the European Commission, Evaluation Report from Switzerland. Complete survey	Survey questionnaire	Document analysis	To conduct the sustainability analysis by finding out how the current situation of the target population changed compared to before the

Thematic Funds	Basic Population	Surveyed Population/Objects	Research Tool	Analysis Method	The aim is
					implementation. attempt to conduct a long-term impact assessment of the thematic fund.
Scholarship Fund	1 project applied to 88 participants	10% participants sample surveyed with a questionnaire; SIB surveyed with a questionnaire, Evaluation Report from Switzerland	Structured survey questionnaire, unstructured questionnaire	Document analysis	To analyze the results of the evaluation and to find out how the project impacted the participants.
Research Fund and Project in Education	1 project applied to 26 participants; 1 project implemented for 8000 pupils	10% participants sample on the Research Fund surveyed with a questionnaire; SIB surveyed with a questionnaire. No survey possible for the Project in Education Fund, only SIB and project executing agency. Evaluation Report from Switzerland	Structured survey questionnaire, unstructured questionnaire.	Document analysis	To find out how the Research Fund impacted the participants long-term. To find out about the Project in Education's performance and current status.
Civil Society Participation Fund	141 implemented projects around Romania	61 telephone interviews and 80 survey questionnaires with the project executing agencies, SIB survey questionnaire, SIB partner survey questionnaire. Evaluation reports	Survey questionnaires, telephone interviews, observation protocol	Document analysis, frequency count, on-site observation	To conduct the sustainability analysis and find out how the projects are doing four years after program conclusion.
Partnership and Expert Fund					

Thematic Funds	Basic Population	Surveyed Population/Objects	Research Tool	Analysis Method	The aim is
		from Switzerland. Complete survey			

Source: own display

2.7. Potential Contribution of This Thesis

The results of this analysis project could improve on two levels: the policy level for the next Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Program and the generic, theoretic level concerning the future cooperation between Switzerland and Romania or any other cooperation system of two countries, where one acts as the donor of expertise and financial help and the other as the recipient of such. The other contribution of this thesis concerns depicting the advantages of the SRCP compared to simple financial donations and the three relationships it is involved with: between Switzerland and Romania, between Switzerland and the European Union, and between Romania and the European Union.

2.8. Critical Review of Our Research Project

After scrutinizing the methodology, we are compelled to raise some thought-provoking questions: How applicable and transferable is it? Can we anticipate similar outcomes in diverse countries? Romania was merely one of the 13 new EU member states that benefited from the program. Would the other 12 perform equally well?

Unfortunately, this project's findings cannot be extended to other countries with the same program. The 13 new EU member states, including Romania, are too distinct for direct comparison. Accurate results can only be ensured with a similar assessment in the other 12 countries. This reiterates the need for localized evaluations, as Romania's unique context is crucial in this thesis.

Additionally, all information gathered through the interviews or questionnaires was archived material. This is a minor issue when regarding technical information and sustainability.

Nevertheless, for the impact assessment we conducted, having someone around who participated in the program's implementation was unnecessary. The impact was measured years after the program's termination.

3. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

“Research seeks to prove; evaluation seeks to improve.”²

3.1. Literature Review

To begin the theoretical chapter on evaluation, we use the words of contemporary evaluation scholar Michael Quinn Patton.³ He describes the core purpose of evaluation, compared to research, in a concise sentence. Chapter 3.1 presents evaluation from a theoretical point of view but also a practical one related to this thesis. We cannot leave out the important features of evaluation and only discuss sustainability. The chapter is designed as an overview of evaluation and an explanation of why we did what we did. It is important to understand why the thesis is conducting a sustainability analysis and not a full-scale evaluation.

3.1.1. What is Evaluation, and What Is It Not?

We have to think of evaluators as professionals. Like any other such group, they, too, have a specific “jargon” to describe their job. Most scholars mention that an evaluation must be **systematic, objective, scientific, periodic, and empiric**. This can be classified as a procedural precondition or as *how* an assessment should work, distinguishing it from everyday evaluations by random people when they rate a restaurant, a newly bought object, or the service of a hairstylist. The following concepts are common aspects of the definitions for evaluation: **worth, merit, utility, design, implementation, significance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and conceptualization**.

If we were to corroborate and scale down the statements of various scholars on the aspects of evaluation, our definition would be: *"Evaluation is the scientific analysis of social programs, based on empiric observation and research, to measure worth, merit, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability to help stakeholders in future decision-making."*

3.1.2. Functions of Evaluation in General, Why This Project in Particular

When considering all the reasons for conducting an evaluation and its functions, we arrive at some of the aforementioned objectives of our thesis: *accountability, improvement*, and helping in *decision-making* based on assessing specific indicators. Accountability is aimed at a program or intervention's stakeholders. Having to pay a specific sum periodically discharged

² Patton, Michael Quinn, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (2. ed.) SAGE Pub, Newbury Park, CA, USA, 1990, p. 532.

³ *Ibidem*.

the Swiss government from accountability towards the taxpayer. Even if the program had failed, Switzerland could not opt out, and they would have to continue paying. This leaves us only one objective function and reason for analyzing this program: *improvement*.

3.1.3. From Theory to Practice

This chapter addresses three vital questions to help the reader understand the motivation behind this approach and the reason why such an undertaking could not have been done differently. The questions are essential for our analysis because they will define our project's application, implementation, and results.

I. How to Evaluate

According to Michael Patton,⁴ models provide a framework and can help by establishing structure and support. However, they only provide the framework, not a recipe for conducting the evaluation. There are seven popular models, among others. However, none of the seven models is entirely suitable for our project, the question remains: *how did we analyze?*

We employed a mixed method, using selected model elements; one might call it an eclectic analysis. We took certain aspects out of selected models, those we could use, and applied them to our project.

II. When to Evaluate

John Boulmetis et al. made a simple and ostensive description of an evaluation program planning cycle with each stage.⁵ They start with the *Needs Assessment*, where one has to identify priority goals that will serve as the basis for the program or intervention; the next step is *Program Planning*, which is about selecting the means to achieve the determined goals, *Formative Evaluation* is the next step and means to decide where improvements in a current program are needed. The final step is the *Summative Evaluation*, where a fully finished program's effectiveness and efficiency are debated. This serves the purpose of deciding whether to continue, expand, or terminate the program.

The last step would be a *sustainability analysis* at least one year after the summative evaluation. We must exclude the needs assessment and the formative or ongoing evaluation from our thesis. Those are not possible to conduct years after the program's conclusion. The same applies to the summative evaluation. Our thesis can only be related to a significantly "extended" sustainability analysis.

⁴ Patton, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

⁵ Boulmetis, John, Phyllis Dutwin, *The ABCs of Evaluation, Timeless Techniques for Program and Project Managers*, (3. ed.) Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, CA, USA, 2011, p. 108-111.

III. What to Evaluate

Our next type will depend on *what* is examined during an evaluation. Langbein et al.'s preceding explanation uses the keyword **output** or **outcomes** examination. Mertens et al. also used the term **impact**, which will be examined more closely.

*Outputs*⁶ “They are tangible products that result from a program’s activities.”

*Outcomes*⁷ according to the encyclopedia, are results or changes, sometimes even impacts, which may be short-term or long-term; they can be proximal or distal; they can have a primary or secondary character; they can be intended or might be unintended; they can be positive or negative and singular, multiple or hierarchical. Outcomes are specific changes that can be measured individually, like knowledge, skills, or attitudes.

*Impact*⁸, according to the encyclopedia, is aimed at the outcomes or impact of a program, policy, organization, or technology. It typically tries to make a causal inference that connects the evaluand with an outcome. According to Rossi et al., one considerable challenge is determining when an impact evaluation or assessment is appropriate and what design to use.⁹ Our project has no choice, so we only have the **sustainability** analysis at our disposition.

IV. Concepts of Evaluation

Scholars have mentioned the **merit**, **value**, or **worth** of an object and the **effectiveness**, **efficiency**, and **sustainability** of a program or intervention. Value and cost are often used interchangeably. The most important analytical concept we are discussing is sustainability. According to Dale, “*The maintenance or augmentation of positive achievements induced by the evaluated programme or project after the scheme has been terminated.*”¹⁰ We will use sustainability as the key criterion for judging the cooperation program.¹¹ In general, sustainability analysis methods may include mail or telephone surveys, site visits, case studies, and archival data reviews. Notably, most sustainability analyses are undertaken about two years after the funding stops.¹² We did it almost four years after the funding stopped. The advantage is that the longer a project survives on its own, the better it was designed.

⁶ Melvin, M. Mark apud Langbein, Laura, Claire L. Felbinger, *Public Program Evaluation A Statistical Guide*, Sharpe, Armonk, NY, USA, 2006, p. 287.

⁷ Mathison, Sandra (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Evaluation*, SAGE Pub, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA, 2005, p. 287.

⁸ Bickman, Leonard apud Mathison, Sandra (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Evaluation*, SAGE Pub, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA, 2005, p. 194.

⁹ Rossi, Peter H., Howard E. Freeman, *Evaluation. A Systematic Approach* (5. ed.), SAGE Pub, Newbury Park, CA, USA, 1993, p. 72.

¹⁰ Dale, *op. cit.*, p. 80-81.

¹¹ Stufflebeam, Daniel L., Chris L.S., Coryn. *Evaluation Theory, Models and Application* (2. ed.), Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA, USA, 2014, p. 40.

¹² Mertens, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

3.2. Theoretical Framework of Swiss-Romanian Relations

Since the whole project is designed as a qualitative study, the existing literature suggests starting with fieldwork before proceeding to the theory and conclusion.¹³ Following the observations, the thesis will discuss the broad theory and narrow it down step by step until it reaches the specific point of interest. The focus point is Switzerland's financial help to Romania, namely the Swiss-Romanian-Cooperation Program.

The Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Program within International Relations Theory

The whole theoretical construction is built around the empirical reality analyzed while studying the documents that emerged from the relationship between Switzerland and Romania and between Switzerland and the European Union. Out of the analyzed international relations theories, **Realism**, **Liberalism**, **Neo-Realism**, **Neo-Liberalism**, and **Social Constructivism**, the constructivist approach is the theory that fits the most, based on the theoretical considerations outlined in our discussion. The goals are also clearly indicated in several documents.

Both countries had positive and somewhat prosperous relations, which remained the case until after the Second World War and the communist takeover of Romania. It is also important to mention that Switzerland depends more on the European Union than the other way around. The European Union is exercising a certain amount of pressure when negotiating specific contracts and relations. The pressure is, of course, not a brute show of force; the methods are economic. For example, they restrict trade with Switzerland, limit the traffic of people and services, or restrict access to academic research programs.

Nevertheless, we can entirely rely on the constructivist approach to describe the relations between Switzerland and the EU as well. Regardless of the imbalance of power between the EU and Switzerland.

¹³ Campbell, Donald Thomas, Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, (6. ed.), SAGE Pub, Los Angeles, CA, USA, 2018, p. 33.

4. In-depth Presentation of the Swiss-Romanian-Cooperation Program

Chapter 4 is divided into three distinct parts. The first part, 4.1, will present the other important European funding mechanisms providing financial aid to Romania. This helps to better understand Romania's economic context. The second part, 4.2, will present the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Program. This is the main object of research and analysis for this thesis. The third part, 4.3, will build upon the second; it presents the results of the content analysis of the SRCP.

4.1. Other European Financial Funding Programs for Romania

“The construction of the European Community (EC) ranks among the most extraordinary achievements in modern world politics, yet there is little agreement about its causes.”¹⁴

The Swiss-Romanian Cooperation program aims *“To reduce the economic and social disparities between Romania and the more advanced countries of the European Union and contribute within Romania to reducing economic and social disparities between the dynamic urban centers and the structurally weak peripheral regions.”¹⁵*

How can we tell which of the financial mechanisms significantly impact Romania's improvement?

I. European Union-Funded Help

The European Union is Romania's primary financial supporter. We will examine the time frame from when Romania became a member of the European Union in 2007 until now (2020).

Three funds in the European Union's Cohesion Policy work together to form the EU's Regional Policy. They aim to support and promote economic growth, competitiveness, job creation, sustainable development, and quality of life across all European Union member

¹⁴ Moravcsik, Andrew, *The Choice for Europe. Social Purpose and State Power, from Messina to Maastricht*, Ruthledge Publishing, London, UK, 1998, p. 1.

¹⁵ *Annex 1: Conceptual Framework of the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme*. p. 1, available on the homepage of the Federal Council, FDFA's page, *Switzerland and Romania*, www.eda.admin.ch/countries/romania/en/home/schweizer-beitrag/schweizer-erweiterungsbeitrag/bilaterales-rahmenabkommen.html. Accessed October 2024.

countries.¹⁶ They are the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), and the European Cohesion Fund (ECF).¹⁷

Romania received a total of around 55 billion Euro between 2007 and 2020. Why is this important? The SRCP ran for 10 years and had a volume of 180 million Swiss Francs; the EU funding ran for 14 years and had a volume of 55 billion Euro.

II. Norway Grants and EEA Grants Funded Help

Norway is a member of the European Economic Area (EEA) because access to that area is essential for Norway.¹⁸ The findings can be summarized as follows: Between 2007 and 2021, Romania received 905.9 million Euro from the EEA and Norway Grants combined. The Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Program, which ran from 2009 until 2019, granted 181 million Swiss Francs (162 million Euros in 2021).

Combining the two foreign financial sources, EU and EEA/Norway Grants, for Romania between 2007 and 2021 without the SRCP, gives us roughly 56 billion Euro.

4.2. Introduction of the SRCP

It all started on February 27, 2006, when the Swiss Federal Council and the Council of the European Union signed the *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)*¹⁹ regarding the Swiss financial support for the ten member states that acceded to the EU on May 1, 2004.

This MOU was approved by the Swiss voting population by popular vote on November 26, 2006.²⁰ Switzerland contributed 1.302 billion SFr. to support projects in those new EU-10 member states.²¹ The Romanian Government approved the framework agreement with the

¹⁶ Official website of the European Commission. Title: *Regional Policy* www.ec.europa.eu/regional_policy. Accessed October 2024.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, title: *Funding* www.ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funding. Accessed October 2024.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ Official website of the Swiss Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research. *Swiss contribution to the enlarged EU: Signing of a memorandum of understanding*. www.admin.ch/gov/en/start/documentation/media-releases.msg-id-3417.html Accessed October 2024.

²⁰ Official website of the Swiss Federal Chancellery (Bundeskanzlei). *Volksabstimmung vom 26. November 2006*. Site is not available in English www.bk.admin.ch/bk/de/home/dokumentation/volksabstimmungen/volksabstimmung-20061126.html Accessed October 2024.

²¹ Swiss Contribution to selected EU member states. The document is available for download as follows: *Der Schweizer Erweiterungsbeitrag. Bilanz zum Abschluss der Länderprogramme in den EU-12 Staaten* (published May, 2020), p. 4.

www.eda.admin.ch/schweizerbeitrag/de/home/der_erweiterungsbeitrag_2007-2024/laender/rumaenien.html

In this document, Romania has not finished the necessary time frame of 10 years, which means there is only an incomplete display of results. Accessed October 2024.

Decision No. 1065/2010.²² The main objective or “Leitmotiv” of the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Program was:

*To reduce the economic and social disparities within the enlarged European Union and between different regions of development of the beneficiary country of Romania. And to contribute within Romania to the reduction of economic and social disparities between the dynamic urban centers and the structurally weak peripheral regions.*²³

The SRCP ran until December 7, 2019. The 10-year time frame was divided into two phases: one commitment phase from 2009 to 2014 and one implementation phase from 2014 to 2019. Project selection took place within the first five years, and all projects had to be completed by the end of the implementation period.²⁴ The SRCP was divided into eight thematic funds²⁵:

- *Health Issues.*
- *The Sustainable Energy Action Fund (SEAF)*
- *Inclusion of Roma and Other Vulnerable Groups*
- *Security*
- *Research Fund and Project in Education*
- *Scholarship (SCIEX)*
- *Partnership and Expert Fund*
- *Civil Society Participation Fund*

Each Thematic Fund was managed by a *Swiss Intermediate Body* (SIB) in Switzerland, which provided expertise and assistance, and a partner organization in Romania. An Executing Agency in Romania implemented each activity/project.²⁶ Each one of the eight SIBs was supervised by the *National Controlling Unit* (NCU) in Romania, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and the Swiss Contribution Office (SCO) at the Swiss Embassy in Bucharest.

²² Portal Legislativ. *HOTĂRÂRE nr. 1.065 din 20 octombrie 2010.* www.legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/123330. Accessed October 2024.

²³ *Annex 1: Conceptual Framework of the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme*, op. cit., p. 1-2.

²⁴ Under the section *Documents*, title: *Der Schweizer Erweiterungsbeitrag. Bilanz zum Abschluss der Länderprogramme in den EU-12 Staaten*, p. 5. www.eda.admin.ch/schweizerbeitrag/en/home/the-swiss-contribution/countries/rumaenien.html Accessed October 2024.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 8-25.

²⁶ *Annex 4: Rules and Procedures for Thematic Funds*, op. cit., p. 1.

4.3. Content Analysis of the SRCP

What did we find in our content analysis? The several sources show significant differences, although they contain the same items: the eight thematic funds. We did not have to discuss the projects since they are not mentioned in Annex 4. We saw different fund titles, definitions, and budgets. The various fund budgets are the most problematic when ranking the issues. The differences range from a few thousand to a few million SFr. There must be an identical methodology for all official sources, and each document must display the same budget. The range can be shown without a fixed budget, but it must be done equally in each document.

Not one thematic fund showed significant issues out of the eight we analyzed. While each fund has a title and a well-elaborated definition, the implemented projects had no underlying theoretical framework. This means we were not able to reproduce the choice behind the projects. There needs to be an explanation inside the available documents on how and why the projects were chosen.

What we also need is a detailed presentation of the needs assessment. First, on the program level, why the eight thematic funds? Then, on the fund level, why the implemented projects? The SRCP has an overall goal. Why and how were the eight thematic funds chosen to reach that goal? Once the thematic funds are determined, the same applies to the project choice: Why and how were the projects selected to achieve the thematic fund's goals?

The documents need a theoretical basis.

5. Sustainability Analysis Results

Chapter Five presents the results we obtained through our sustainability analysis. At the beginning of the thesis, we formulated four hypotheses; only two can be tested by our analysis. The other two hypotheses rely on foreign data analysis through desk review. The two hypotheses are:

H₁: *The Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Program did work at an operational level, and*

H₂: *The set goals of the Swiss-Romanian-Cooperation Program were achieved at a high degree (>66% success rate).*

Needs Assessment Analysis Results

After surveying the three responsible institutions- the SCO and the NCU in Bucharest and the SDC in Bern- we could not precisely determine how the eight thematic funds were chosen. We can only assume that the selection was carried out correctly.

The documentation regarding the needs assessment should have been included. However, since none of our survey respondents were present during the needs assessment before the program's implementation in 2010, they were unaware of it as well. There should have been a protocol or guideline for the procedure.

I. Scholarship Fund

The main goal of this thematic fund was *individual*, not institutional. The objective was to improve the situation of the students enrolled in this project, not a specific faculty, university, or ministry. A final report examines the project process and the issues encountered. What we are missing, though, is any remark about the output or the project's impact on the fellow's career. A measuring mechanism should have been implemented to observe the long-term effects. The sustainability was **unsatisfying!**

II. Research Fund and Project in Education

Our next thematic fund is the Research Fund and Project in Education. This fund has two parts: the *Research Fund* and the *Project in Education*. The Project in Education part has no evaluation or final report, but there is a final report for the Research Fund part. The first part concerns academic research and is similar to the Scholarship Fund we discussed. The fund has 26 research projects, and the proposals came from universities in five cities, including 17 from Bucharest. Again, we have the same pattern as in the Sciex program. The research part of this fund will be repeated with the new Swiss contribution. The sustainability analysis for both parts was **satisfying!**

III. Security Fund

A professional evaluation team from Switzerland, TC Teamconsult, evaluated this thematic fund. We were not able to interview the participants of the 19 implemented projects.

According to the report, the thematic fund security has achieved all the short and medium-term results that were planned and initially expected. The document is available on the Swiss Confederation's website, ARAMIS.²⁷

A persistent problem is corruption. As we can see from the data provided by Transparency International, it has not improved significantly over the past ten years. Our research and analysis show that the sustainability was **unsatisfying!**

²⁷ Website of the Swiss Confederation, a special page called ARAMIS (Administration Research Actions Management Information System) This is an information system about research and innovation projects that are partially or entirely funded by the Swiss Federation. The evaluation has a project number and title and the page provides additional information about the authors and the federal sponsor and the legal foundation. www.aramis.admin.ch Accessed January 2024.

IV. Inclusion of Roma and Other Vulnerable Groups

We have an evaluation of this fund performed by B.S.S. Economic Consultants Ltd. from Basel. The fund implemented six projects. The fund's results are promising. However, the impact has been more local than national. The full evaluation is also available on the Swiss Federal Website ARAMIS.²⁸ To address the issues, the new contribution program must include a component tailored explicitly for Roma people. The sustainability was **unsatisfying!**

V. Sustainable Energy Action Fund (SEAF)

Our next thematic fund is the SEAF, which aims to increase the sustainability of the *Energy Cities for Romania* Program. This will be done by contributing to the necessary technical assistance and support activities for an extended number of Romanian cities and by ensuring a link with cities in poor or underdeveloped regions.

BIZ SPIN Consulting SRL from Bucharest partially evaluated the SEAF Fund; they evaluated 12 projects, and we did the rest, six more in five different cities. We received the evaluation report from the Swiss Agency of Development and Cooperation. BIZ SPIN finalized the assessment report, as they call it, on May 31, 2019²⁹. At that time, seven other projects still had to be prepared for evaluation. Additionally, according to the assessment report, some of the evaluated projects had not been finalized by May 31, 2019. We checked these projects and found out that they had been finalized. Although there was some delay, they are now implemented and working.

After analyzing the remaining projects, our impression of this fund was very positive. It is one of the most successful of the eight SRCP funds. The goals were clear, the methods proven, and the tools available. The more tangible a project is, the easier it is to implement and measure. We consider the sustainability **very satisfying!**

VI. Reform Fund Linked to Civil Society Participation and

VII. Partnership and Expert Fund

We can combine two thematic funds into one presentation. Both funds were managed by the same Swiss Intermediate Body from Zürich, had the same Romanian project partners from Bucharest and Miercurea Ciuc, and had the same team publish the final report.

²⁸ Website of the Swiss Confederation, *op. cit.*, www.aramis.admin.ch/Texte/?ProjectID=49915 Accessed November 2024.

²⁹ Pițigoi, Bogdan, Daniel Petean, Loredana Manolache, *Assessment Report. Project «Sustainable Energy Action Fund» (SEAF), financed within the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme to reduce economic and social disparities within the enlarged European Union*. BIZ SPIN Consulting Srl. Bucharest, Romania, May 2019, p. 44-45.

The authors of the report mention that the thematic fund achieved four out of five objectives.³⁰ We will combine the recommendations for both funds.

Since we did not evaluate the thematic fund, we cannot confirm or reject the agency's issues and recommendations. What we did was check for sustainability. Here, we could witness a particular pattern: NGOs generally seemed to have difficulties with financial support. Everything that was government-funded had no trouble continuing the project after Swiss funding ended. The sustainability was **very satisfying!**

VIII. Health Issues

We surveyed the Swiss Intermediate Body, the Executing Agencies, and the Project Partners with a questionnaire. One project, consisting of seven equal interventions, was checked on location through observation. We managed to survey the head of the Swiss Intermediate Body.

Additionally, we surveyed the head of the partner agency from Romania. We also had a short conversation with a Romanian Ministry of Work functionary. However, that conversation was only about the Community Integrated Health and Social Services project since the ministry was responsible for employees' wages in each of the community's seven Centers for Medical Care. We will only make recommendations for one of the five projects in this fund. The other four are very well-designed and well-implemented. The needs assessment was methodically conducted, and the current situation was evaluated before the right project was chosen to tackle the hot spots within the Romanian health system. We have nothing to add to those projects. Our only recommendations are for the Community Integrated Health and Social Services project. This should be repeated in the next Swiss Contribution. The sustainability was **satisfying!**

³⁰ Zürcher, Dieter, Irina Bejan, Csilla Daniel *End of Phase Report (EPR) November 2011-June 2019* Final August 2019, Zürich, Bucharest, Miercurea Ciuc, Switzerland/Romania, p. 2.

6. Discussion, Contribution, and Improvements

In this chapter, we present several elements of the SRCP that we have analyzed so far: the beneficiaries, the target groups, the Swiss Intermediate Bodies, the relationships it may have created, and the policy changes.

6.1. Discussion

Beneficiaries

The program included partnerships between public institutions, elements from the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and civil society actors. Each thematic fund had partners in Romania who implemented and sometimes managed the projects; they benefited from the program and its payments by improving their agency or institution or by delegating the implementation to a designated executing agency.

Target Group

We have three funds with a very narrow target group: the Scholarship Fund, the Research Fund and Project in Education, and Roma Inclusion Fund. These funds target a very well-defined group of people: Roma and other vulnerable people, PhD students, post-doc graduates, and senior academic researchers — also, children in high school, 8, 9, or 10 graders. The other five thematic funds have an extensive target group, reaching tens of thousands of people.

Swiss Intermediate Bodies

This is the management part of the thematic funds. Not every fund had a SIB. The representatives are experts in their field of activity and each organization has a rich portfolio as a reference, and we do not doubt their professionalism.

Relations

We sent questionnaires to each Swiss Intermediate Body responsible for a thematic fund. We also surveyed the executing agencies within the thematic funds using a questionnaire. Additionally, we analyzed the projects and, in some cases, surveyed the executing agencies with a questionnaire. In summary, while relationship improvement was not a specific feature of the SRCP, it did occur in certain funds. The consequences were very positive and sustainable. These networks will help implement the following Swiss contribution program.

Policy Change

Our last subject of discussion is the policy change caused by the SRCP. Four thematic funds did not help implement a new national policy.

The thematic fund Research Fund and Project in Education only changed one policy in the Project in Education section.³¹ The Health Issues Fund only generated one policy change regarding community socio-medical centers, which is listed in the Department of Justice's legislation portal.³² The Civil Society Participation Fund and Partnership and Expert Fund had three policy changes³³, which is impressive compared to the other six funds. However, the number of policy changes is meagerly related to the number of projects, 141 for both funds combined.

6.2. Contribution

We consider the contribution in two parts: the SRCP's contribution to the relationship triangle, which comprises Switzerland, Romania, and the European Union, and our thesis's contribution to better understanding the triangle. We start with the thesis's contribution and finish the subchapter with the SRCP's contribution.

Thesis' Contribution

Our thesis aimed to contribute to a specific need's remedy; we did not solve a problem. We fulfilled the need and described a particular situation. All SRCP thematic funds had been evaluated, but a sustainability analysis of the implemented projects was needed to be a genuinely complete evaluation. Additionally, with this thesis, we were able to provide insight into a specific form of international relations. The Swiss Contributions brought 14 countries closer together under the umbrella of the European Union. Without this particular context, it is hardly imaginable that Switzerland would have contributed with such intensity.

³¹ Homepage of the Ministry of Education, pre-university education, title Dual education. The site explains the new system and refers to the new method introduced after the Project in Education. www.edu.ro/invatamant-dual. Another document related to the legislation is here: www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/OMEN%203393_Programe%20Scolare%20Gimnaziu.pdf. Both pages were accessed September 2024.

³² Portal Legislativ is a website of the Romanian Ministry of Justice. It contains a list of legislative changes and existing laws. The new law can be found here: www.legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocumentAfis/214842. Accessed September 2024.

³³ Portal Legislativ, the homepage of all laws and orders in Romania. Law no. 151 from July 24, 2019, concerning the use of territory and urbanism, www.legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocumentAfis/216610. The other is the order no. 253 from February 23, 2018, concerning the organization, functioning, and authorization of homecare services, www.legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocumentAfis/198281. Law no. 302 from December 10, 2018, concerning measures to control tuberculosis, www.legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocumentAfis/208647. Accessed September 2024.

Relations between Switzerland and Romania

The first part of our relational triangle concerns the relationship between Switzerland and Romania and how the SRCP has influenced it.

This relationship is of primary importance to our thesis because it directly involves the SRCP, our object of interest. Additionally, we have been able to survey the circumstances surrounding this relationship. Whenever representatives from Switzerland visit Romania and debate about specific interventions, they can rely on insight-driven information and expertise from the Romanian civil society organizations thanks to the SRCP.

Relations between Switzerland and the European Union

How did the SRCP influence the relations between Switzerland and the European Commission? We do not believe that the program has had a significant impact. However, we can confirm that the SRCP will be repeated at the end of 2024. The first steps were taken in 2018. Both parties, Switzerland and the European Commission, agreed to continue with increased financial support for Romania. This shows us that the SRCP was considered successful and will be repeated. This model of cohesion funding is suitable for Switzerland. Rather than transferring the funds into a common EU pot, this way, Switzerland still maintains some control over its use. Additionally, Switzerland is increasing its visibility in Eastern Europe; this is an essential asset.

Relations between Romania and the European Union

The SRCP never specified improving relations between Romania and the EU as a goal or target. If any effects could be registered, they would be coincidental. With the program layout and the projects funded, it would have been impossible to influence any relational system between Romanian and EU institutions.

6.3. Improvements

Needs Assessment Analysis Improvements

Our overall recommendation is to narrow down the goals of the future cooperation program. According to the fund title, several thematic funds are trying to improve a problem for a broad range of residents, but they have only helped a few people from the target group. The best example is the Roma Fund. It reached around 45.000 people, which is less than 10% of the target population, based on the 2011 census, which is still respectable. It would also be good to archive the needs assessment procedure in the future.

This helps to better understand how certain thematic funds were chosen and how specific projects within those funds were chosen.

I. Scholarship Fund

A measuring mechanism should have been implemented to observe the long-term effects. Our recommendations for a future scholarship fund are:

Recommendation 1: Follow-Up Contact

We recommend that for similar future projects, an email server within the scholarship program be installed and an email address be assigned to every program participant. The address will be used to send each participant a catch-up survey after a predetermined period. The survey will help to assess the impact the project had on their career.

Recommendation 2: Volume Reduction

Another recommendation is to reduce the number of calls for proposals. We noticed that there were many proposals; the report even mentioned this. Instead of investing only in research programs, the Swiss Contribution should establish a thematic fund with a broader focus on academic education. This means fewer Ph.D. or Postdoc projects and more Master's projects.

Recommendation 3: Inclusion

We noticed that only top-notch Romanian universities were involved in all the projects. The Sciex program took in submitted proposals but did not specify any institutional requirement. Since only proposals from the elite universities of Romania were submitted, Sciex accepted them without any exclusions. From a development point of view, this could be more efficient.

II. Research Fund and Project in Education

Our recommendations for this fund are:

Recommendation 1: Institutionalization

We would have been delighted to see a Romanian government-run program for student exchange with Switzerland, not a foreign-aided, less inclusive one. This is also valid for the Scholarship Fund; the Romanian government must set up an exchange mechanism for Romanian students who want to attend a Swiss university. Whether as a Master's program or a PhD program.

Recommendation 2: Wider Integration

The project was not intended for theoretical high schools and their students. However, not all pupils pursue an academic path after finishing theoretical high school. Some follow vocational training and learn a profession. Therefore, this program would benefit theoretical high school students equally as those from technical high schools.

III. Security Fund

The new contribution program must again include a dedicated anti-corruption element.

The next SRCP must also address the new problems of the 21st century, namely cybercrime. Although Romania has had a specialized unit since 2011, the Security Issues Fund did not include such a project. The unit is called *Directoratul Național de Securitate Cibernetică (DNSC)*.³⁴ Together with law enforcement, these structures must be strengthened, and international cooperation must be deepened. Cooperation must work without obstacles, especially with Swiss institutions.

IV. Inclusion of Roma and Other Vulnerable Groups

Our recommendations are:

Recommendation 1: Raising awareness among the local population.

The problems will only be solved with the help of every citizen

Recommendation 2: Campaigns need to be intensified at the political level.

Minority rights need to be strengthened more at the national level. This measure will benefit not only the Roma population but also other minorities living in Romania, such as Hungarians, Germans, or Slovaks.

Recommendation 3: The education system needs better monitoring.

Roma children must not be subject to discrimination or segregation. Roma children must attend kindergarten and school, not roam the streets, beg for money, or do illegal work.

Recommendation 4: Infrastructure issues must be remedied.

Access to clean drinking water must be a right, not a privilege. Designated Roma settlements must be provided with the same quality of infrastructure as their Romanian counterparts.

³⁴ Homepage of the Romanian National Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-RO). The organizational document is available here: www.dnsc.ro/vezi/document. Accessed November 2024.

*Recommendation 5: **Health issues need to be addressed.***

Access to health services must be guaranteed, and discrimination based on ethnicity must be eliminated.

V. Sustainable Energy Action Fund (SEAF)

We fully agree with BIZ SPIN's recommendations concerning the extended deadlines for project implementation. Some projects had very complex implementation procedures, several actors were involved, and several variables influenced the termination of the project. Unforeseen problems can occur, so the implementation phase should be more flexible, with some buffer time for those incidents. Weather is another unpredictable variable when planning outdoor projects over several years. Viral outbreaks like the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2022 are another prime example of unforeseen problems.

VI. Reform Fund Linked to Civil Society Participation and

VII. Partnership and Expert Fund

*Recommendation 1: **Awareness Raising***

Civil society organizations in Romania need strengthening and better funding. They also need more public support and better information about their work and the role of NGOs in society. After talking with several representatives from different NGOs, we got the impression that many people in Romania perceive NGOs as foreign agents or spies trying to damage society through their actions.

*Recommendation 2: **Introduction***

Initiate more events, such as field or forest clean-ups in rural areas, with the participation of students and children from grammar and primary schools. Invite students to do more volunteer work in social services, like in a home for the elderly or disabled. Promote voluntary work for an NGO during summer holidays or a semester at the university and get the work evaluated and credited with ECTS points.

*Recommendation 3: **Better Funding***

NGOs should also be strengthened by providing them with the necessary funds for legal action. We often hear that some NGOs want to take legal action against local or county administrations to force them to adhere to their obligations. However, the problem is that such actions require more than just financial means, and if they fail, they fear repercussions from the authorities against them. Some called it revenge by the government.

Recommendation 4: Archiving

Ensure that the project manager archives project data for future sustainability evaluations. We encountered people who needed a proper archive of the project and the activity after the program's conclusion. They had to recall the events and did not know everything; another issue was the lack of bookkeeping of the activities. They could not reproduce how successful the measures were in the last couple of years because of the need for more statistical data recording.

VIII. Health Issues

We will only make recommendations for one of the five projects in this fund. The other four are very well-designed and well-implemented. The needs assessment was methodically conducted, and the current situation was evaluated before the right project was chosen to tackle the hot spots within the Romanian health system. We have nothing to add to those projects. Our only recommendations are for the Community Integrated Health and Social Services project.

Recommendation 1: Increasing the Volume

The project consisted of seven implementations in three different counties. However, having seven implementations in seven different counties would have been better. The number of community centers can be more than just seven. There could be as many as 14 or even 21 in various counties. The need is undoubtedly there; people need these centers, especially in rural, isolated communities with many vulnerable people.

Recommendation 2: Inclusion

The project was implemented based on a call for proposals from the local authorities. There is a problem here: some communities have competent personnel in the town hall, while others still need to do so. There is a positive causality between the qualifications of the staff of an administration and its financial success. Project commissioning should be centralized and based on needs identified in a special assessment.

Recommendation 3: Specialization

Community administrations need a specialized unit qualified to set up project proposals. The unit should consist of 1-2 employees qualified in community project management. A better community financial plan must be elaborated; small and impoverished communities need better support from the national budget.

Recommendation 4: Territorial Integration

There is a town hall and a mayor for every community. Several communities within a short distance of each other should merge their administration into one unit, leaving the small

communities with just a simple administration for the daily needs of the inhabitants. This means that there should be a territorial reform plan for the future of Romania. It would lower the spending and increase the efficiency. Some of the communities we visited had neighboring hamlets and smaller villages. Unfortunately, the inhabitants of these settlements could not benefit from the community services implemented in their vicinity.

Overall Recommendations and Lessons Learned

After finishing the SRCP's eight thematic funds, we would like to make our recommendations from an overall evaluation methodology perspective. We faced some issues during the analysis, which we would like to address in the lesson-learned section.

Recommendation 1: Sustainability

Each thematic fund should be evaluated for sustainability. During this project, we learned that the thematic funds were not adequately assessed for sustainability. It is necessary to have an overall picture of the intervention to increase the program's efficiency in the future.

Recommendation 2: Specify Goals

The formulation of program objectives was comprehensive. However, it was difficult to relate the thematic funds' comprehensive goals to the implemented projects' results. A more quantifiable objective makes it easier to measure the success of a thematic fund.

Recommendation 3: Evaluation Coordinator

Integrate the individual evaluations into one comprehensive document. Once every thematic fund has been evaluated, all the individual assessments should be bundled. An evaluation coordinator should be responsible for coordinating all evaluations. The coordinator should coordinate the evaluation teams in the field and act as a liaison between them and the Swiss and Romanian programs responsible at the headquarters in Bucharest and Bern.

Recommendation 4: Archiving

We found during our visit that more statistical data should be available. The executing agencies did not keep a permanent record of data gathered after the program termination. There should be an understanding between the contracting parties that it is necessary to keep track of the project's development after foreign funding stops.

Recommendation 5: Project Displaying

During our research, we had several different sources where the projects were presented. One source was the SDC website, another source was the SNF website, and the third source

was a website created by the Swiss Intermediate Body consortium (the KEK Consultants, the Civil Society Development Foundation, and the Environmental Partnership Foundation), which displayed 141 projects. Of all these sources, the consortium's website was the best. It has a perfect categorization, assigning each project to the appropriate category. It also gives detailed information about each project with links to the executing agencies.

*Lesson Learned: **Time Frame***

The biggest issue we had was the availability of data after four years. According to the literature on evaluation, it is recommended to carry out sustainability analyses 1-2 years after funding is terminated. We did it four years later. The problem is that if people are not prepared for sustainability analyses, it becomes more challenging to obtain data. In some cases, essential individuals passed away; in other cases, they changed their jobs, moved away, and were unavailable. Sometimes, documents were missing, or they got lost. In four years, a lot of unforeseen things can happen. However, this can be avoided by clearly specifying at the beginning of the program that a sustainability evaluation will be conducted 1-2 years after program termination. This means that every executing agency, beneficiary, and program partner involved with the project must take measures accordingly to record data, keep an archive, and be able to provide the needed data to the evaluators.

7. Conclusions

We have reached the end of our project, the sustainability analysis of the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Program 2009-2019. We conclude after checking whether our thesis fulfilled its purpose, discussing the objectives reached, answering the research guiding questions, addressing the four hypotheses, and expressing our final thoughts.

Was the purpose fulfilled?

We remember that the thesis had a defined purpose: to investigate the sustainability of the SRCP and to determine the remaining percentage of implemented projects. We also wanted to learn about the SRCP's contribution to the triangular relationship between Switzerland, Romania, and the European Union.

The purpose was achieved, and we proved that the SRCP was, on average, sustainable. However, it was not entirely sustainable; we showed that two of the eight thematic funds had some sustainability issues, but six performed well after the program concluded. We have completed the analysis and learned a great deal about the involved parties, their goals, and their relationships with each other, as well as about the SRCP's contribution to improving relations between Switzerland, Romania, and the European Union.

Were the objectives reached?

We set four objectives to help us achieve the purpose of this thesis. We can confirm that all four have been achieved successfully. Here are the four objectives:

- Analyze the theoretical background of the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Program based on well-known International Relations theories.
- Present a comprehensive description of the SRCP and conduct a content analysis.
- Conduct the sustainability analysis of each thematic fund and its projects.
- Highlight existing improvements in bilateral relations between Switzerland and Romania, Switzerland and the European Union, and Romania and the European Union.

What is the Answer to the Research Guiding Questions?

Following the four objectives, we elaborated four research guiding questions:

Did the program or intervention work? Yes, it did.

Did the implemented measures achieve the intended goals? Yes, they did.

What types of implemented projects are still operational, and how many? Question three helped us describe the sustainability and pattern of project management. We could not find strong evidence that a government-managed project had a higher chance of continuous operation than an NGO-managed project. The distribution of still-active projects was almost 50/50; this means nearly half of the still-working projects were managed by public or government institutions, and an NGO managed the other half. More than 75% of the implemented projects were sustainable, which is impressive.

Did the SRCP improve the bilateral relations between Switzerland and Romania?

Question four asked if the SRCP helped improve relations between Switzerland and Romania. The idea was to see if the program improved relations on an institutional level.

The answer is that three thematic funds—the Security Issues Fund, the Civil Society Participation Fund, and the Partnership and Expert Fund—slightly enhanced the relationship between Switzerland and Romania on an institutional level.

The SRCP did not influence the relationship between Switzerland and the EU or Romania and the EU.

Accepting or Rejecting the Hypotheses?

The last task of our concluding chapter is to discuss the hypotheses and determine whether to accept or reject them.

H₁ The Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Program did work.

We can confirm that the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Program worked after conducting research, surveys, interviews, and observations. Thus, we can accept the first hypothesis.

H₂ The set goals of the Swiss-Romanian-Cooperation Program were achieved to a high degree. (>66% success rate)

This hypothesis can be accepted. But it was more complex to deal with. We had to aggregate the results of each thematic fund to decide for or against the hypothesis. In this case, we discuss a 2/3 success rate of each thematic fund, which means at least five funds out of the eight must be successful.

H₃ The majority of the implemented projects lacked sustainability. Less than 50% are still operational, and only the ones managed by government institutions are still successfully active.

Our third hypothesis concerns sustainability and the project's management body. This hypothesis can be rejected.

H₄ The SRCP contributed to the improvement of bilateral relations between Switzerland and Romania.

Our last hypothesis can also be rejected. We surveyed the SIBs of six thematic funds, 11 Romanian partners, and over 150 executing agencies. Only one thematic fund improved relations between the participating institutions. Two thematic funds enhanced relations between the participating NGOs and some institutions, and two thematic funds improved relations between the participating beneficiaries, who were individuals in those cases.

Final Thoughts

Was the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Program a success? The population declined by almost two million people in 10 years. But the national GDP grew from 127 bn to 220 bn Euro³⁵. This is an impressive value, given that Romania lost almost two million people simultaneously. Also, the GDP per capita grew from 6190 to 11.419 Euro. This is nearly a duplication in 13 years. The unemployment rate fell from 6.4% to 5.03%. However, the Corruption Perception Index did not change during that time; the rank remained the same, 69th place, in 10 years of campaigning and investing in anti-corruption programs and foreign aid. Fighting corruption and organized crime, furthering the inclusion of disadvantaged minorities, strengthening civil society organizations, and addressing migration should receive more attention. On average, Romania has improved a lot since it joined the European Union, but this is not only the merit of the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Program. We learned that Romania had additional help from abroad: the EU, Norway, Iceland, and Lichtenstein. However, given the financial differences between the foreign aid programs, we cannot assume that the SRCP contributed significantly to the overall improvement of the situation nationally. Yet, the contribution was of value; the program was able to find and exploit niche domains not covered by the other financial aid programs.

³⁵ The website of countryeconomics.com gives us a good overview of the specific economic and social indicators we used. We used their data to show the situation in 2010 and 2020. www.countryeconomy.com/gdp/romania Accessed September 2024.

We do not believe that the program had a significant impact on the relations between Switzerland and the EU or between Romania and the EU at the formal institutional level. At the project level, the SRCP has created some new relationships. Thanks to the thematic funds, agencies, and organizations that contacted Swiss experts. The data confirm that exchanges took place during project implementation, and in some cases, continue. Switzerland has been able to benefit from the program by promoting it in Romania and the other 12 new European member states; which is not to be neglected, given Switzerland's size.

We also learned that economic circumstances improved in Romania in the last 5-6 years, according to the Chamber of Commerce Switzerland—Romania; in 2018, Romania exported goods worth 446 million Euros to Switzerland, and in 2023, it was 753 million Euros. At the same time, Switzerland exported goods worth 421 million Euros to Romania, and in 2023, they had a value of 1081 million Euros. Romania is becoming more attractive to Swiss investors, too. In 2019, the Swiss Foreign Direct Investment Stock was 2,82 billion Euros; in 2022, it was 4.02 billion Euros.

We cannot attribute the trade increase to the SRCP alone. However, it is happening, and the merit of the SRCP is of secondary concern to the people in Romania. Their primary concern is to improve their social and economic situation. This is what has happened in the last 15 years. Therefore, we conclude that the SRCP has been of significant help within a particular and narrow domain, the eight thematic funds. We also know that it has had a minor influence on certain Romanian institutions, which is a significant achievement. Knowing that a second contribution program starts in 2024 is proof enough for us that the involved parties also considered it a success.

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Federal Act on the Federal Assembly (Parliament Act, ParlA) of December 13, 2002 (Status as of January 1. 2024) Article 27. Evaluation of effectiveness. Document available on fedlex, www.fedlex.admin.ch.

The Annexes can be accessed via the same website of the Federal Council. The used documents are:

Annex 1: Conceptual Framework of the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Program

Annex 2: Rules and Procedures for the overall Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme

Annex 3: Rules and Procedures for Projects

Annex 4: Rules and Procedures for Thematic Funds

www.eda.admin.ch/schweizerbeitrag

Homepage of the Federal Council, Department of Foreign Affairs.

The page explains in detail everything about the eight Thematic Funds

www.eda.admin.ch/schweizerbeitrag/en/home/the-swiss-contribution/countries/rumaenien/thematische-fonds-in-rumaenien.html

Official website of the Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA. Title:

Bilateral Relations Switzerland-Romania www.eda.admin.ch/eda

Additionally, the site with the title Switzerland's European policy, Switzerland-EU in figures was used, available here www.eda.admin.ch/schweiz-eu-in-zahlen.html.

Homepage of the Federal Council, website of the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, title:

European Economic Area (EEA) Description of the EEA www.seco.admin.ch/seco

Homepage of the Federal Council, title: *Swiss contribution to the enlarged EU: Signing of a*

Memorandum of Understanding www.admin.ch/gov/en/start/documentation

Presence Switzerland, under the umbrella of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

(FDFA), maintains a presence within the FDFA ranks and functions as an extended arm of the Swiss Government abroad. It is responsible for promoting Switzerland's image and implementing its communication strategy abroad. www.eda.admin.ch/presence-switzerland.html.

Official website of the Swiss Federal Chancellery (Bundeskanzlei). *Volksabstimmung vom 26. November 2006*.

www.bk.admin.ch/bk/de/home/dokumentation/volksabstimmungen/volksabstimmung-20061126.html

Website of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), *Second Swiss contribution:*

issues and players Page dated August 31, 2022. Unfortunately, there is no page about the first Swiss contribution. But the institutions and players are the same.

www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/fdfa/fdfa/aktuell/newsuebersicht/2022/08/zweiter-schweizer-beitrag.html

Swiss Contribution to selected EU member states. *Der Schweizer Erweiterungsbeitrag*.

Bilanz zum Abschluss der Länderprogramme in den EU-12 Staaten (published May, 2020), p. 4. www.eda.admin.ch/schweizerbeitrag/de/home/der_erweiterungsbeitrag_2007-2024/laender/rumaenien.html

Website of the Swiss Confederation, a special page called ARAMIS (Administration

Research Actions Management Information System) This is an information system about research and innovation projects that are partially or entirely funded by the Swiss Federation. The evaluation has a project number and title and the page provides additional information about the authors and the federal sponsor and the legal foundation.

www.aramis.admin.ch

Romania

JOBS is the job orientation training for businesses and schools. The page contains information, statistics, and free training material for download. www.jobsproject.ro/about-jobs/

The CNDIPT introduced the new project website, *alege-ti drumul!* It looks similar to the JOBS project and offers the same features. www.alegetidrumul.ro/despre

Homepage of the Romanian National Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-RO). The organizational document is available here: www.dnsc.ro/vezi/document

Official Romanian Postal Service website, with attached pdf document, Document: *Raport Anual 2010. Repere ale istoriei postale* www.posta-romana.ro

Portal Legislativ:

HOTĂRÂRE nr. 1.065 din 20 octombrie 2010

www.legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/123330

HOTĂRÂRE nr. 324 din 23 mai 2019

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<https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/208647>

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Website of the Romanian Government, section Fonduri Europene Structurale și de Investiții, sub-chapter Alte Programe, title *Programul de Cooperare Elvețiano-Roman*. www.fonduri-ue.ro/ch-ro

Homepage of the Ministry of Education, pre-university education, title Dual education. The site explains the new system and refers to the new method introduced after the Project in Education. www.edu.ro/invatamant-dual Another document related to the legislation is here:

www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/OMEN%203393_Programe%20Scolare%20Gimnaziu.pdf

Supra National Organizations

Official website of the European Commission.

<http://www.ec.europa.eu/world/agreements/Switzerland> and
www.ec.europa.eu/regional_policy

Official website of the European Parliament. Fact Sheets on the European Union.

www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/95/european-regional-development-fund-erdf

European Commission. EU and Switzerland to sign Memorandum on Swiss financial contribution to the new member States.

www.ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_06_234

Eurostat. Data Browser. GDP and main components (output, expenditure and income).

www.ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/nama_10_gdp/default/table?lang=en

Non-Governmental Organizations

Homepage of the consortium formed by KEK-CDC Consultants, The Civil Society Development, and the Romanian Environmental partnership as the Swiss Intermediate Body for managing and administrating both funds. elvetiaromania.ro/en/projects

Website of Radio Romania International.

www.rri.ro/en_gb/german_landscape_architects_in_bucharest-2556309

Website of country economy. Publisher of statistical data

www.countryeconomy.com/gdp/romania?year=2010

Homepage of Transparency International. Publisher of the corruption perception index.

www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2010