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### **The Swiss Programme financing period in Latvia has been completed**

On Thursday, June 14, the five-year Swiss-Latvian Cooperation Programme financing period was completed resulting in twelve approved projects in total amounting to ~33 million lats (56,88 million CHF) or 100% of the financing allocated to Latvia.

*“I am satisfied that a good cooperation has been developed between Latvia and Switzerland; as a result with the Swiss assistance important public projects are financed. It is important that investment is mainly focused on fields not financed or only partly financed from other financial resources – EU funds, Norwegian and EEA mechanisms, for example, micro loans to companies, fire safety measures in Latvian schools, court modernization etc.,”* says Deputy State Secretary of the MoF on EU Funds Issues Armands Eberhards.

Swiss financing was available to Latvia from 2007 till the end of June 2012, with a possibility to implemented projects by 2017. Since implementation of the first projects started in mid-2009, current indicators of acquired financing can be assessed as very good. Latvia has received from Switzerland 42% of the total project financing in repayments to the state budget. Information received from the donor shows that Latvia is the first among 12 beneficiaries in terms of acquired Swiss financing.

Now the school bus project has been completed successfully and 95 municipalities have received 110 new school buses for transportation of school children. Implementation of the project “Project Preparation Facility” has been completed. Within the framework of this project researches were done before project implementation.

As a result of implementation of remaining ten projects significant results have been achieved:

- 7 of 17 multifunctional youth initiative centres have been opened in regions;
- 350 micro loans have been granted in amount of 2.2 million lats to micro companies and self-employed persons to start business;
- doctoral students and new scientists from Latvia have received scholarships to carry out researches in Swiss universities/scientific institutions;
- by the end of June 2012 in all courts and prisons ~80 video conference equipment will be installed and in all court rooms 295 audio recording equipment will be installed;
- ~40 of 60 NGO projects have been implemented within the framework of the NGO fund to improve living standards for young people and children from unfavourable families, with special needs, orphans and seniors.

Within the framework of the Swiss programme scholarships will be also granted to Swiss scientists to read lectures and exchange experience in Latvian universities and scientific institutions that will contribute to development and strengthening of potential of Latvian higher education and scientific institutions. Remediation works will be also carried out in five objects in the Riga Free Port territory recovering and improving the environment quality in polluted areas. The first remedy works will be started in the second half of this year.

Since the school bus project was completed with savings, it was possible from February 2012 to grant Swiss financial assistance to improving fire safety measures in Latvian education institutions. Therefore within the framework of the project in 138 municipal education institutions (mainly boarding schools) fire safety systems will be improved thus creating safe environment for at least 700 children and young people.

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