**Reuniting Europe Programme Evaluation – 7 projects in Croatia 2011-12**

**Programme Background**

On accession to the EU in July 2013, Croatia was the first country from the former Yugoslavia to have transformed itself from a war-torn state to NATO and EU member. This was achieved in less than twenty years.

The British Embassy Zagreb used the Reuniting Europe programme in 2011 – 2012 to help maintain Croatia’s progress during the Accession Process as well as to build Britain’s influence in Croatia by promoting British values and diplomatic influence through all strata of Croatian society. The Embassy ran seven projects under the programme with a total value of £519,000. The projects focussed on two main areas – building capacity in public administration, strengthening reforms in the justice sector, and promoting human rights.

**2011-12 Programme Details**:

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| Project Code | Project Title | Purpose | Dates |
| GB-3-PEU SRE 000613 | Judicial Umbrella project 1 | To provide supervision and advice to the three court managers and in parallel review the scheme encouraging co-ordination of all relevant judicial stakeholders. | Apr 10 – Mar 12 |
| GB-3-PEU SRE 000721 | Support the setting up of Zagreb Faculty Legal Clinic | Ensure that Zagreb Faculty Clinic offers best practice legal aid to the public | May 11 – Mar 12 |
| GB-3-PEU SRE 000722 | Bringing British Public Administration skills to Knin, Zadar and Split | To strengthen the effectiveness of public administration in Croatian local administration | May 11 – Jun 12 |
| GB-3-PEU SRE 000723 | Bring judiciary closer to the public – train spokespersons of County Courts in Croatia | To improve the public perception of courts in Croatia through improvement of County Court spokespeople skills | May 11 – Mar 12 |
| GB-3-PEU SRE 000724 | Strengthen the ability of the Croatian law enforcement agencies to deprive offenders of the proceeds of crime | Strengthen the ability of the Croatian law enforcement agencies to implement article 82 of the Criminal Code to deprive offenders of the proceeds of crime | May 11 – Mar 12 |
| GB-3-PEU SRE 000725 | Strengthen the implementation of the new Freedom of Information Act | To train Data Protection Agency staff and information officers in line ministries and local administration to better understand their role in implementation of the Freedom of Information Act, whilst developing a standardized approach to classification of documents and recording of Freedom of Information requests. | May 11 – Mar 12 |
| GB-3-PEU SRE 000726 | Adviser to Central Office for Development Strategy / Co-ordination of EU Funds (CODEF) | To help CODEF meet the timetable for EU accession negotiations under Chapter 22 (Regional Policy and Coordination of Structural Instruments) with a view to maximising Croatia’s future absorption of EU funds. | Apr 11 – Sep 11 |

**Key Findings**

1. This strategically aligned programme contributed to enabling Croatia to sustain momentum and drive on key issues in the lead up to its eventual accession; and served to enhance the UK’s bilateral relationship with a new EU member.
2. Some projects were overly ambitious and lacked sufficient local buy in. Consequently they have not yet delivered all their outputs. Evidence suggests that work is still in progress.

**Relevance**

The programme was coherent and strategically aligned with the reform priorities for Croatia’s EU Accession, focussing on judicial reform and strengthening public administration in support of the Embassy’s objectives. Efforts were made to identify key policy areas where our programme could add value.

The timing of the chosen projects was good in that they responded to priorities arising from the close EU accession date – the judicial/rule of law chapters were the closing elements of the EU accession negotiations – however more could have been done at project selection stage to ensure that the most relevant projects were selected in support of a strong overall strategy. The process for identifying projects and selecting implementers should have been more transparent and focused on beneficiary need. Over-emphasis on implementation through international organisations may have weakened the ownership and input of Croatian Institutions. The programme did enable broad use of UK expertise allowing for wider bilateral benefits, however greater consultation with a wider constituency in country would have supported greater programme relevance.

**Efficiency**

The Embassy worked with implementers to redesign some of the projects mid implementation in order to ensure that they remained efficient, continued to add value and did not duplicate new donor work. However most of the projects evaluated are still to achieve their original indicators and many of their outputs. Court Managers are still not in place (see above) and under the Freedom of Information Act project only 41 individuals, out of a projected 100, were trained.

The programme supported projects which were developed by implementers. Priorities were identified as a result of donor -implementer dialogue rather than consultation with the beneficiary. Consequently projects did not adequately respond to local priorities or circumstance and lacked necessary high level buy in to achieve impact. Often international consultants were used where partnership with local implementers would have been both less costly and more sustainable. Where an international consultant was the most appropriate implementer, better value could have been achieved by pairing with Croatian counterparts. In the area of training delivery, engaging local trainers would have allowed shared learning and the embedding of benefits.

**Effectiveness**

Beneficiaries consistently reported satisfaction with project effectiveness, praising the quality of UK expertise, and with the work enabling Croatia to sustain momentum and drive in key issues. This allowed the Embassy to promote the UK as a keen supporter of Croatia – meaning that the Embassy was better placed to lobby effectively on EU accession issues, and enhance the UKs bilateral relationship with a soon to be new EU member.

The programme effectively acted to leverage greater EU funding in support of our objectives through contributing to the successful positioning of the UK to win two EU Twinning projects: One €1.8m project on the establishment of probation services in Croatia; the other (still ongoing) €2.6m project aimed at strengthening the efficiency of Croatian judiciary.

The implementation of projects within the programme supported the delivery of the two key strategic goals of the programme: supporting Croatia down the EU path; and promoting the UK as a natural partner. However the projects have not yet fully delivered greater public administration capacity and justice sector reform in Croatia. No project within the programme has fully achieved its purpose to date. Whilst projects were well designed to ensure that outputs were strong and sufficient to deliver purpose, they were generally over ambitious in defining what could be achieved in the short time frame. More could also have been done to ensure the required stakeholder buy in.

**Sustainability**

The UK is seen as an effective and valued partner by the Government of Croatia and work to support them through the accession process, both diplomatically and financially through the Reuniting Europe programme continues to be recognised.

There was evidence that work begun in some projects is continuing and that progress is being made towards outputs and ultimately project purpose. This is most obvious in the justice reform work where there was greatest alignment of purpose with beneficiary need. In some cases, project outcomes have been sustained because they have fed into and complemented other larger and longer term projects funded by different donors.

Projects where there was no evidence of sustainability were those that lacked the necessary local buy in to achieve project purpose, and where the implementer had no long term presence in country.

Greater sustainability could have been achieved if the programme had worked more closely with local implementers and beneficiary institutions in design and implementation of projects. This would have ensured greater relevance of purpose and increased local capacity to take forward the project work after the project ended.

**Impact**

The Embassy had picked a strong portfolio of relevant projects which, over the course of the programme enabled the UK to help Croatia demonstrate its commitment to reform as it worked towards eventual EU accession. The programme allowed the UK to build stronger relationships with Croatian ministries. Strategically the programme had impact. However objectively very few of the projects have yet to deliver concrete change, although there was some evidence of projects feeding into a slow incremental change in processes and mind sets, particularly through their contribution to on-going larger scale projects. Greater impact could have been achieved with more focus at design stage on defining achievable, impactful objectives.

Many of the implementers and beneficiaries commented that despite Croatia’s accession, the objectives of the British Embassy Zagreb’s programme in justice and public administration remain unfulfilled and that there was a continued need for assistance.

**Lessons Learned**

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| 1. | Closer consultation with beneficiaries and stakeholders at project design stage to ensure projects match local need and circumstances. |
| 2. | More partnership with local implementers to achieve greater sustainability. |
| 3. | Integrate programme into wider Embassy work to ensure opportunities to strengthen diplomatic relations and build influence in support of strategic policy direction are fully exploited. |
| 4. | Better project record keeping to help the Embassy and Programme benefit from lessons learnt. |
| 5. | Importance of timeliness. Given, that it is difficult to assess the pace of the legislation changes and the institutional responsiveness to intended changes, it is necessary to design the project that its purpose does not remain limited to the products of consultancy work, with no influence on improved practices. |