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SASDA

Secretariat for Analysis of
Swedish Development Assistance

*Development Cooperation with Eastern and
Central Europe - a review of evaluation results*

Kim Forss
Stockholm, September 1994

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SASDA

The Secretariat for Analysis of Swedish Development Assistance

The Swedish government has appointed a committee with the task of analysing the results and effectiveness of Swedish development aid. A special Secretariat, SASDA, was set up on 1 March 1993 to carry out the work.

The Secretariat will work until the end of 1994 and will have as its main task to propose to Government suitable mechanisms for evaluations and policy analyses of Swedish aid. In its work SASDA will give priority to carrying out a set of selected studies world-wide, at country, sector and subject level and to studies of individual organisations to provide a basis for decisions on development co-operation in the future and to gain experience on how policy evaluations should be carried out. A major study concerns Sweden's co-operation with Central and Eastern Europe.

SASDA's point of departure is the aim of a better understanding of the mechanisms of development in order to enhance the results and increase the effectiveness of aid in achieving the five goals set by the Swedish parliament: increased resources, economic and social equality, economic and political independence, the democratic development of society, and the long-term management of natural resources and care of the environment.

The studies and analyses will be managed partly by the Secretariat's own staff and will include studies commissioned from different specialists in the committee's areas of priority.

The staff are :

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Development Cooperation with Eastern and Central Europe

- a review of evaluation results

Commissioned by the Secretariat for Analysis
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Summary

The purpose of this report is to summarize all evaluations and reports concerning development cooperation with Eastern and Central Europe, from 1989 and up to the present. All evaluations are included as well as many other forms of feedback; for example final reports from projects, internal memoranda, etc. The report summarizes 48 reports, at a total of 1.300 pages. The evaluations speak for themselves, and it is their conclusions that a reader may listen to. No visits, interviews or any other search for data or opinions were undertaken in connection to the review. Three questions and their responses are at the center of interest.

Question 1: Does the Swedish cooperation has an impact in terms of the Swedish policy objectives; that is, to promote the transformation to a market economy, to support democracy and the development of legal governance, and the protection of the environment?

Answer: Most evaluations do not say anything at all, either because they were not asked to do so, or because the project/programme was not explicitly designed to have an impact. The policy objectives do not appear to have any direct relation to the activities. Few of the organizations relate their activities to the objectives, at least in written form, in evaluations and reports. When the evaluations say anything about the policy objectives, the most common conclusion is that is uncertain whether there was an impact, or that there was no impact at all. It is only in 2% of the cases that the evaluators say that the project/programme had an effect in respect of a policy objective.

Question 2: Do the projects and programmes have an impact in terms of their own direct, concrete and immediate objectives?

Answer: Only seven reports came to the conclusion that the objectives were reached, but out of these four were internal reports, and one was contradicted by an external evaluation. Those projects that reached their objectives were rather small, and they had few and clear objectives. Large programmes with many and fussy objectives were not likely to score highly in this respect. Besides, it is not quite clear what function objectives have in the development cooperation with Eastern and Central Europe, but in any case they do not serve as valid criteria for evaluations.

Question 3: Has the programme of cooperation been effectively implemented?

Answer: The majority of evaluations cannot say that implementation was effective, only eight of the programmes were considered effective by the authors. The concept of effectiveness is poorly analyzed in the reports. It is an indication that the author found implementation rather fast and smooth, and the costs reasonable. The most frequent shortcomings in the cooperation process concern lacking coordination, low local involvement, insufficient attention to project design, low flexibility, and declining interest on behalf of the recipients.

Are the results accurate? Some of the evaluations have not followed a structured process of inquiry, they do not present their methods, they do not present data in a form which is verifiable, and they do not discuss how reliable their findings are. In particular, their assessment of whether objectives are achieved, and their calculations of effectiveness should only be accepted with caution. How does this affect the conclusions above? I do not think there is any risk that the reports taken together underrate the achievements of development cooperation. Considering the nature of the reports, it is more likely that they present better results and paint a brighter picture of the cooperation than would be justified by reality.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Secretariat for Analyses and Studies of Development Assistance (SASDA) undertakes a comprehensive review of Swedish development cooperation with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The present report is part of that review, and it should be seen and understood in light of the other studies undertaken. The purpose of this paper is to summarize all evaluations that have been completed in respect of the aid to Central and Eastern Europe, from its start in 1989 until now (mid-June 1994). The task was accomplished in three steps; trace evaluations and reports, read them and write a report to summarize what they have to say.

I summarize evaluations concerning the funds allocated by the government for aid to Central and Eastern Europe - the amounts found under item G7 in the government's budget proposal, plus some smaller additional allocations under budget titles 12 and 14 (ministries of Industry and Commerce, and Environment and Natural Resources). The organizational structure that takes decisions and implements the aid has shifted during the years of cooperation.

I will not delve into the institutional arrangements on the Swedish side. Most of the funds have been disbursed through the agencies for development cooperation with the Third World, but much has also been allocated directly through other government agencies. These issues are covered in other studies, and have also been discussed in recent organizational studies. Money is the starting point for this paper, not organizations.

The second starting point is evaluations. However, the borderline between "proper" evaluations and memoranda, progress reports, final reports of projects etc is fluid. In theory an evaluation may be defined as the "systematic application of social science techniques to programme design and implementation" (1). This is arguably not the one and only definition, but it is commonly accepted. The problem is that it would leave us with almost no evaluations at all of the aid programme! Even though many studies were undertaken few were based on "a systematic application of social science techniques".

Some would say that an evaluation is a sort of feedback on how things are going. That would be a wider definition, and would open up many sources of data. Internal memoranda, progress reports, etc contain a lot of information/feedback. As the main purpose of this paper is to find as much evidence as possible on design and implementation of the development assistance, these other sources of opinion and information were included.

1.2 Meta-analytical research methods.

Studies that build on and summarize other studies are called meta-analytical studies or, as in this case, meta evaluations. Meta-analytical procedures are not common in the evaluation of development assistance. As far as I know, it has never been attempted among the Swedish aid organizations before. This is not meant to be an introductory text in meta-evaluation, but I would like to introduce the reader to some basic texts in the field. "Meta-analytic procedures for social research" by Robert Rosenthal (Sage Publications, 1984) is a good introductory text, and so is "Meta-analysis; cumulating research findings across studies" by Hunter, Schmidt and Jackson, also published by Sage, 1982. Both texts are of a general introductory nature, but the latter is less quantitatively oriented. Also, the Annual Review of Evaluation Studies almost always have one or two articles on meta-evaluation.

Meta-evaluation can be used in several ways; for example, to add different studies so that you get a larger data base, or to explore differences between studies and look for causes that explain those differences. In the field of aid evaluation, it might be more interesting to know if 500 people have found a programme useful than to know if 10 thought it was good. In this paper, the evaluations are cumulated in respect of three issues;

- (1) What is the overall impact of Swedish development assistance in respects of the Swedish government's formally stated objectives of cooperation?
- (2) What is the impact created by the various projects, in respect of their own objectives?
- (3) How has the implementation of the cooperation worked, in particular, to what extent do the evaluations and reports find the process effective?

There were no field visits during the work with this report, no interviews, nor any questionnaires distributed. The only input of data came from the reports that were included in the survey. No major evaluations and reports have escaped attention. All Swedish organizations involved in the aid programme were contacted, and those who had any material sent copies. The reader who wonders about the sample presented here should know that it is not a sample, but the full population, as of the 15th of June 1994. Other evaluations or reports might have been completed after that date (I know of at least 6 evaluations that were finished during the next month), but the work on this study ended in mid-June.

As all the work has been conducted as "arm-chair research", one may object that the report lacks a feeling for reality. This is not a valid objection, the whole point with meta-evaluation is that the other evaluations should speak for themselves. I do not repeat the

evaluations; I summarize the results. The voices speaking here are first and foremost the voices of other evaluators - and the point is to let them be heard, irrespective of whether I personally agree or disagree.

One of the methodological problems in meta-evaluation concerns whether studies of poor quality should also be included. The general opinion is that all studies should be included, and if the author decides to drop a study, it must be carefully explained why and how, and the criteria for exclusion must be discussed at length. In this study, I have not left out any source of data that has been known to me. If I have missed anything, it is entirely by mistake.

At times there are reasons to agree or disagree, and I have solved this problem by adding a discussion of the reliability and validity of findings. In essence, this is a comment on the quality of the evaluations, an evaluation of the evaluations; that is, my opinion on whether they are to be trusted or not.

I should mention that Andante Consultants AB was commissioned for three of the evaluations covered here (nos 3,4 and 39). I have tried to assess our evaluations in the same terms as the others, and to be as critical against our firm as against others. I might have failed, obviously I am biased, and the reader should take particular care when reading these summaries.

The task to compile evaluations was undertaken by Kim Forss and Jerker Carlsson, both of Andante Consultants AB. Jerker Carlsson gathered evaluations from BITS, wrote summaries of BITS evaluations and took part in the discussion of the final report, Kim Forss gathered and summarized all the other evaluations and wrote the report.

1.3 A note to the reader.

In chapter 2 the evaluations and reports are presented. There were 48 different reports, of totally 1.300 pages. Together they cover 29 projects or programmes. Each evaluation is summarized. At first I present the project background and what it tried to achieve; second, the major conclusions in respect of the questions above; and third I describe the accuracy of the evaluation findings.

Many of the evaluations and most of the reports are strongly oriented to the future. Once I saw a poster saying that the world is made up of three kinds of people; those who make things happen, those who watch things happen and those who wonder what happened. I have the impression that the reports here were written for the first two kinds of people, and they do not bother much about those who wonder what happened (which is a valid question as around 3.000 million SEK have been spent on the cooperation programme).

The feedback is not much concerned with explaining and understanding why and how things happen, nor much with effects either. Consequently there is often not much to summarize, particularly not in

respect of questions 1 and 2 above (development objectives and project objectives or short-term and long-term objectives, to use another terminology). When there is nothing written in the reports, I simply bypass the issue and proceed to the next level where the report may have something to say. I do not summarize recommendations for the future, they are irrelevant in this context.

It is not fair to assess reports according to quality criteria nobody ever thought of. First of all, progress reports, memoranda, etc cannot be expected to apply social science techniques. I do not mean to say they should, and most of the time I simply do not discuss methodological issues in connection to them. However, this also means that they have little reliability, and at times I choose to remind the reader of fact.

Evaluation quality is more tricky, and I am well aware that I set methodological standards much higher than the profession (in Sweden) is used to. Swedish administrative practice tends to put heavy weight on the independent status of an evaluator. Independence is assumed to be the harbinger of truth. It is rare that evaluators apply research techniques. Many evaluators merely visit places and talk to people. Hopefully they find out what is good and bad, whether there are any effects etc. Whether the evaluator finds out "the truth" depends on his or her wisdom, perception and integrity.

The qualities of wisdom, perception and integrity may yield accurate results, and those who commission evaluations presumably know if the evaluators possess these qualities. But a reader who takes part of the studies and who is not familiar with the persons cannot know. When the reports do not contain any methodological discussion it becomes impossible to verify how accurate the findings are. Thus, when I question the accuracy of evaluations, I do it as an outsider who is interested in the issue and who looks for information apart from what personal acquaintance with the evaluators would yield.

Consequently, this report suffers from a dilemma. I include many reports that do not even pretend to be "evaluations" because I need the information they contain. I apply standards of accuracy that would push most of the reports that are in fact called "evaluations" into another category of writing. My own opinion is that feedback of all sorts is essential, and I think it is important to recognize the information content which is available in many memoranda, notes to the file, and other more or less casual documents. It is also necessary to raise the methodological standards in respect of evaluation practice.

2. A review of evaluations.

On the following pages I present the evaluations and reports on development cooperation in Eastern and Central Europe. I present them in chronological order, except where several papers belong together because they are about the same project or programme. The total number of pages of the evaluations amount to roughly 1.300 and they are presented on 50 pages in this report. They contain much information which is not covered here, but I think that all they have to say in respect of the three questions mentioned on page 2 is found below. The discussion in chapter 3 brings together the studies and aggregates the findings.

(1) Report from an evaluation of nine management development projects in Poland. An evaluation commissioned by BITS. October 1992.

Background

Under the Swedish programme for assistance to Polish economic reforms management training has been given high priority. Altogether nine different projects have been implemented, at a total value of 32,4 million SEK at the time of the evaluation. BITS commissioned the present evaluation, in agreement with its Polish counterpart.

Conclusions

The nine projects share the same objectives; increase the strength of Polish management through training programmes and contribute to institutional development. In summary, the objective to arrange training courses has been achieved, although attendance has at times fallen short of expectations. The results with respect to the objective of institution building are more mixed. In three projects, the objective was achieved, in one it was within reach and one project failed. Below follows a brief summary of each programme.

Torun regional development programme had as overall objective to support industrial development in the region. Phase 1 was designed to make an inventory of the situation, identify enterprises for further appraisal and determine industrial priorities. Everything specified in the agreement was done and the Polish authorities were satisfied with the reports, but the evaluator had questions about the quality of the work. During phase 2 and 3 some 25 - 30 companies were to be privatized and helped to establish commercial relations with foreign companies, they were to be assisted by the consultants, in addition investment banks were to be created, a special study on tourism undertaken, and a restructuring program for some industries started. Training connected to these activities was undertaken according to plan, but the privatization never occurred and the evaluator could not establish the effect in respect of institutional development. The evaluator considered the programme to be cost effective.

During the project to establish the Polish Management Center, the objectives were met in respect of training teachers and producing training material. However, the Polish cooperating institution ceased to exist in 1992. Still, there might be positive side effects anyway; people have still been trained. The evaluator concluded the program was not cost effective.

Another project, implemented by the same institution as above, was to train board members. 600 board members in 25 Polish firms were sent to training, but the evaluator could not assess the impact. The institution building effect could not be established. The evaluator thought the project was highly cost-effective.

Yet another project was to train teachers from Cracow university. Nine week long courses was given to a total of 191 participants. The evaluator is not clear about whether the performance is acceptable or not, and does not assess the institution building effect. But the project was considered cost effective.

The so called EMTA management programme was designed to develop a management assistance programme and to train local consultants in its use. Both objectives were met, but instead of 10 consultants only 5 were recruited to work with the programme. The evaluator concluded it was cost effective. A consecutive project had a similar approach, but in the more limited field of profitability analysis. The full number of local consultants were trained, and the companies they worked in registered significant improvements within a year. The evaluator concluded it was cost effective.

Methodological issues.

The evaluator based his conclusions on reading documents and agreements, work plans and budgets, and the reports produced by the projects. He made a two week visit to Poland and interviewed representatives from Polish authorities, cooperating organizations, and participants in courses. He also interviewed representatives of the Swedish firms engaged in the cooperation.

The findings are presented in qualitative form. The analysis of cost effectiveness was usually done by comparing costs per trainee, although I cannot find a standard for when this is considered satisfactory and when not. The assessment does not take quality aspects into account.

The evaluator continuously reminds the reader of the uncertain nature of data, and in particular discusses the question of long-term impact and sustainability. It is quite clear that the evaluator is very uncertain about which conclusions to draw, which is not surprising considering the time at disposal to undertake an evaluation of so many and different projects.

(2) Utvärdering av samarbetet med Polen. (An evaluation of the cooperation with Poland) Memorandum from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. January 1993.

Background.

In november 1989 the government decided to allocate 300 million SEK for development cooperation with Poland. The objective was to support democratic development, facilitate the transition to a market economy and focus on environmental protection. The funds were administered by BITS, SIDA, the Swedish Institute and Swedfund.

Conclusions.

The evaluator is of the opinion that the funds were distributed according to the governments intentions; that is, for the purposes stated above. It is noted that official Polish comments are careful and guarded, and seem to express disappointment with the collaboration. The Polish partners seem to want aid that gives more concrete results in the future. Comments such as "too many consultants" were often heard. The Polish partners strongly express that they wish to negotiate with one partner in Sweden, one partner who will be able to give the whole programme a coherent direction. Furthermore, they wish to see a stronger focus on sectors and regions.

The evaluator concludes that the implementation of small and medium sized projects has been effective and has yielded the expected impact. Within this category he lists large numbers of courses, seminars, study tours and advisory services.

However, the evaluator says it is more difficult to find any large project which has been successful. He quotes examples of boiler supplies where the project has been delayed for so long that it may never be concluded. The same applies to some water treatment plants; the budgets were miscalculated and there were no additional sources of funds. He says that some of the reasons for the failures might be that the Polish partners lacked experience of project management, and the decision making structures in the new administration were unclear - and consequently projects were delayed. The Polish banking system was disorganized and could not supply credits. Limited and random inputs of Swedish consultancy services were not sufficient to solve the problems. The evaluator gives several examples of projects that can be questioned. In conversation, Polish partners were dissatisfied with a program for regional development, and the technology transfer provided by a Swedish firm left few traces.

Methodological issues.

Although this is formally speaking an evaluation report, it contains no discussion of methods used, and in fact no methods may have been used. It seems as if the evaluator has spoken to a number of persons in Poland and Sweden, and thus he has solicited opinions in an unstructured manner. There is no way to verify whether these opinions

are correct or not, or whether another evaluator would have arrived at the same conclusions.

There is a major discrepancy in the report. The evaluator concludes that small and medium sized technology transfer projects have worked well (even though there is no empirical data to support this conclusion). Still, the evaluator as well as the Polish authorities express dissatisfaction with too many scattered projects and too many consultant's reports ending up on the shelves. On the other hand, the larger projects have failed, or have not yielded the expected results. But the conclusion is that future assistance should be more concentrated and coordinated in projects that are mutually supportive.

The fundamental issue in any evaluation is whether the conclusions regarding impact, effectiveness and efficiency in implementation are accurate. It is not uncommon that the only guarantee in this respect is the sound judgement and independent position of the evaluator. That is the case here, and there is no methodological guarantee of accuracy, nor is there any presentation of data that could either support or disqualify the opinions put forward in the report.

(3) Technical cooperation in industry and management with Eastern and Central Europe. An evaluation commissioned by BITS. March 1993.

Background.

BITS supported a total of 48 projects in the sector of industry and management at a cost of 31 million SEK in the three Baltic countries, Hungary, the Czech and Slovak republics. This report is an attempt at an overall evaluation of these projects.

Conclusions.

The evaluators distinguish three different types of projects among these 48; (1) those that intend to affect the structure of industrial and commercial relations by affecting institutions and legal framework, (2) those that aim at training people or build training institutions, and finally (3) those that are directed at firms with concrete problem solving inputs.

Looking at project implementation, the evaluators find short-comings; for example, fewer people than expected attended courses and the delivery of services was often delayed. The evaluators found the content of some courses and seminars of poor quality. However, their most serious - the evaluators emphasis - objection to project implementation practice is that the partners at times are passive and lack control of what is happening in the projects they are supposed to have ordered and are expected to control. The evaluators note that they have not found any examples of fraud or irregular practices, and they consider the shortcomings as manageable - but the actors need to pay attention.

The evaluators discuss impact in respect of three different objectives; those set by each project (immediate objectives) and the objectives to contribute to economic reform and to create commercial links to Sweden. In summary, the evaluators conclude that most projects achieve the immediate objectives, although with short-comings as mentioned above. The programme as a whole does not have any impact when it comes to affecting the economic reforms (mostly because few of the projects have direct short-term targets in this respect), and they are only moderately effective in building commercial relations to Sweden. It is primarily the third category of projects (direct support) that are successful in this respect.

Methodological issues.

The evaluation was conducted by a Swedish consultant in collaboration with the aid coordinating committees in the three Baltic countries. The evaluators used questionnaires to assess the impact of training, asking what those taking part thought of the courses, assessing what they learnt, how they applied skills and to what extent this benefitted the organizations. In addition, the evaluation team visited organizations and interviewed collaborating partners in the recipient countries. The response rates to questionnaires, and the selection of interviews are reported and discussed. The interviews were conducted according to a structured format, and each interview was typed out, circulated in the team, and enclosed to the evaluation report (as was the data base of questionnaire responses).

The evaluators discuss accuracy and conclude that it is high. The weakest point, which is only briefly treated in the report, concerns the generalization. The whole evaluation builds on 14 projects in the Baltic countries, but it claims to be valid for the full population of 48 projects. Still, the team has nothing to support why the conclusions would be valid outside their own research domain.

(4) An evaluation of technical assistance projects to promote business development in Estonia. Commissioned by Länsstyrelsen i Stockholms Län. March 1993.

Background.

Länsstyrelsen i Stockholms län (the regional council) allocated funds for development cooperation with Estonia in 1991 and 1992. Two projects were financed, one to develop, print and disseminate a pamphlet with information about the Swedish market, and the other to establish links between a business center in Estonia and a center in Södertälje. The objective was to promote commercial relations to Estonia, and to support the development of medium- and small scale business activities. The evaluation was commissioned when the two projects had come to an end, both to assess results and to support decisions on future cooperation. The total amount for both projects was slightly more than 500.000 SEK.

Conclusions.

The evaluators found that the pamphlet was appreciated in style and content, though it contained information which was not strictly necessary. It was not well-known and had by and large failed to reach the target group in Estonia. Consequently the objectives were not reached.

As for the business center, the evaluators found that time had run away from the original purpose of the project. The Estonian institutions had proliferated and political as well as personnel changes led to new developments in Estonia. However, at least one of the institutions survived and grew, and a network of organizational contacts were built between the Swedish center and several centers in a region in southern Estonia.

More important, the business contacts increased rapidly. Both sides benefited as exports to Estonia as well as imports to Sweden grew. By March 1993 more than a hundred different contracts had been signed, and there were many real cases of completed - and profitable - transactions. This part of the programme was found to be cost-effective and the objectives were reached.

Methodological issues.

The evaluation was a joint undertaking by a Swedish and an Estonian consulting firm. The evaluators worked with structured, formal interviews, questionnaires, and analysis of commercial data from the centers and from importers/exporters. The evaluation contains a discussion of the quality of data. Questionnaires were translated and all interviews in Estonia were conducted by the Estonian partner. The major shortcomings of the evaluation concern the second of the projects, namely the business centers. The total volume of business cannot be definitely established, and the calculations of cost effectiveness are indications of direction rather than definite measures.

(5) Review of BITS supported studies within the forestry sector in Poland. An evaluation commissioned by BITS. June 1993.

Background.

BITS financed a number of consultancy studies of the forestry industry in Poland, as an input to the Polish governments work to restructure the sector. The studies were divided into two phases, the first a single review of the whole industry, the second a number of studies to follow up concretely on selected issues from the first phase (the situation at four paper mills, management training and general advisory services). The total contract for the two phases amount to 30.9 million SEK.

Conclusions.

In this project merit cannot be ascertained by reference to objectives as there appear not to have been any except to deliver the services. The evaluator concludes that the management at two of the paper mills did not find the reports, nor the advisory services, to be of any use in their work. The management of the other two paper mills found the input from the Swedish consultants useful.

Regarding the management training, the evaluator says that all participants he met verified that the training was interesting and instructive. What they learnt was news for them and sometimes difficult to understand. But it gave ideas in marketing, organization and economy. The training has also given results. In at least one mill, the organization was changed, and management started analysing production costs.

The Swedish consultants also provided studies that were to be an input to the Polish government's privatization programme. The evaluator concludes that these inputs were useful, and they were appreciated by the Polish officials. However, the activities of the Advisory Board was regarded as dubious by the Polish authorities and little was known about it.

As a general conclusion, the evaluator argues that the services provided by the Swedish consultants were professionally conducted and potentially useful. The consultants fulfilled their obligations in respect of the contracts. Technology transfer has been extensive, Swedish technicians, economists and marketing specialists transferred their knowledge in the most effective way. The evaluator concludes that the project has been cost-efficient.

Methodological issues.

The evaluation was conducted by one person in 10 days, out of which six were spent in Poland. The evaluator took part of projects plans, documents produced by consultants etc, and interviewed Polish and Swedish partners. There is no methodological discussion in the evaluation, and it contains no data from interviews, nor any calculations verifying costs or effects.

As for the evaluation of training, the evaluator met 15 persons in Poland but it is not clear whether they took part in the training programmes. Several programmes were held, but we do not learn how many persons were trained nor for how long or in what subjects. Consequently it is impossible to assess whether the statement that "the training was appreciated, effective and lead to results" is true or not. Based on these few comments, it should be clear that I have questions regarding the accuracy of the report.

(6) Bra bistånd - med små medel. An evaluation commissioned by SIDA regarding support through NGOs to Estonia and Romania. August 1993.

Background.

SIDA's development cooperation in Eastern and Central Europe started in 1989. The government has allocated 180 millions between 1989 and 1993/94. These funds are administered by SIDA and used to support activities of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The government set three targets for the support via SIDA: it should contribute to reestablish and consolidate democracy and democratic institutions, promote the market economy and it should preserve and improve the natural environment.

In Estonia, a total of 36 NGOs have received funds from SIDA for development cooperation. 22 were engaged in development projects and the remaining 14 in catastrophe relief. The present evaluation covered 13 of these organizations, and 9 of them were engaged in development activities. Their budgets amount to around 7 million SEK; that is, in support from SIDA for the activities that were evaluated. In Roumania 23 NGOs have received funds, 15 for development projects and 8 for catastrophe relief. The evaluation covers 7 organizations, and their funds from SIDA amount to somewhat more than 20 million SEK. The total value of the projects covered by the evaluation amounts to around 27 million SEK, representing 15% of the total assistance granted by SIDA.

Conclusions from the evaluation.

The evaluation discusses the relevance of the projects compared to the objectives of development cooperation. The conclusion is that the assistance has been relevant, both in respect of the social development in the recipient countries and their need for cooperation, as well as in respect of the objectives set by the Swedish government. The projects have been particularly relevant in respect of strengthening grass-roots organizations, and training their members in languages, pedagogics, adult education, and organizational development.

The evaluators note that the assistance in building democratic grass-roots organizations has been very important considering that nothing of the sort existed beforehand. The contributions to the other objectives - to promote the market economy and to preserve and improve the natural environment - have been less significant. The evaluators stress that the objectives concerning the natural environment appears to have been neglected and they deplore that so few NGOs in the sector have chosen to work for an improved environment in Eastern Europe. However, the evaluators also note that the projects have been too small and too diversified to have any impact at the national level in respect of any of the objectives.

Did the assistance reach its objectives? The evaluators discuss the question, distinguishing between the humanitarian assistance (relief

operations) and development assistance on the one hand, and between the two countries on the other hand. They note that the relief operation in Estonia has reached its targets (less than 1% of food aid packages disappeared en route).

In Roumania, they note that the aid (mostly pharmaceuticals, food and clothing) does reach its destination at hospitals and childrens homes, however once there much of it disappears - meaning that it is stolen. The evaluators cannot quantify the losses, but they stress that the problem is significant and at some places has reached unacceptable proportions. They point at low moral among management and personnel at the institutions, low status of the work being done and low salaries. The NGOs concerned are aware of the problems and one of them has stopped sending relief goods to Roumania.

Concerning the development assistance, the primary objective has been to build an institutional capacity among the cooperating organizations. The evaluators note that progress and competence varies considerably between the 11 projects. Many of the activities were training programmes, and they appear to have taken place as planned, and the participants expressed that they were pleased with the content and quality of the training (the evaluators interviewed some 10 to 20 people who had taken part in the programmes - meaning not two per programme).

However, one of the most important objectives was to train trainers in the study circle techniques. These techniques were not absorbed and the people in the recipient organizations have not adopted methods of self instruction and active, participatory learning. The NGO's underestimated the difficulties of breaking traditional methods of instruction.

The evaluators cite the example of Rädde Barnen in Roumania as successful institution building through training and personnel assistance. They note that the cooperating NGO's now can cooperate with Rädde Barnen as equal partners, and there is no need for technical assistance any longer.

The evaluators point at the assistance from Alliansmissionen in the same country as an example of aid that may have considerable negative side effects. The agricultural credits are directed at the "wrong" type of farmers, and besides expose these to considerable risks. The sustainability of the effects from the cooperation is affected by the factors mentioned above, and as the evaluators show the effects vary. There are a few examples of successful institution building, but it is more common that the effects are not sustainable when the cooperation ends.

The evaluators conclude that the cooperation has been cost effective. Much of the funds were used for training and competence development and consequently they argue that it was efficient. The evaluators base their conclusion on their observation that technical assistance, as

opposed to financial assistance, cannot be misappropriated and is not subject to corruption.

The only area where they find a reason to question the efficiency of the cooperation concerns the relief assistance to Roumania. The evaluators note that the NGOs often buy goods in Sweden and transport it to Roumania. However, the problem is not that goods are not available in the country, but that the recipient institutions cannot afford it. Local purchase would have several advantages; it would be cheaper, it would stimulate local production and it would create local employment to purchase, package and distribute the items.

The evaluators finally note that the cooperation between the Swedish NGOs could be improved. At times their mutual contacts have been characterized by conflict and competition. Well established NGOs have been reluctant to admit new, young organizations in their circle. The evaluators note that "the potential for sharing information and knowledge has been far from utilized". Some organizations jealously guard their territory from new entrants.

Methodological issues

The evaluation was undertaken by a team of 3 persons with considerable experience from development assistance in the Third World. One visited Estonia together with a SIDA staff member, the other two Roumania. Each field visit took a week, and the team also contacted the NGOs in Sweden. The evaluation report describes the work plan but does not discuss any methodological issues, such as the choice of projects to be investigated, the collection of empirical data, analysis of empirical material etc. There are extensive lists of interviewees, but no interview protocols nor any format for the interviews. Issues of validity and reliability are not covered in the report.

Are the conclusions accurate? As the reader has no means of verifying the evaluation process it is hard to answer that question. The evaluation has many observations regarding isolated projects, and some of these are rather critical (for example concerning the costs of relief supplies, or the transfer of pedagogical skills). Still, the main conclusions are that the assistance has been cost effective, has reached its targets and has contributed to the achievement of the governments development objectives.

A detailed reading of the report could also lead to the opposite conclusion, or under any circumstances put a serious question mark concerning the impact and effectiveness of the aid. There is a major difference between the conclusions and the empirical data, but on the other hand issues of sampling, validity, reliability and generalization are not treated. As the authors draw far ranging conclusions based on their relatively few projects - and few interviews - it would have been appropriate to discuss the accuracy of the findings.

(7) Swedish-Polish Cooperation project in the field of the Polish Labour market. Evaluation study on behalf of BITS. September 1993.

Background.

AMS and AMU International cooperated with the Polish Public Employment Service and the Vocational Training Organization. The purpose was to improve labour market mechanisms and vocational training. The total amount for the project was 5.5. million SEK.

Conclusions.

The evaluator observed that all activities specified in the agreements were carried out. Even though many results are not measurable, the evaluator concludes they were well achieved. A major deviation occurred with respect to computer training, where those trained in the use of equipment did not get the goods, which instead went to others who had not received any training. The evaluator also notes considerable prolongation of the project and delays in reporting.

Still, the implementation went smoothly, and the evaluator found the project concept highly relevant to Polish problems. Did it reach the objectives? No, not as these were expressed to have an impact on the whole of the country. If limited to two voivodships, they were well achieved. Obviously, the objectives were far overstated and beyond what could reasonably be achieved. The evaluation concludes that most of the program was cost effective, except for a study tour to Sweden, which the evaluator considers not to be an effective use of money.

The evaluator found that most of the results were sustainable. The Polish organizations had changed, and people there could be seen to work with new skills and new attitudes towards labour market issues.

Methodological issues.

The evaluation was undertaken by one person during two weeks work. This included visits to Poland and interviews there, meetings with Swedish organizations and perusal of project documents, reports etc. The evaluator did not use structured interviews nor any other formal evaluation instruments. The calculation of cost effectiveness was based on cost per trained person, with no regard to quality of training or impact.

The evaluation contains a section describing methods of work. Issues of validity and reliability are thoroughly discussed, and the evaluator points at issues that are not sufficiently covered, and where he has not enough data.

(8) Evaluation of air pollution monitoring and control program for Riga. An evaluation commissioned by BITS. September 1993.

Background.

This was a technical cooperation project financed by BITS. The total volume of the contract was 2 million SEK. The consultants carried out training programmes in Latvia, and after the programme the participants were expected to be competent in the following areas: (1) prepare databases on air pollution to enable the Latvian organization to simulate consequences for the environment, (2) analyse air pollution with information on discharges and analyse consequences of remedial action, (3) determine the consequences of air pollution for industrial sites, traffic planning, town planning etc, (4) suggest optimal measures to improve the quality of air, and (5) produce a map of air quality in Riga. The evaluation was undertaken to find out if the participants possessed these skills and were able to use them practically at work.

Conclusions.

The evaluator found that the first objective was partly fulfilled. A database had been established and the Latvian authorities are working on increasing its data content. It is possible to undertake simple simulations. The second objective was also partly fulfilled as the database is being established. Meteorological data is available for certain calculations. Discharge data is still of doubtful quality. Only limited calculations of consequences are possible.

The third objective is partly fulfilled, but the fourth objective is not fulfilled as the database lacks environmental data. Concerning objective five, the Latvian partners have started mapping nitrogen oxides emanating from traffic. The contribution from other sources is not yet clear, nor other emissions. The objective is only fulfilled to a minor extent.

In summary, none of the objectives is fully met, and two out of five are hardly met at all. However, the evaluator says this is as good as one might expect. It takes a long time to establish data banks. In all essentials, the project was completed according to original intentions. The evaluator mentions that the training programs were appreciated by the participants, and he has found that equipment delivered under the project (computers and computer program) functions well. The program has been covered by the Latvian news programs and daily journals - in very positive terms.

Methodological issues.

The evaluation was undertaken by one person who spent a week in Riga, visiting authorities and meeting people who took part in the training. The evaluator also interviewed the Swedish partners. Interviews were informal and unstructured, at least there is nothing in the evaluation saying the contrary. Issues of validity and reliability are not addressed. The evaluator's conclusions regarding objectives build on

observation of work in progress, and as such it is descriptive. It has high validity and reliability. However, the comments on reaction to the training programmes and the extent and nature of cooperation generally, are less reliable.

(9) En utvärdering av bidragen till enskilda organisationers samarbete med Central- och Östeuropa. (An evaluation of support via NGOs.) A study commissioned by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, ÖSEK.

Background

This evaluation also covers the cooperation between Swedish NGOs and organizations in Eastern and Central Europe; that is, the same subject as the evaluation reviewed above (no 6). Apart from the fact that it is commissioned by another organization, it differs in coverage and intention. This study discusses cooperation with all countries in Eastern and Central Europe, whereas the former was limited to experiences from Roumania and Estonia. The former study built on empirical investigation of selected projects, but the present study has no empirical foundation. On the other hand, it is more concerned with policy and the organizational aspects of how this cooperation is administered.

The terms of reference state that the evaluator should map the extent of cooperation through the NGOs, summarize the experience of their work, evaluate its strategic significance and the effectiveness of the cooperation to date, as well as review the conditions for development cooperation in the recipient countries. A major part of the terms of reference are devoted to consideration of future cooperation, and the report consequently devotes as much attention to the future as to the past and present.

Conclusions

The evaluator argues that support via NGO's must be assessed against the objectives for cooperation that were formulated by the government; that is, contribute to democratic development, market economy and environmental improvement. He also argues that NGO's naturally should be part of the cooperation in respect of their experience from development cooperation in the Third World. He says that their objectives were "less egoistical" (mera oegennyttiga) than other partners in the cooperation with eastern Europe.

In many cases the objectives of cooperation have not been expressed concretely or precisely, and consequently the projects were termed successful if the technical implementation worked well. However, even if that was the case (but the evaluator does not prove the point) the projects have often been one-shot events. There have also been very many different projects. The effects are thus small per se, and there is a risk that they do not achieve any sustainable effects as there are no

follow-up measures. The evaluator notes that the need for training is far from satisfied on any of the projects.

The evaluator notes that the cooperation has engaged many people in the Swedish organizations, although he also says that at times it might be just one or two persons who use the organizations as a base for their own activities. The author argues that the strategic significance of the cooperation lies in that it has created many contacts between people in Sweden and in the recipient countries. He has also found that all the countries covered by the interview express interest in taking part of Swedish experiences as communicated by the participating organizations. He notes that the Swedish NGOs are met with sympathy by the authorities and the media; newspapers and TV, have also reported enthusiastically about cooperation projects.

The evaluation was completed a few weeks after the evaluation above (no 6). The author notes that he has taken part of the conclusions of the former study, and that he in general agrees to its assessment of projects. Presumably that means that the author has found the conclusions accurate, however it is not quite clear whether that refers to the overall conclusions or the empirical material. As I mentioned, there is a discrepancy between the two.

The evaluator also looks at how the Swedish agencies coordinate their activities, and he finds room for improvement. The contacts between the three major agencies (BITS, SIDA and Svenska Institutet) are sporadic, both in respect of country level coordination and in respect of topics and contacts with other Swedish institutions. He finds that the competence at Swedish embassies is underutilized. The embassies should be better integrated in the cooperation process.

The evaluator notes that SIDA, and probably others as well, more or less at random suggest budget cuts in proposals for collaboration. He says that the applicants may well have foreseen that, and have applied for more funds than they really needed. On the other hand they may reduce their ambitions in cooperation. Anyhow, the effects of the budget process, and the final size of budgets are uncertain.

The author also notes that the effects of short-term inputs are uncertain. Initially many organizations thought they would achieve a high impact following a few courses and exchange visits, but it is more difficult. The author argues for longer cooperation, albeit with stringent controls along the way and realistic targets.

The author is positive to the framework agreements between SIDA and NGOs and argues that more organizations should be treated similarly. The NGOs have to make their own contributions, and the evaluator discusses the extent of this at length. He finds that this requirement has been an obstacle to several organizations, but that it fails to discriminate between more and less serious applicants. The applications of rules varies considerably.

The evaluation continues to describe technicalities in the design of the cooperation, such as information aspects, support to political parties, freight costs etc, but little of this has any bearing on conclusions of effectiveness.

Methodological issues.

The evaluation was undertaken by one person between June and October 1993. A large number of persons in Sweden were interviewed, and the evaluator visited the Baltic countries and Poland to look at projects, meet representatives from the collaborating organizations and the authorities in those countries. The report does not contain any methodological statement and it is unclear how the evaluator has worked. There are no sampling criteria, no interview formats nor any protocols or other elements of standard evaluation techniques. Consequently there is no discussion of validity and reliability and there is no basis for a reader to assess the accuracy of the evaluators conclusions.

Instead, the assessment of the merit of the NGO's cooperation rests on the integrity and personal judgement of the evaluator. As the report does not contain any empirical data, the reader must instead try to judge the soundness and the logic of arguments and conclusions. The evaluation questions focussed on two issues; the strategic importance of the cooperation and the effectiveness. In respect of the first, the author concluded that the major significance of the cooperation came from the fact that it has helped establish contacts between people in the collaborating organizations. Whether the contacts are sustained, if they are used for anything of "value", or whether they could have been established at a lower cost, are issues that the report does not cover.

Concerning effectiveness, the evaluator has noted shortcomings due to size and durability of projects, as well as deficiencies in coordination and other aspects of administrative practice in Sweden. A brief review of aid evaluation would show that these factors always affect results, and there is no reason to doubt their impact here as well. Often the evaluator states that results are uncertain. This is of course true - until someone comes along to assess them, for example with the use of evaluation tools. In summary, even though the report is called an evaluation it contains little that merits that title. It is a policy discussion, based on some impressionistic observations and personal assessment. As such, it may serve its purpose well, but as a report on impact and effectiveness it can be questioned.

(10) Basic Evaluation for Bio-energy Conversions. memorandum Birzai, Lithuania, September 1993.

(11) Ett miljöanpassat energisystem i Östersjöområdet. Rapport till Riksdagen. April 1994.

(12) NUTEK's program för Baltikum och Östeuropa. Public information pamphlet from the executing agency. No date.

(13) Quick, affordable and reliable assistance. The Swedish concept for fossil-fuel conversion and improved efficiency in the Baltic sea area. A memorandum from the executing agency. March 1994

(14) Evaluation of Environmental and Energy Economy Project. Balvi Energy, Latvia. 1994

(15) Boiler Conversion to Biomass in Lithuania: in the town of Birzai. Final report. February 1994

(16) Valga Estonia. Basic Evaluation for Bio-Energy Conversions. Tallinn 1994.

Background.

In April 1993 the government allocated 95 million SEK via the Ministry of Commerce and Industry for a programme to improve energy systems in the Baltic countries, and another 45 million via the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. More specifically, the program is to reduce the use of fossil fuels by converting boilers to biofuel and by increasing the efficiency in energy use. In June 1993, the programme was extended to Poland and Russia, and a further 87,5 million SEK has been allocated for 1994/95.

The funds are administered by NUTEK. The money is used for direct technical assistance; that is, feasibility studies, advisory services and training, and for subsidized loans to the implementing organizations, at prevailing IBRD rates. NUTEK's approach has been to select projects that have high demonstration effects and that can survive on their own (economical) merits. The key words have been to find projects that can be implemented quickly, at low cost and with reliable technologies.

The programme has appointed an independent evaluation group, consisting of people from universities and research institutions in Sweden and the recipient countries. The reports above are partly written by the evaluation team and some by NUTEK and the Ministry of Industry. There are no major discrepancies, though the evaluation teams are more technical and more problem oriented.

Conclusions.

By the end of May 1994, three projects at a total cost of 14 million SEK (loans and grants) had been completed, and another 16 projects were identified or under implementation. The three completed projects were examples of converting boilers from oil or coal use to wood chips. The profitability of the projects have been measured against the avoided cost of fossil fuel. According to one report, there are problems in having proper incentives since energy is heavily subsidized in all these countries. Nevertheless someone is paying for the fossils, though it may be rather complicated to arrive at accurate social costs and benefits.

The results from the first three projects indicate yearly reductions from these plants of 25.000 tons of CO₂, 155 tons of sulphur, 36 tons of particles and 21 tons of NO_x. In economic terms, the reduced costs for fuel are 2.720.000 SEK per year, meaning that the payback period is between 3 and 4 years per project.

The independent evaluation reports found the implementation of the projects to be quick and effective. They commend the business-like approach. One quotes the Estonian Minister for Energy as saying: "Mostly help from abroad has very low efficiency and the bigger part of the help goes back to origin country. Swedish government through NUTEK's program is the first and may be the best practical example of foreign help."

The reports do point at a few problems as well. In one case the local partner (owner of the plant) had not quite understood the agreements, in particular not the loan agreements and setting of interest rates. The local personnel needed more training in running the plants. Results of performance tests in one place showed lower efficiency and heat output than calculated. The evaluator pointed to the necessity to test boilers and carry out measurements before fuel conversion starts. In other there were problems with high temperatures of flue gas and sedimentation in boiler channels. The delivery of equipment was late and the translation of manuals from Swedish to Lithuanian was of low standard. In the third plant, parts of the equipment were faulty and the designed capacity of the converted plant was not achieved.

Methodological issues.

The institutional arrangement of appointing and independent evaluation team appears to have several advantages. It helps communication between the partners, it facilitates for all to learn from experience, and it provides the Swedish organizations with reliable information. From an evaluation point of view, there are three issues to raise.

The first concerns technical measurements of emissions from the plants. The measures are important, and the results do point at differences between expected and real performance. As far as I can understand, the deviations are normal, and of the kind that are adjusted during a continued operation of the plants.

The second concerns the economic results. The reports from the Swedish agencies appear to build on calculated effects rather than real. When the full capacity is not installed, and when there are problems of equipment supply etc it is likely that the expected saving will be lower. In addition, the capital cost is based on the loan from NUTEK which is subsidized. The real capital cost would of course be much higher. It is likely that the pay-back period is much longer than suggested in these reports.

The third issue concerns the nature of communication in the network and the inputs of consultants and advisory services. The results build on interviews and observation and the impressions, though of an unstructured nature, appear credible. If we compare the design of this project to the experiences recounted in previous evaluations, it seems that many of the flaws and mistakes recounted there will be avoided on this programme.

(17) Swedish Cooperation Program for Radiation Protection in Eastern and Central Europe. SSI-rapport 93-29. Swedish Radiation Protection Institute.

(18) Project Strålskydd Öst. A memorandum from the Swedish Radiation Protection Institute. No date.

Background.

The Swedish government has allocated funds for cooperation in the area of radiation protection, especially in the Baltic states and Russia. The programme is coordinated by SSI. So far, 25.1 million SEK have been allocated, with an additional amount of 50 million SEK pending for the next three fiscal years.

The reports argue that there are great needs for improvement regarding radiation protection in a broad sense, meaning everything from legislation, organization, supervision, education and training as well as technical improvement of instrumentation, laboratory equipment, computer systems etc. The objectives of the programme are to:

- implement an effective radiation protection system
- solve acute problems.

This will be achieved by improving technical conditions and methods, legal framework, organization and strategies, etc. and by enhancing the competence and safety culture of both organization and staff. The first of the above mentioned reports describes 59 projects, of sizes varying from 10.000 SEK to 1.6 million SEK.

Conclusions.

The two reports describe the purpose of the project and to some extent what has been delivered. They may for example mention in respect of

one project that "work on legislation regarding technical safety and radiation protection in nuclear power production is in progress", or that "a Russian radiation protection officer will study radiation protection at a Swedish nuclear power plant". Neither of the reports say anything about impact of training, advisory services or delivery of equipment, nor do they say if objectives are achieved.

The reports show that many activities take place and the budget information provides some information about the area of expenditures, but no pattern emerges. Some project budgets are exceeded and on others it is possible to cut back expenditures. It is not clear whether that is done in collaboration or unilaterally by the Swedish part. It is not possible to draw any conclusions regarding cost effectiveness of the programme.

(19) Anteckningar från möte med lettisk delegation för koordinering av samarbetsprogrammet. Memorandum from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Eastern European Secretariat. December 1993.

(20) Anteckningar från möte med estnisk delegation för koordinering av samarbetsprogrammet. Memorandum from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Eastern European Secretariat. March 1994.

(21) Svenska NGO-insatser är högt värderade i Vilnius och Riga - de behöver fortsätta, helst trappas upp. Memorandum, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, NGO/U2. February 1994.

Background.

Two of the memoranda are protocols from meetings between Swedish organizations handling aid funds, and delegations from recipient countries. Most of the discussions are presentations of the various organizations and introduction to their manner of working and their mandates. This is presumably meant as information to the foreign delegations. In the following I will only quote the statements referring to the implementation of the aid programme.

Conclusions.

The delegations from the recipient countries emphasize the need for coordination and control of the aid programmes. They argue that the central decision-making organizations in Tallinn and Riga respectively must be informed about the aid. They describe how they have taken measures to strengthen coordination by establishing databases and by creating units for aid coordination within their Ministries of Finance.

They request that all the Swedish agencies at least keep them informed of their activities. They express satisfaction with BITS procedures, and implicitly criticize the others who do not always let the recipient country establish priorities.

The Estonian delegation expressed that they wished to see an emphasis on the infrastructure sector and investments in future cooperation. The Latvian delegation particularly mentioned the "sovereignty support" and asked that it be given considerable weight in the future. Still, both delegations expressed that they viewed the wide-ranging contacts with Sweden as beneficial and they also commended the flexibility of the cooperation programme.

(22) Rapport för ÖEK:s verksamhet under budgetåret 1992/93. (Report on activities) To Sida. Dated 1993-11-25.

(23a) Yttrande över "En utvärdering av bidragen till enskilda organisationers samarbete i central- och Östeuropa" av Curt Lidgard. (Comments on the evaluation no9). Till Utrikesdepartementet. Dated 1993-11-22.

(23b) Anslagsframställning för budgetåret 1994/95. (Budget proposal for the next year)

Background.

The three papers above are treated together as they discuss the same topic, namely collaboration in the field of medical care and health administration that is coordinated by the East Europe Committee of the Swedish Health Care Community (with the abbreviation ÖEK in Swedish and SEEC in English) under the National Board of Health and Welfare. The SEEC is one of the organizations that have a framework agreement with SIDA. It was set up in 1992 by a large number of professional organizations and public bodies within the health administration.

Its purpose is to promote the development of medical care and health in the areas of Eastern Europe close to Sweden. The focus of the cooperations is on exchange of knowledge through visits by doctors, nurses, midwives and others in the recipient countries to Swedish hospitals, and providing them with an opportunity to work with Swedish colleagues. In addition, SEEC organizes courses and seminars in the recipient countries as well as personnel support to hospitals in Eastern Europe. A total of 12,3 million SEK were allocated up to 1994/95, and for the coming year SEEC got a grant of 8 million SEK.

Conclusions

According to the agreement with SIDA, SEEC should prepare a "monitoring report" to cover performance compared to plans, analyse trends in the activities and explain possible deviations from the plans.

The report should also cover administrative and financial issues. In the report of November 1993, SEEC concludes that all the funds allocated from SIDA have been used to high and beneficial effects for the health care systems in the Baltic countries. The activities have supported the development of knowledge and competence and has helped to stimulate a renewal of health care.

The report notes that several groups in the population face increasing problems in respect of health care. Even though health care is well developed and specialized, it suffers from lack of equipment, pharmaceuticals and disposable materials. However, the Swedish cooperation should focus on knowledge transfer, particularly on new methods and experiences in diagnostics, therapeutical and rehabilitation methods, and on attitudes and values that must characterize a modern health care system.

SEEC receives applications for projects from the Swedish health care system. These are treated when they arrive and the applicants get notified within a month if the project was approved. The average size of a project was around 20.000 SEK, and up to June 1993 222 projects had been approved. Out of these, 43% consisted of training in the recipient countries and 39% consisted of study tours to Sweden, participation in conferences etc. During 1993/94 the average size of projects increased to 27.000 SEK, less funds were used for training in Sweden and more for activities in the recipient countries.

The report of November 1993 discusses the possibility of concentrating on a few central problem areas, to achieve a higher long term impact. Preparatory work started in four areas, which is also noted in the comments on the evaluation of NGO assistance. However, even if the ambition is to focus on five such areas, ÖEK claims that it will be necessary to let some projects have the character of ad hoc inputs of a short term duration.

In respect of other conclusions in the evaluation, SEEC agrees that the effectiveness has been satisfactory, but still there are problems with the stability of some cooperating partners and in the information between them. SEEC reports that it is introducing a new system of screening and recording applications. The registry will enable embassies and other funding agencies to follow their activities better.

The application for funds 1994/95 do not add anything in terms of assessing effects or commenting on experiences from the cooperation, but it elaborates on planning activities in the four priority areas. The application for funds identifies besides the four areas which have been given high priority (maternity and child health care - including family planning, psychiatry, care of the handicapped and support to infrastuctural production) two areas for longer terms activities (infections and a review of health structure in Lithuania).

Methodological issues

The three documents discussed here are not evaluations and the professional criteria for evaluations cannot be applied in respect of them. The reports show that funds have been disbursed effectively; meaning at low cost and high speed to a large number of applicants. The number of projects amount to some 200 per year, meaning a total of 400 projects implemented to date.

When ÖEK reports that the projects have led to significant developments of competence in the recipient countries and stimulate the renewal of their health care systems, I must question the empirical base for this conclusion. The few persons in the secretariat cannot possibly keep track of the real impact of around 400 projects. They probably receive feedback from some participants in the programs (that is, from the recipient countries) and most likely they hear from the Swedish partners about their experiences. The conclusion may well be true, but at present it is at best a well-informed guess.

(24) Deepened cooperation between Swedish municipalities and municipalities in Poland and the Baltic countries. An evaluation commissioned by BITS. October 1993.

Background.

The programme was set up to establish links between municipalities, so-called friendship communities. The objective was to strengthen local democracy and increase the capacity of local administrations. Many smaller projects falling under the umbrella of the friendship communities have had as their purpose to train people, theoretically and on the job, and to contribute to building institutions that are sustainable and democratic. The programme covered Poland and the three Baltic countries. Total amounts were 14.1 million SEK.

Conclusions.

The evaluation concludes that few of the municipalities have been able to account for any real effects. Sometimes the activities are not yet concluded, and for many of the activities, such as training, it is difficult to see any effects at all. Still, all participants agree that the cooperation is important and useful.

The evaluators conclude that the programme has a high cost effectiveness. Each activity has been relatively cheap and has involved a lot of voluntary work. However, it was not possible to assess cost effectiveness properly, as there was such a weak system of reporting results.

Methodological issues.

The evaluation is based on interviews with actors in the program, both in Sweden, in Poland and the Baltic countries. The evaluators sent out

questionnaires in order to explore opinions more systematically, but to a large extent the evaluators have to rely on reports from the municipalities themselves - and these are weak. The reports are mostly descriptive and say little about results and achievements. The evaluation is quite clear in its discussion of how reliable the results are. The evaluators present an in-depth discussion of the accuracy of their conclusions.

(25) Transport and communications in the Baltic states. An evaluation commissioned by BITS. November 1993.

Background.

Support in the transport and communications sector has emphasized institution building in public organizations; more specifically in the following areas, transport policy and legislation, civil aviation, maritime affairs, roads, road transport, public transport, telecommunications and postal services. The various projects have encompassed almost the whole range of activities that BITS can finance: feasibility studies, training programmes and technical assistance. There were 33 projects at a total cost of 27.1 million SEK.

Conclusions.

The evaluator notes that it is difficult to evaluate to what extent the objectives have been met, mainly due to shortcomings in project reports. The deficiencies in the reports do not suggest that performance has been inadequate or less meaningful. On the contrary, the evaluator has the impression that the assistance has been constructive and has given value for money. The assistance appears to be greatly appreciated by all parties. It is said to have been important both from the point of view of institutional, organizational and manpower development, and of having given important boosts to morale. The Swedish support was quick to start and worked without much bureaucracy. It was very responsive to demand. It has been particularly meaningful when focussing on institutional development issues, including general organizational and staff development aspects.

Methodological issues.

The evaluation was based on project documents and reports, as well as site visits and interviews with project managers and Swedish collaborating partners. Interviews were the main source of information. The evaluation does not discuss reliability of its results, although the evaluator notes shortcomings in the reporting from the projects.

(26) An evaluation of management training in banking and finance in Eastern Europe. An evaluation commissioned by BITS. December 1993.

Background.

An institution at the University of Stockholm has arranged courses in banking - at the master's level, for a number of financial organizations in the recipient countries. The objectives were to: (1) transfer knowledge and understanding of the role and function of the financial and banking system in a market oriented economy, (2) illustrate how the banking system can act as a catalyst in the creation of new enterprises and how this affects growth, (3) analyse, through case studies, the level of economic development in the participants home country, and (4) propose measures for increasing the efficiency of the financial system at the national/regional level, which the participants after their return can actively implement. The value of the support was 12 million SEK.

Conclusions.

The evaluation shows that the training programme was successful in bringing new knowledge of a theoretical nature to the participants. Thus the first three objectives were considered fulfilled. The programme was less successful with respect to the fourth objective. The impact in terms of application of knowledge and changing the organizations' mode of operating was not very significant - or rather, the evaluation could not establish any significant effects given the methods of work and the time between training and evaluation of results.

Methodological issues.

A questionnaire was sent out to all participants. The response rate was 74%. The returns were entered into a database and analyzed with statistical methods. The evaluation enclosed the questionnaire format and data base. It contains a discussion of reliability and validity, as well as alternative interpretations of the data.

(27) Training in Board Work and Management in Latvia. An evaluation commissioned by BITS. December 1993.

Background.

This project consists of a number of training programmes directed at senior managers in Latvian industry. The general objective was to provide knowledge about practice of efficient board work, about the function of the board in relation to other managing bodies of the company and the role of the board in developing the business of the company in a market economy. More specifically, the training intended to give basic education in efficient board work to present and future board members, to licensed auditors and to managing directors; give an education at a more advanced level to those who have gone through the basic course; and to give insights in and new contacts with Swedish

industry and provide possibilities of contacts between Swedish and Latvian board members.

Conclusions.

At first, the evaluator questions project design. Some of the companies taking part in the programme had no boards, and some participants could not relate the training to a real working situation. Second, the programme included training in accounting and auditing, which could as well - and at lower cost - be obtained from Latvian institutions.

The participants in the training programmes were generally quite satisfied, and the development of skills and knowledge in respect of the three objectives mentioned above is consequently regarded as high. However, the number of participants in each programme was lower than expected when the programme was designed, and hence there is less skills developed in Latvia than anticipated.

The evaluator discusses the sustainability of the results. As the training is directed at the end users, and as there is no effort to train future trainers or institutions, the sustainability of the results is low. The evaluator concludes that "some contributions were definitely made, but considering the fact that some slippage occurred, the objectives have been reached to a lesser extent than envisaged". The cost-effectiveness of the support is lower than expected, primarily because the costs of the programme are distributed on fewer heads than expected. The evaluator notes that the work conducted by the consultants was very satisfactory and smoothly implemented.

Methodological issues.

The evaluation was conducted by one person in three weeks time, with a visit to Latvia and Lithuania during 6 days. The report clearly presents how it has been working, and discusses reliability and validity of its findings. Questionnaires, interviews and cost calculations are present. Issues of sampling are covered. The conclusions build on both quantitative and qualitative data, all presented and assessed in a transparent and reliable manner. The evaluation should be as accurate as possible within the time constraints.

(28) Scania Corps - en studie av AMS och sydsvenska handelskammarens samarbetsprojekt med Estland. (A study of Scania Corps - project of AMS and the Chamber of Commerce in southern Sweden.) A report to SwedeCorp. January 1994.

Background.

AMS and the Chamber of Commerce in southern Sweden in 1992 started a joint project to place unemployed Swedish economists and technicians in Estonian enterprises. The two partners intended to expand the project to Russia, Latvia and Lithuania, and applied to SwedeCorp for additional funds. SwedeCorp commissioned the present

evaluation of the pilot project in Estonia to have a base for a possible decision to support the extended programme (note that it was not, at the time, a SwedeCorp financed project).

The evaluators found that there were no clear objectives, but in their discussion assume that the following three objectives are relevant: (1) to create employment opportunities for Swedish personnel, (2) to transfer knowledge to Estonian enterprises, and (3) to build a network of contacts between Swedish and Estonian firms. The conclusions are based on interviews and questionnaires, to Estonian firms and to the Swedish personnel.

Conclusions.

In respect of these three objectives, the evaluators conclude that the project has been most successful in creating employment for the Swedish personnel. 59% had got a new employment at the time of the evaluation, or thought it likely they would get employed soon. However, the evaluators also note that several of them were not really unemployed at the start. Many had signed up as unemployed because they wished to join the program. Consequently the success rate in respect of this objective would be much lower.

Whether the objective to transfer technology has been reached is more uncertain. Only 21% of the Estonian firms thought the Swedish person very helpful in solving problems (37% considered them somewhat helpful, and 42% ranked them to be of little help). The Swedes themselves had a more optimistic view of their contribution. In addition 58% of the firms said they had practical use of the knowledge contributed by the Swedes - and 42% answered they had no practical use of their knowledge. The evaluators asked whether the firms would be willing to pay an Estonian salary for the use of their services. 63% of the firms answered "no", but 37% said "yes" - on condition they could request better performance from the persons.

Achievement of the third objective, to create contacts between firms, is also uncertain. 39% of the Estonian firms in the program responded that they now have contacts with Swedish firms which have resulted in concrete business deals. (Note that the Swedish participants assume that 76% of the firms may have such contacts.) The same difference applies to the mutual contacts between the visiting Swede and the host company; 45% of the firms report they maintain contacts with the Swedes, but 71% of the Swedes have contacts with the Estonian firms.

The evaluation furthermore discusses side effects and dynamic aspects of the programme. The programme has competed with local and international consultancy firms, who sell the services that are offered for free under the programme. Also, the programme does not request the participating Estonian firms to put up payment in kind, or add other contributions to the programme. Thus it might be more difficult for the regular aid programmes, who do request some contribution in kind from the local partner.

The evaluators do not calculate an opportunity cost of the project, but they note that the decision makers view the Swedish personnel as free goods; that is, with no opportunity costs attached to them. The evaluators show this mode of reasoning to be wrong, and argue that an opportunity cost be considered. As there is no measure of results it is not possible to calculate cost effectiveness. However, the evaluators make a preliminary comparison with costs of other forms of assistance. They find that compared to technical assistance personnel under the regular aid programme, the costs of this programme appear to be rather high and the effects considerably lower.

Finally, the evaluators note that the implementation of the programme has been unbureaucratic and flexible, and the programme has been able to change rapidly in response to new circumstances. This has been a major strength, but also cause for some of the weaknesses that the evaluators have noted. A large part of the report contains recommendations on how to structure and organize the programme to have a better control and make sure that the intended benefits materialize.

Methodological issues

The evaluation was undertaken by an Estonian and a Swedish consulting firm. Four evaluators were involved, and they based their review on a combination of site visits, interviews with personnel, and questionnaires to both companies and Swedish personnel. The response rates were high in all cases, and so was the coverage in interviews. The report contains a serious discussion of reliability and validity, and the responses are normally double-checked and assessed in comparison to contradictory evidence.

The authors note that the programme was flexible, thus some of the projects with Estonian firms were interrupted very early - and these firms left the program. Those who respond tend to be those where the impact was highest and where the Swedes were most able to find a role for themselves. There is thus a positive bias among the Estonian responses.

The authors conclude that the programme was most successful in respect of creating employment. I would disagree, considering that those taking part were not "really" unemployed. Hence the effect is much lower, and the opportunity cost higher. Perhaps the highest effect lies in creating contacts and networks, but that raises the question of level of ambition. Is it enough that 37% of the firms who received assistance managed to establish commercial contacts with Swedish firms? And how do the costs relate to the possible benefits of those contacts?

(29) Assessment of G-24 Assistance to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the Environment Sector. A report to the Commission of the European Countries. February 1994.

Background.

Environment has been one of the priority sectors for G-24 assistance to Central and Eastern European countries and since 1990 the G-24 governments and the European Commission have committed hundreds of millions of ECU's to technical assistance and related projects. The International Financial Institutions have also committed considerable sums, mainly in loans. As part of the input to the Environmental Action Programme, prepared for a meeting of Environment Ministers, the present evaluation was commissioned by the G-24 Coordination Unit of the European Commission. The purpose was to: (a) evaluate the extent to which the programmes have already covered priority areas and contributed to the improvement or solution of the most urgent problems, and (b) identify the constraints in implementation.

Conclusions.

The evaluators conclude that a great deal has been achieved in the past three years (1990 - 1993). Many hundreds of projects have been undertaken and many of these have helped build institutional capability and some have achieved real improvements in the environment (my emphasis). In the review, it is noted that the largest share of assistance has gone to Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia (note the date) by a considerable margin.

Air pollution has received a relatively small proportion of the assistance in some countries, particularly distributed air pollution sources (vehicles and low stack emissions). Small to medium sized waste water plants have received only limited attention, except where transboundary pollution has been an issue. The G-24 Environment Sector Strategy has not been instrumental in formulating the programmes, other forces have determined what projects were to be implemented.

Though some programmes are demand-driven, others are donor-driven. The evaluators say that although in most, if not all, cases there is a desire to help the recipient country, the programmes are also strongly influenced by the potential donor country benefits, eg assisting export of goods and services or reducing transboundary pollution from the recipient country to the donor country.

Although such projects may benefit the recipient country, they do not automatically generate a portfolio of projects which is optimized to tackle the most urgent issues in the recipient country. The piecemeal distribution of aid leads to sub-optimal projects. In addition, the evaluators comment on the processes whereby consulting firms influence project selection to their benefit through building local alliances and short-cutting the project selection process.

The evaluators note that there are some excellent examples of where investment in infrastructure and institutions has already created real improvements in the environment or created a good foundation for improvements in the future. Despite these examples, there is also a widely held and legitimate view in the recipient countries that there have been too many feasibility studies and reports. The studies have failed to generate the necessary institutional and financial information necessary to take investment decisions. Technical studies should be supported by appropriate policy, institutional and legislative frameworks to define the route to implementation.

As programmes move towards large scale implementation, there is an increasing concern that the necessary investments will be difficult to secure, particularly as the environment per se is no longer a top priority for the recipient countries compared with the need for investment in economic reconstruction. Consequently, the financial institutions should be involved already when feasibility studies are started, and projects demonstrating a financial payback should be given priority.

The evaluators also found that the donors did not use local expertise enough, and related to this, the rate of disbursement has been limited by the absence of local capability to manage projects and programmes. Institutional structures as well as political and organizational change has also impeded the projects. Projects were often delayed.

The team stress that management must be local, particularly as different activities evolve, institutions are decentralized and the responsibilities are devolved. As a detail, there were many complaints that local staff have to spend too much time with requests for information from donors, hosting visits and missions from donors and their organizations.

The evaluators found several examples where the activities of different donors supporting the same sector in a country was not coordinated. This has led to direct overlap in some activities and an absence of coordination between related activities (eg water supply and waste water treatment).

There is a need for effective coordination to monitor whether priority issues are addressed, to provide a focus for information exchange, to channel the best expertise to the recipient countries, and to ensure that experience is shared and people learn from the mistakes and successes of others. The evaluators have also found monitoring of effectiveness to be weak, and recommend that it be made more rigorous for all donor programmes.

Methodological issues.

The evaluation was undertaken by a British consulting group. It was based on the analysis of a G-24 database of environmental projects and a series of interviews with representatives of donor and recipient countries, financial institutions and other organizations. The evaluators looked at four projects in more detail to establish how well

different types of projects have met the objectives of the various organizations involved.

Most of the critical comments and views reported above must come from the four case studies and the interviews. The database is purely descriptive and as such it can be used to tell who is doing what, and where, but it does not tell anything of impact or effectiveness. It is hard to tell how valid the comments are, because there is no discussion of selection criteria nor any review of interview methods, nor any case studies to prove the points being made. However, the criticism does appear to have substance to it, particularly when compared to other experiences.

The major question concerns the link between the problems of implementation and the impact of particular projects on the one hand, and the evaluators overall conclusion that "a great deal has been achieved in the past three years". A careful reading of the report would lead to the impression that the hundreds of projects and hundreds of millions of ECU's have had relatively little impact and that the implementation of aid has suffered from so many shortcomings that that the overall effect is sharply reduced.

(30) Remissvar på betänkandet "Inriktning och samordning av Sveriges samarbete med Central- och Östeuropa". A memorandum from the National Environmental Protection Agency (SNV). November 1993.

(31) Redovisning av bilateralt samarbete kring kunskapsuppbyggnad och förvaltningsstöd i Östeuropa. A memorandum from the National Environmental Protection Agency (SNV). April 1994.

Background.

SNV has received 12.9 million SEK to support the public administration in the environmental sector from 1992 through June 1994. According to agreements between the agency and the government, there should be a monitoring report every six months. In this section I review the latest progress report, plus the agency's comments on the review of the organization of bilateral development cooperation with Eastern Europe (Ds Fi 1993:79). The latter also contains a summary of the agency's experience of cooperation.

Conclusions.

The memorandum notes that the cooperation channelled through SNV builds on two budget allocations from the government, each covering one year of activities. In practice this means a string of ad hoc projects. Even though each project may have an important objective the risks connected to this mode of operating should not be underestimated, according to the memorandum. Short sighted symbolic gestures may take the place of activities that have long-range effects. Several projects need

more than a year to have a measurable impact, and many important needs cannot be met due to the short planning horizon.

It is noted that there are recurrent contacts with the authorities in the Baltic countries and Poland, but the contacts with Russian authorities lag behind. The general impression is that the authorities have good knowledge of the Swedish resources and organizations, and that they have formulated long lists of rather disparate projects. Still, the capacity to receive administrative support varies. Poland has the best capacity to receive assistance and the least need for it.

Assistance in public administration presupposes communication between the partners. As long as the subject is technical and scientific there are no problems, but as soon as it concerns institutional issues problems begin. The memorandum describes the evolution and specifics of Swedish administrative practice, and contrasts this to other European countries as well as to the recipient countries. It is suggested that Swedish experiences and traditions may have a very limited applicability, and perhaps other European administrative modes are more relevant for the countries in eastern Europe.

As this is a memorandum and not an evaluation, the methodological issues are of little relevance. Suffice it to mention that the observations above build on several years of experience and seem to match the conclusions from the evaluation mentioned above.

(32) Kärnkraftsäkerhet i Ignalina - ett led i ett regionalt samarbetsprogram. A report for the first quarter of 1994. Statens Kärnkraftsinspektion - Swedish Nuclear Power Inspectorate (SKI).

Background

The government has allocated funds to SKI for cooperation in the fields of reactor safety and control of nuclear waste. As for the first topic, the activities are concentrated to Lithuania, but for the second subject other countries are included. According to Lithuanian and international assessments, the power supply from Ignalina will be needed several years on. It plays a central role in the power supply to Lithuania, Byelorussia and Latvia. The objectives of the cooperation are expressed as follows:

The objective within the sphere of reactor safety to the Ignalina power plant is to reduce the risk of a nuclear accident with large disbursement of radioactive material, as far as possible within the economic constraints, up to the closure of the plant. The objective in the sphere of nuclear waste control is to ascertain that the sovereign nations are in control of nuclear substances within their territories and that the nations ensure that no illegal use of such material takes place. To date, around 70 million SEK have been used.

Conclusions.

The report notes that the plant in Ignalina is relatively well equipped and has an active program to increase safety. A total sum of 300 million SEK has been allocated from various sources to implement the program. Still, the program is not sufficient to raise the security in the plant to western levels, but the most urgent problems will be solved.

The cooperative projects can be classified in three areas; (1) institutional cooperation, (2) industrial cooperation and (3) technical improvement. The first refers to training, equipment and advisory services to strengthen the Lithuanian Nuclear Power Inspectorate, as well as a comprehensive safety study to generate a picture of the risks for accidents and to set priorities for safety improvements. This has also established routines for inspection, documentation and quality control. Industrial cooperation has meant direct contacts with Swedish firms to undertake repair work and to transfer know-how and equipment. Technical improvements have included delivery of new fire protection equipment.

In conclusion and generally speaking, and considering the problems of the recipient countries, SKI finds the results to date highly satisfactory. The report says that future support will be more directed at advisory services, and less funds will be used for delivery of equipment. Instead, it is assumed that investment funds will be met directly by the government of Lithuania or from international institutions.

As this is a quarterly report from the executing agency, there is no need to elaborate on evaluation methods. It should be clear that the nature of the objectives are such that evaluation becomes rather complicated, and there are no verifiable indicators in the report whether objectives are met or not. The statement "very satisfactory" stands as the opinion of the Inspectorate, and as such it may have weight and credibility.

(46) Rysk roulette i Litauen - "Russian roulette". Article by two journalists in "Sveriges Natur" (the periodical of the Swedish Association for Environmental Protection). December 1993.

Background.

The article appeared in a recent issue of "Sveriges Natur". As it concerns the same project as mentioned above, I think it throws additional light on the complexities involved in the assistance, as well as on the coverage and reliability of stakeholder reports in general. It also shows how a domestic political issue (the future of nuclear power) reverberates in the evaluation and feedback of an aid programme.

Conclusions.

The journalists quote a G-7 meeting where the Ignalina plant was classified as "not safe" together with 23 other reactors in Eastern

Europe. They refer to a study by the European Bank (for Reconstruction and Development?) saying that an investment programme of 136 million US dollar would be required to reach a minimal standard of safety, but that only a third of this has been committed so far and almost nothing has been used yet (note that the figures correspond to those in the above mentioned study).

The article discusses the need for electric power, differentiating between household consumption, industrial consumption and exports. The pricing of imported raw materials (uranium) and export materials is discussed, and the journalists explore the viability of different export and trade scenarios and discuss the consequences in terms of energy. They find that it is quite uncertain whether the additional power supply from Ignalina is needed and argue that rapid closure of the plant is the most economical alternative. They quote interviews with World Bank staff, NGO's in Lithuania as well as officials at the Ministry of Energy.

As for implementation of the cooperation, the journalists quote interviews complaining of expensive consultants who come for visits, write reports and then disappear. In their view, most of the money disappears in the form of air tickets, hotel bills, salaries, and little that make their job easier or safer. The journalists point at the lack of coordination between foreign donors, where many have been involved at Ignalina, but the lack of coordination appears total.

The article discusses the issue of safety and control in the nuclear plant. The Lithuanian Inspectorate has 9 employees that are to control the 5.000 employees of Ignalina. The legislation is unclear, salaries and moral low in all places. In summary, the article paints the picture of an assistance programme which is unnecessary, or even dangerously mistaken, inefficiently implemented, poorly coordinated and strongly criticized by at least some in the recipient country's authorities.

Methodological issues

The article is not an evaluation, but it is an example of carefully researched journalism. It builds on verifiable interviews and technical sources; eg banks and the G-7 meeting. I am not the person to judge which of the two statements presented here comes closest to the truth. However, compared to the evaluation of European assistance in the environment sector, the general themes of criticism are similar (the weaknesses of technical cooperation, lack of resources to follow-up with investment and poor coordination among donors). It is of course also well known that the organization publishing the paper is one of the strongest opponents of nuclear power in Sweden (and abroad).

(34) Ekonomisk politiks rådgivning till Ryssland - slutrapport. (Advisory services in the field of economic policy.) Stockholm Institute of East European Economics. March 1994.

Background.

An international team of economists has been coordinated by the above Institute to set up a unit for independent research and economic analysis at the Ministry of Finance in Moscow. The purpose was to provide advisory services in the field of macroeconomics to the new government from 1991 onwards. The Swedish government has allocated 6 million SEK for the activities, but the unit also received support from the Ford Foundation and from other donors to cover specific advisory inputs by economists from the U.S.A and the European Community. The activities ended in late 1993. This paper is a final report from the project organizer to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Conclusion.

The report describes who the advisers were, who they have been reporting to during the three years of cooperation, and it contains a list of papers published by the Macroeconomic and Finance Unit (MFU), which was established jointly by the advisers and Russian economists. MFU has had a wide range of contacts and according to the report it has communicated with most of the prominent Russian economists.

The foreign advisers, together with Russian economists at MFU analysed policy issues, wrote memoranda and drafted legislative proposals. The MFU added new ideas, expertise and statistical analysis to senior decision makers in the government. The MFU took part in the economic debate within government circles, and also in the public debate.

The report also notes that several analytical studies were undertaken on the direct initiative by the staff of MFU, for example concerning forecasting, energy policy, agricultural policy and tax reforms. These studies, and recommendations based on the studies, were forwarded to government, international organizations, journalists and foreign embassies. Recurrent reports mirrored development in social policies, industrial production, investment, foreign trade and monetary policies.

The report concludes that the cooperation has been effective and that the activities supported by Sweden has affected Russian economic policy and debate significantly during the past two years. It concludes that a continuing and sustainable network of economic researchers has been developed.

Methodological issues.

The report describes what activities has taken place and by whom. It is detailed and concrete. It is not an evaluation report and thus it does not contain any references to opinions by the collaborating partners nor any independent attempts to measure impact. Whether the

cooperation has been effective and whether it has had any impact is not verified as such, but it is the opinion of the advisory group. The description indicates that the MFU as such is an established unit which will continue to act on the Russian scene.

(35) Mötesprotokoll från möte med representanter från Grossistförbundet. Memorandum by from a meeting with representatives of whole-sale distributors. SAU. April 1994

(36) Industrins syn på det svenska biståndet till Central- och Östeuropa. (Industry's view on development cooperation with Eastern and Central Europe.) Memorandum from Industriförbundet. April 1994.

Background.

These two memoranda summarize the opinions of industrial organizations on the performance and effectiveness of development cooperation with Eastern Europe. Rather, they contain hardly any information on impact or effectiveness, but they give industry's collective experience of how the aid programme has been implemented. Most of the comments in the two memoranda refer to how the Swedish aid funds should be allocated in the future.

Conclusions.

The most common comments in the two papers refer to the administrative structure in Sweden. The papers strongly emphasize that responsibility for the aid programme is split on too many hands. It is difficult to know who takes decisions and how the aid agencies and other authorities distribute work between themselves. The procedures to apply for funds are obscure, and they differ sharply between the many authorities. In addition, many complained of bureaucratic procedures and long delays while waiting for decisions.

Several comments implied that far too much of the aid money end up in the pockets of consultants, and too little is used for delivery of industrial goods. One voice argued that technology transfer is not necessary - all technical know-how already exists in the recipient countries. However, most of the commentators meant that technology transfer still is important, but it needs to be supplemented by funds for investment. Rather than a few technically advanced projects with a high share of technical consultancies, it would be more effective to fund plenty of small, cheap and simple projects. A general conclusion was that consultancy reports seldom are reliable and realistic and that this is an ineffective means of development cooperation.

Some comments referred to the credit guarantee scheme. One large firm mentioned the scheme had helped them a great deal. The general opinion was that it worked well, but it was dysfunctional in three respects: (1) the restrictions concerning size of guarantees, (2) the

condition that the deal must generate its own supply of foreign currency, and (3) the geographical coverage. Some questioned the usefulness of co-financing arrangements. Finally, it is argued that aid financed credit schemes would be a very effective way of providing development assistance.

(37-44) Reports and policy papers on cooperation within the fields of security and national sovereignty. (7 reports)

Background

The development cooperation covered by these reports is implemented by the Swedish Coast Guard, Customs authorities, the Police and the Board for Civil Defence. The overall aim is to assist the Baltic countries build the institutions and competencies to guard and control the national territory and its borders. The documents that are reviewed here report on the objectives and discuss policies. To some extent, they assess results and experiences. In the following I summarize what they have to say about impact and effectiveness. The amount of assistance has been 102 million SEK, through June 1994.

Conclusions

In respect of border control, the most important requirements are supplies of communication equipment, computers and vehicles (including ships). Deliveries of goods and training are said to have an effect, and one of the report mentions how the Latvian marine has incepted smugglers in several cases - that would not have been made without the equipment and training provided.

One of the early policy papers assessing needs and opportunities for cooperation notes that evaluation is important, particularly in respect of equipment. It is extremely important that equipment reaches the intended destination, and that it is not sold, misused or misappropriated. The report mentions that timing is important, and when timing has been wrong, the result was that equipment was not used, ended up in the wrong place or simply disappeared.

The support to the police forces consist of equipment, training and advisers. The needs are huge, both in terms of training and personnel development and equipment. According to a monitoring report, the impact between countries varies considerably. The report frankly notes that it has been necessary to put very stringent conditions on the support. The experience was otherwise that people were sent on courses in Sweden more as a reward for past accomplishments than because a need for training. Also, the distribution of police cars was at first highly inappropriate (40% of dubious value), but after discussions and Swedish controls the situation was rectified. Also, delivery of equipment has been delayed due to savings and reorganization in the Swedish authorities.

The same report notes that the many training programmes in Sweden generally had a high impact. The police officers who attended were interested and mastered the course contents. However, the training in recipient countries was less useful. One course was never completed, and another was marked by an astonishing lack of interest on behalf of the participants. One of the problems in cooperation is the competence and attitudes of personnel (in a western democratic perspective), corruption, low salaries, low status and poor recruitment. At the same time, there is very rapid turnover of personnel, particularly among senior managers.

The report treats aid coordination. The recipient authorities are secretive about their aid negotiations with other donors, and they do not disclose what they ask for from other donors. The report concludes that although aid should be coordinated by the recipient countries, they do not appear either willing or able to do so. Consequently the Swedish police coordinates activities directly with selected authorities in other donor countries.

In respect of the police, it is finally concluded that the collaboration occurs in conjunction with development in other parts of society; primarily political mobilization and maturity, legal reforms and organizational development. Not until these other conditions are met can we expect an acceptable impact from the collaboration with police forces.

The customs authorities organized three one week courses for personnel from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The course evaluations showed that the participants were very satisfied and developed their competence. Many of them will act as teachers when they return. Both the Civil Defence Board and the Customs authorities have received study tours of personnel and they have arranged shorter courses and provided technical assistance. The reports note the amounts utilized, which are similar to allocated amounts. Apart from what was noted above, they do not comment on impact or effectiveness.

Methodological issues.

As the reports do not claim to evaluate the impact of assistance, nor do they really discuss the matter, a methodological discussion is not relevant. It is only the Customs authorities which has attempted to formally evaluate three of its courses, and the manner of doing it was a traditional end-of-seminar evaluation. These are always worthwhile to undertake, but generally have little to say about impact or effectiveness. However, the report from the Police authorities has a frank and valuable discussion of performance. It shows considerable shortcomings and problems in implementation, but it also shows how the difficulties are avoided or overcome in the future cooperation.

(45) Evaluation of Labour Market Projects carried out by AMS and AMU International in St Petersburg 1992 - 1993. Study carried out on behalf of the Swedish Ministry of Labour. February 1994.

Background.

In 1992 the government allocated 5 million SEK in support of projects in St Petersburg to develop the labour placement activities and a system for labour market education in the region. The projects were carried out by AMS and AMU International in cooperation with the Committee for Labour and Employment of St Petersburg. The project is coming to an end in June 1994, and the present evaluation was commissioned by the Ministry of Labour.

Conclusions.

(A) The AMS project.

The purpose of the project was to assist in the development and improvement of labour market mechanisms as well as to transfer practical knowledge in this field which could be of value for the St Petersburg party. The scope of work is expressed in terms of five activity fields; analysis of the regional labour market as well as management and organization, study tours to Sweden, training and advisory services directed towards employment centers, and the same directed towards the Committee itself. The evaluator concludes that the activities stand in good relation to the objectives, although it was not spelled out how much of the resources would go to each activity. The agreement had technical deficiencies, but these were solved in cooperation between the parties during implementation.

The report notes that the project addresses only one limited, though important, problem in a much wider problem complex. The advantage of selecting a narrow area and applying a bottom-up approach is that concrete results are easier to achieve, but there is a risk that higher level problems may impede implementation at lower levels. The evaluator discusses this issue in the context of relevance of the project. It is recommended that future projects also address "higher level" areas.

The evaluator notes that the project has contributed to a radical change in the perceptions of the participants concerning what an active labour market programme is all about. The objectives were to a very large extent achieved. The nature of work at the Committee and among the employment centers has changed considerably as a result of the project; including concrete measures on information to job seekers and enterprises, new techniques for discussion, considerable organizational changes and active cooperation with enterprises. Consequently, it is likely that the results will be sustained in the long term. The project concept was found to be sound, except that "training of trainers" could have been more strongly emphasized; the spread effects would then have been higher.

The project was smoothly implemented, and the Russian part expresses full satisfaction with the implementation of various parts of the project. In addition, it was particularly mentioned that the Russian part appreciated that the Swedish experts did not bring ready made solutions, but were sensitive to adapt to conditions prevailing in St Petersburg. The evaluator notes that the cost efficiency of the project was lower than necessary due to the high cost of study tours (which he doubts the value of, partly as some of the people on the tours did not take part in the remaining project activities.) The share of expenses was also found to be very high compared to the consultancy fees, and the costs were also high because of the needs for translation and duplicating work among the Swedish consultants. However, the evaluator also notes that many more weeks of service were provided than stipulated in the contract.

B. The AMU International project.

The evaluator notes that objectives and scope of the project are somewhat unsystematically presented in the agreement, but suggests the overriding objective was to contribute to a system for employment training in the St Petersburg region. Major components of the work were to analyse current labour market educational systems in Russia, present Swedish systems, provide advisory services to the Committee (cf above), conduct training in Sweden (three two week seminars) and one two week seminar in St Petersburg. The agreement did not specify how many would be trained nor who they would be. Cost sharing arrangements were well specified.

Still, the evaluator concludes that the basic concept appears sound. The main focus was on systems to procure employment training, but that does not make the concept less valuable. The agreement stresses the importance of building on the Committee's own experience, which was also done in actual practice. The rate of change has consequently been considerable, and the results of the project's advisory services appear substantial.

Regarding the seminars in Sweden, the evaluator questions whether these actually had to be implemented in Sweden. Considering the content of training, they might as well have been conducted in St Petersburg with little loss in efficiency, but at much lower cost. The training also covered subjects such as pc usage and English language skills (both in Sweden and St Petersburg), and the evaluator means that such elementary training could have been carried out by local institutes, rather than under the umbrella of this project. In addition, to be effective, language training needs to be carried out over longer periods than two weeks.

Consequently, the objectives in respect of advisory services have to a considerable extent been reached, but regarding the training, it is more difficult to state whether any objectives were reached - despite the fact that participants expressed high appreciation of the seminars and have adopted some new skills in their work. As the project has contributed to an improved organizational structure for procurement training, it is

concluded that results are sustainable. The evaluator finds the cost efficiency of advisory services quite satisfactory as the consulting fees were reasonable and there were no excessive expenses related to them. The cost efficiency of the training appears lower for the above mentioned reasons.

Methodological issues.

The evaluation was undertaken by one external consultants, spending two weeks of preparatory work in Sweden, perusing documents and interviewing the Swedish partners, and one week in St Petersburg, visiting the organizations involved in the project and interviewing a total of 35 persons. The total time spent was three man weeks of work to cover both projects.

The evaluation builds on interviews. These were open-ended but structured around four questions concerning experience of implementation, opinions of the project, follow-up action and future needs. The evaluation does not contain any discussion of sampling criteria, nor any comments on validity or reliability of interview data nor concerning the overall findings. No other evaluation instruments are used.

The report is written in an open and discussing tone, letting the reader view the complexities of assessment regarding results and merit of the two projects. In spite of the formal weaknesses regarding method, it is quite possible for a reader to draw conclusions about the accuracy of the evaluators conclusions, and possibly to form an independent and different judgement. The qualitative description is rich enough to supply material that should otherwise have been satisfied through more formal evaluation techniques. My conclusion is that the evaluation is valid and reliable.

(46) Den särskilda garantiramen - lägesrapport. (Status report on the export credit scheme.) Export Credit Board (EKN) Memorandum dated March 1994. (Restricted)

Background.

The Swedish government allocated funds for export credit guarantees to the Baltic Countries and Russia. The funds became operational in February 1994. The present report is an internal memorandum discussing the nature of applications and the status of commitments. It is noted that the number of applications has been very high and the level of commitments has grown rapidly.

Conclusions.

I do not elaborate on the amount of commitments nor on the distribution according to sector and countries. It might be relevant to note that most of the applications concern long-term credit, many of them of comparatively small amounts. There are differences between

countries, most of the larger credit amounts are sought for business in Russia.

The exporters applying for credits are often new to EKN, they are unexperienced concerning export financing and international business in general. The exporters seldom have the financial strength to undertake the delivery on their own, and they tend to regard EKN as a financing organization. The Swedish exporters often establish new joint stock companies for the export deal (what is called "50.000 kronors bolag"). It is common that they do not own the equipment they undertake to deliver at the time of application. The purpose is to buy this, often used machinery, once the credit application has been granted.

When the credit guarantee scheme became operational many called to inquired about it. A typical telephone conversation could take around 30 minutes. The staff of EKN found themselves acting as consultants in international trade, in view of the nature of applicants and their lack of experience. Administration of the scheme is heavy, and EKN has to undertake extensive investigations of the Swedish partners to ascertain the soundness of business proposals. These investigations are carried out by EKN personnel, but to rely on consultants or other external expertise to control the business proposals would be expensive.

The report concludes that commitments will soon reach the levels allocated by the government to the scheme. The size of the scheme and the operational guidelines have worked well. In particular, the rule that the business transaction should lead to export promotion has been a useful instrument in selecting the soundest business proposal, with low risks. The report also discusses the political risks involved in the credit guarantees in Russia and suggests how these risks could be handled.

Methodological issues.

The report builds on observation and the experience of EKN staff. As I mentioned above it is not an evaluation, but an internal assessment of experience. There is no reason to doubt the information on exporters, and the nature of their transactions. However, it is interesting to compare this view of the commercial contacts that develop between Sweden and the Baltic countries to the more optimistic reports coming from those organizations that are project managers on schemes to create links between firms on both sides of the Baltic (in particular reports no 4,28,47 and 48)

(47) Conversion of Russian Military Technology. Report to SwedeCorp. April 1994.

Background

The report is an assessment of phase 1 of a project intended to create links between Swedish and Russian firms to find peaceful uses of Russian military technology. The report covers the first six months of activities, and it is also a plea for continued support. It is written by the Swedish partner in the project. The project focusses on medium sized Swedish companies interested in technology and products available in Russian firms. The Russian companies should be located in the northwestern parts of the country. According to the contract, five business ideas should be identified for continued cooperation.

Conclusions.

During the contract period (six months) two symposia were organized in St Petersburg. In the first 11 Swedish companies took part, but it is not reported how many took part in the second. Seven Russian organizations were present at the second conference. The Russian participants in the first were listed by name and not by institution, so I cannot tell how many firms took part.

During the contract period, the consultants report that they have contacted large numbers of Swedish firms and institutions such as research centers, development funds, chambers of commerce and others. The report claims that ten direct contacts between Russian and Swedish companies have emerged. It specifies Swedish and Russian partners and areas of interest. Some appear as fairly concrete, others are highly general - specifying no Russian partner, a Swedish "företagarcentrum", and an area of interest known as "Environmental technology". This can of course not be a viable business proposal, at least not until partners, products, or services are identified. Yet another of the contacts is described as follows; Swedish partner. Länsstyrelsen, Stockholm; Area of Interest: General interest in new products; Russian contact: Wants to be exposed to all new products from Russia. A long shot from a viable business opportunity!

Again, this is not an evaluation report but a report on the first phase of a project - combined with an application for additional funds. Consequently the information is geared to convince the reader of the merits of the proposal.

(48) Slutrapport från utbildning i Affärs- och företagsutveckling i Klaipeda. (Final report from a management training programme in Klaipeda). A report to SwedeCorp. April 1994.

Background.

AMU arranged a program in management training for entrepreneurs from the Klaipeda region in Lithuania. The training took the form of

seminars during three two-week sessions in Sweden, with a mixture of theoretical lectures and study visits to companies and institutions. The present report is a summary of results from the course organizers. At the same time as the report is forwarded to SwedeCorp, the organizers note that the demand for this type of training is high and they intend to apply for funds for an additional programme.

Conclusions.

The course organizers note that the participants from Lithuania had far lower knowledge of western business life than they had expected. Still, they found the participants to be quick learners. At the end of the programme the participants were eager to return and apply the new knowledge in their firms. In two of the larger firms, the management group wanted to tailor make a training programme for their companies. One of the participants was teaching at the local university and he uses some of the methods and material used during the seminars.

Course evaluations show how the different subjects rank. The ranks are high, many on the extreme positions. Others are lower, reflecting the diversity in the composition of the group and probably also differences in quality between the parts of the programme. A total of 10 commercial contacts are reported, all at a concrete level, naming products and partners. As for the methodological issues, the comments on the report above apply here too.

3. Discussion.

3.1 Starting points.

Following the review above, our the task is now to detect any emergent patterns of cooperation; that is, patterns of impact, success or failures. It is not an easy task. If the evaluators came together as a group there is not much they would agree upon; some are strongly against technical cooperation, others think it makes a significant contribution; some say the support has been cost effective, others that it is unnecessarily costly; where one report applauds the diversity of organizations and projects, others call for concentration and priorities.

Yet another problem is that the evaluations and reports are not quite reliable. Some may be biased because the writer comments on his or her own activities. Others may be biased because the evaluator has a fair share of his or her incomes from the organization that commissions the evaluation. Many are simply not reliable because there are no ways to verify their findings except to do the study again.

Quality is elusive and I suggest that we take a short cut here. Let us assume that the most important purpose of feedback is to give the reader a "true" account of the project; how it was implemented and what the effects were. The safest and often least costly way to do this is to gather evidence by the use of tested and tried methods; that is, structured interviews, questionnaires, group work and feedback conferences, structured analysis of written documents, case studies and finally, to subject the choice of methods to a critical examination. In the following, the word quality will be used as a synonym to a structured and systematic application of these evaluation techniques, a full presentation of empirical data, and an open, critical examination of the evaluation process itself.

Table 1 presents to what extent the reports follow a formally structured process of inquiry, to what extent they present empirical data, and to what extent they discuss their working methods critically. The columns simply lists a yes, partly, or no, the reader may refer to the reports in chapter two for a closer view of the methods used. I advise the reader to bear these three columns in mind when looking at the tables that follow. It is important to modify the conclusions of different reports by an estimate of their quality.

The reader should once again bear in mind that both "regular" evaluations and other reports are included. In table 1 through 4 I have underlined the reports that are described as evaluations either on the title page or by those who commissioned them. Note that they often fall short on the quality criteria, but some of the other reports rank much higher. This shows the organizations' own understanding of what an evaluation effort means cannot be taken as a starting point for a meta-analysis.

Table 1. Introduction to the evaluations

Project/programme	Amount (mill SEK)	Quality indicator		
		Structure inquiry	Present data	Discuss method
1 <u>Management development Poland</u>	32.4	no	no	yes
2 <u>Cooperation with Poland</u>	300.0	no	no	no
x 3 <u>Industry and Management</u>	31.0	yes	yes	yes
x 4 <u>Business development in Estonia</u>	0.5	yes	yes	yes
5 <u>Forestry sector in Poland</u>	30.9	no	no	no
6 <u>NGO's in Estonia and Roumania</u>	27.0	partly	partly	no
7 <u>Polish labour market</u>	5.5	no	partly	yes
8 <u>Air pollution Riga</u>	2.0	no	no	yes
x 9 <u>NGO's eastern Europe</u>	230.0	no	no	no
10-16 Bio-energy conversions	14.3	yes	yes	yes
17-18 Radiation Protection	25.1	-	-	-
19- 21Baltic coordinating meetings	-	-	-	-
22-23 Board of Health and Welfare	12.3	-	-	-
24 <u>Municipalities in cooperation</u>	14.1	-	-	-
25 <u>Transport and communications</u>	27.1	no	no	no
26 <u>Banking training programme</u>	12.0	yes	yes	yes
27 <u>Training in board work</u>	-	yes	yes	yes
x 28 <u>Scania Corps</u>	12.0	yes	yes	yes
29 <u>G-24 Environment sector</u>	-	yes	yes	yes
30-31 Environmental protection	12.9	-	-	-
32 Nuclear power programme	70.0	-	-	-
33 Russian Roulette	-	yes	yes	no
34 Policy advice Russia	6.0	-	-	-
35-36 Industry's comments	-	-	-	-
37-44 Security and sovereignty	102.0	-	-	-
45 <u>St Petersburg labour market</u>	5.0	yes	no	yes
46 Credit guarantees	-	-	-	-
47 Russian military technology	0.5	no	no	no
48 Management training, Klaipeda	1.6	no	no	no
Total project/programme amount	878.4			

It is remarkable how much more critical the reports that score highly on the quality indicators are. It would be possible to launch the hypothesis that the higher the quality of the evaluation (in the above sense), the more knowledge is generated and the more diversified and critical are the conclusions likely to be.

The first column in table 1 gives the total amount allocated to the projects/programmes at the time of the evaluation. This sums up to 878 million SEK, which is less than a third of the amounts allocated by the government to cooperation with Eastern and Central Europe up to the end of the fiscal year 1993/94. Is it a reasonable coverage to have feedback on a third of the volume of the aid flow? Let us compare with common practice on the bilateral aid programme and among other aid organizations.

Roger Riddell (Foreign Aid Reconsidered, 1987) concludes that not more than 10% of the total OECD aid flows to the Third World is subject to evaluation. However practice differs between organizations. The World Bank evaluates all (100%) of its projects. On the average around 10 - 20% of Swedish aid is evaluated (Bra Beslut, DsUD 1991:63). So it would seem that the cooperation with Eastern Europe is more controlled than other parts of the aid programme. However, in this review I included many other types of feedback than evaluations. If monitoring reports and various internal memoranda were included on the aid programme, almost 100% would be subjected to some form of feedback - which is then significantly more than cooperation with Eastern and Central Europe.

If we only look at proper evaluations; that is, if I deduct the internal memoranda etc, it is cooperation worth somewhat less than 500 million that was evaluated, or around 15% of total amounts that were subjected to a systematic inquiry, with the use of (some minimal amount of) social science methods, into design and implementation of activities (programmes no 3,4,6,7,8,9,10-16,26,27,28,29,33 and 45). Reports 10-16 were internal evaluation designed by NUTEK, but of a very high quality and commissioned by independent evaluators using reliable methods and presenting their full data. Out of the other nine reports, one was commissioned by the Ministry of Labour, one by SwedeCorp, one by SIDA, one by Länsstyrelsen i Stockholms län and the remaining five by BITS.

However, out of these nine reports many did not cover the full amounts allocated with empirical studies. Evaluation no 3, for example, supposedly treated 48 projects, but the conclusions were based on empirical studies of 14 projects. We know nothing at all about the remaining 34 projects. If I deduct the part of the evaluations that have no empirical base, it is less than 100 million SEK of cooperation that was subjected to evaluation.

Mere quantity of evaluations is not a virtue. The programme might be better served by a few good evaluations than many of poor quality. Still, the answer to the question whether the "coverage" should be considered adequate or not would be that the evaluation effort is roughly the same

as on other aid programmes. But organizations which go about the issue of feedback and learning seriously have a much higher coverage (as for example the World Bank).

Are the evaluations here of a higher or lower quality than on the regular aid programme? As far as BITS and SwedeCorp is concerned, there is not likely to be any difference. However, SIDA's evaluation unit also has the experience and methods to ascertain a fairly high average quality of evaluations. Many of the organizations that commissioned the evaluations and reports here have less experience of evaluation. SAU's database of evaluations, when completed, will let those interested in the comparison look more closely at the matter.

During this study I came into contact with several organizations when I traced evaluations. Many answered that their particular activities could not be evaluated as they were of a different and special nature. Some claimed for example that policy advice differed from traditional development assistance and could not be evaluated. This is nonsense. For one thing, policy advice has played a major role in all development cooperation during the last 20 years (and did exist before that).

Second, even though it is not possible to evaluate policy advice with the same methods as you analyse an industrial investment project or a vaccination programme, there are many techniques available. There is much literature in the field and also a lot of experience. A hypothesis might be that people simply do not want to have their cooperation programme subject to independent, professional scrutiny.

In summary, compared to the aid to the Third World, there is (a) much less monitoring feedback concerning the cooperation with Eastern Europe, (b) roughly speaking about as much evaluation and possibly somewhat more, and (c) a lower quality of evaluation reports.

Let us now turn to the conclusions of the meta-analysis. The discussion here will be structured around the three questions listed in chapter 1, plus a more general account of experience. The last is a category for discussing all other issues that may arise from the review. The questions were:

(1) What is the overall impact of Swedish development assistance in respect of the Swedish government's formally stated objectives of cooperation; that is, transformation to a market economy, democratic governance and environmental protection?

(2) What is the impact created by the various projects, in respect of their own, immediate and concrete objectives?

(3) How has the implementation of the cooperation worked, in particular, to what extent do the evaluations and reports find the process effective?

3.2 Is there an impact on policy objectives?

In the white papers the government has formulated the policy objectives of the funds allocated for development cooperation with Eastern and Central Europe as follows: to support the transformation of the economy from socialist planning to one based on market principles; to support the evolution of pluralistic democracy and a system of legal governance; to improve the conditions of the natural environment.

These statements are my translations from Swedish to English, and even though the translation might not catch every nuance in meaning, they should be sufficiently clear to understand the aim of the cooperation. In addition, there is one objective which concerns only the Baltic states; to support and strengthen independence and sovereignty.

The last objective has not been commented or even mentioned in any of the evaluations or reports, and consequently there is nothing to say about whether it has been achieved or not. I drop it from the remaining pages of this review. However, there is another issue which is often mentioned as an end in itself, though it may also be seen as an instrument to achieve the other objectives. In the policy papers it is referred to as "to create as many and diverse contacts between Sweden and the countries of Eastern and Central Europe as possible".

Many and diverse contacts, for example between communities, schools, the environmental movements, museums, universities, hospitals may strengthen and encourage the development of civil society and thus contribute to a stronger democratic tradition. Similarly, many contacts between enterprises would increase trade and strengthen the economic reform process. That seems to be the link between the three objectives above and the plentitude of contacts. The desire for close relations at all levels of society is so prominent and dominant in project documents and policy papers that it gets the character of an overriding objective. In addition, it is practical - more amenable to measurement than the other objectives.

Have the funds been used so that the three objectives were reached? In theory, table 2 might have consisted of 29 times 3 three "yes" indications in respect of the three objectives (there are 29 projects or programmes covered by the reports). In practice it is rare that projects are directed at more than one, or possibly two objectives. However, whole programmes, like the cooperation with Poland or the NGO support to Eastern Europe might have had (should have had?) an impact in respect of all objectives.

Table 2. Does the aid achieve Swedish policy objectives?

Evaluation reports	Policy objectives			
	Market economy	Democracy & legislation	Environment	Multiple contacts
1 <u>Management development Poland</u>	-	n.a	-	-
2 <u>Cooperation with Poland</u>	partly	partly	partly	-
3 <u>Industry and Management</u>	partly	n.a	n.a	partly
4 <u>Business development in Estonia</u>	n.a	n.a	n.a	yes
5 <u>Forestry sector in Poland</u>	-	n.a	n.a	-
6 <u>NGO's in Estonia and Roumania</u>	no	yes	no	no
7 <u>Polish labour market</u>	no	n.a	n.a	n.a
8 <u>Air pollution Riga</u>	-	-	-	-
9 <u>NGO's eastern Europe</u>	no	no	no	partly
10-16 Bio-energy conversions	n.a	n.a	yes	n.a
17-18 Radiation Protection	n.a	n.a	-	n.a
19-21 Baltic coordinating meetings	-	partly	-	partly
22-23 Board of Health and Welfare	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
24 <u>Municipalities in cooperation</u>	no	no	no	no
25 <u>Transport and communications</u>	uncer	n.a	n.a	n.a
26 <u>Banking training programme</u>	no	n.a	n.a	n.a
27 <u>Training in board work</u>	-	n.a	n.a	n.a
28 <u>Scania Corps</u>	-	n.a	n.a	partly
29 <u>G-24 Environment sector</u>	n.a	n.a	partly	n.a
30-31 Environmental protection	n.a	n.a	uncer	n.a
32 Nuclear power programme	n.a	n.a	partly	n.a
33 "Russina roulette"	n.a	n.a	no	n.a
34 Policy advice Russia	yes	n.a	n.a	n.a
35-36 Industry's comments	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
37-44 Security and sovereignty	n.a	partly	n.a	n.a
45 <u>St Petersburg labour market</u>	-	n.a	n.a	n.a
46 Credit guarantees	-	n.a	n.a	-
47 Russian military technology	n.a	n.a	n.a	yes
48 Management training, Klaipeda	-	n.a	n.a	yes

But the answer coming from the evaluations and reports says either nothing at all, or that goal achievement is uncertain or partial, and only in three out of the potentially 87 instances do they say "yes", the project did contribute to this goal. The evaluators say definitely "no" on ten occasions, a clear and explicit "no" is more than three times as common as "yes". In addition, one might question whether those authors who write that goal fulfillment is "uncertain" do not mean to say "no, there are no indications that the cooperation has contributed to these objectives". It is quite clear that the evaluations and reports seldom conclude that the cooperation has an impact in respect of the policy objectives.

In nine cases do the evaluations conclude that the activities have had some impact in relation to the policy objectives. The evaluation of NGO's in Estonia and Roumania (no 6) concluded that the contacts between organizations for adult education did encourage and strengthen democratic structures in Estonia, and the evaluation of industry and management (no 3) found that some activities had a lasting impact on the transformation to a market economy. The objectives are not of such a nature that they can be measured, thus the evaluators usually only assess impact qualitatively.

The evaluation process itself may be biased against a conclusion that the project has had an impact. If a project is relatively small and has clear objectives, then an evaluation might find that the objectives were reached - beyond doubt. However, such objectives are often far removed from the lofty policy statements, and a careful evaluator does not then undertake an exploration of what impact there is in terms of these objectives. Too many intervening factors would affect the impact. On the other hand, larger programmes, such as the cooperation with Poland, would be expected to have an impact on policy objectives. But then there are many and multiple objectives, and some of the many projects involved are likely to have failed, and then it is not likely that the answer regarding impact will be anything but "partly", "uncertain", or no answer at all.

Looking at table 2, it is remarkable how many indications of "not applicable" it contains and how often there is merely a dash. Why? I wanted to be fair both to the programme and the evaluators. A programme such as "conversion of military technology" (48) is not designed to address the policy objective to improve the environment. It would be trivial to note that it had no impact, and it would not do the project justice. Similarly, the programme on bio-energy conversion is not designed to have an impact on the first two objectives, and to note that it had no impact would be to change the information content in the answer "no" in the table. As it is, when I write "no" it means that the evaluator has come to the conclusion that the project has not had any impact *where it was expected to have an impact*.

The dash in the table signifies that the evaluator has not come to any conclusion at all about impact in terms of the policy objectives, and he or she did not answer that impact was partial, or uncertain. The reader

should also remember that the answer an evaluator gives depends on the questions. Perhaps those who commissioned the evaluation did not ask about impact in terms of these policy objectives (that was the case on evaluation no 4 and 45 for instance). In my opinion, both these projects had an impact in respect of the first objective (but it is not my opinion that counts, cf page 3 above).

It is striking that "not applicable" is the most common indication in the table. The organizations find it difficult to relate their activities to the policy objectives; if anything, they can only relate to one policy objective at the time; and they do not design activities that reach these objectives. In summary, I would conclude that the policy objectives play a marginal role when the practical aid programme takes shape, and consequently it is not very likely that an evaluator will reach any conclusions regarding the policy objectives.

The last column in table 2 shows whether the evaluations have found that the programmes lead to good neighbourly relations; that is, whether they did create many relations between people and organizations. There are more positive indications here than on any of the other objectives, and there are only two evaluations that come to the conclusion that the programme had no such effects (however, these two programmes would be expected to achieve much more in this respect than many other). Nevertheless, goal achievement appears to be higher here than in respect of the other objectives.

Is there any difference between the objectives? If we look at the volumes of assistance connected to the projects (table 1) and then look at where the evaluators have found the assistance to have at least a partial impact, it would seem as if more money has had an impact in respect of the objective to promote democracy than in respect of the other objectives. The objective to improve the environment ranks second, and the objective to support economic reform ranks third. This is of course a highly uncertain conclusion, more to be regarded as a hypothesis.

Let us now sum up what the evaluations have to say on whether the Swedish policy objectives are reached:

1. Most evaluations do not say anything at all, either because they were not asked to do so, or because the project/programme was not designed to have an impact in terms of the objectives. The last factor is most common, and my conclusion is that the objectives have seldom been operationalized in the practical work. Few of the organizations relate their practical activities to the policy objectives, and there are no indications that they are very interested in doing so.

2. When the evaluations say anything about the policy objectives, the most common conclusion is that is uncertain whether there was an impact, or that there was no impact at all.

3. It is only in 2% of the cases that the evaluators definitely say that the project/programme had an effect in respect of a policy objective. Only one of these was an evaluation that ranked highly on the quality indicators.

4. The cooperation with Eastern and Central Europe has been slightly more successful in respect of the "instrumental objective" to create many and diverse contacts, than in respect of any of the other three objectives.

3.3 Did the projects reach their immediate objectives?

Let us now turn to the immediate objectives, or the objectives set for each and every project or programme. It should be clear from what has been written above, that the cooperation mostly have other objectives than the policy objectives formulated by the government. However, the varying objectives may stand in relation to each other. If the projects reach their direct, concrete, specific and immediate objectives, it is more likely they have an impact in terms of the policy objectives. But it does not follow automatically. I will quote two examples.

Assume that one of the projects financed under the programme listed in the tables (22-23) has the objective to let partners from Latvia update themselves in modern techniques of psychiatric diagnoses. Even if a number of people took part, learnt a lot and apply their learning in their professional endeavours, it would be hard to relate this to one of the policy objectives. On the other hand, assume that one of the projects under industry and management (3) leads to the establishment of new contractual legislation in Estonia. This would certainly have a great impact on the reforms to a market economy. Even though both projects were successful in terms of their own objectives, only one of them would contribute to the policy objectives.

One reason the projects seldom contribute to policy objectives may be that they do not even reach their immediate objectives, and thus they would not be likely to have an impact. A management training programme which fails to give the participants any new insights cannot be expected to contribute to the economic reform process, to take an example. So, do the projects and programmes reach their own objectives? Table 3 presents the conclusions from the evaluations and reports. I have sorted the evaluator's conclusions in four (plus two) categories:

yes -	means that the report concludes that the objectives were reached.
partly -	means the report concludes that some of objectives were met but not all, or that the objective(s) were not reached fully.
no -	the report concludes that the objectives were not achieved.
-	the dash means that the report does not say whether the activities reached any objectives.
n.a.	indicates that the report is not of such a nature that it contains feedback on whether objectives were met

Only seven of the reports conclude that the objectives were reached, and only three of these are reliable evaluations - the other four are reports from those responsible for the activities. In one case do external evaluators come to the opposite conclusion regarding the project (nos 32 and 33).

How much money does this concern; that is, how much of the 3.000 million SEK that have been allocated for cooperation do we know has been used in such a way that the immediate objectives of assistance were reached? Well, not more than 20 million SEK, representing about one half of one percent. Those three reliable evaluations indicate that 20 million were used in such a way that one can unambiguously conclude that the objectives were fully reached. If we add the other four reports which still indicate that objectives were met, the conclusion would be that 97 million SEK reached the objectives (out of which 70 million refers to the nuclear power programme - no 32).

The table shows that the most common answer to the question is that objectives were reached partly. Accordingly, twelve of the programmes are said to have reached the objectives partly. Let me quote a few examples. The evaluation of the management development programme in Poland had as objectives to strengthen management through training and institution building. The evaluator concludes that the objective to arrange training courses were met (the courses did take place - note that the evaluator said nothing about transfer of skills or any other form of impact from the training - merely that training did take place).

The evaluator found the effects of institution building mixed; in three projects the objectives were reached, in one the objective was within reach and yet another did not reach the objective. Consequently one objective was reached, the other was reached partly, and the third not at all; and I sum it up as that objectives were reached partly.

Another example, from the Scania Corps programme (no 28): the evaluators found that the objectives were not clearly stated, but they derived three objectives which they used in the evaluation: to create employment (for Swedes), to transfer skills, and to create contacts

Table 3. Did the projects/programmes reach their objectives?

	indicator of achievement	nature of objectives:	
		many or few	clear or fussy
1 <u>Management development Poland</u>	partly	many	clear
2 <u>Cooperation with Poland</u>	partly	many	clear
3 <u>Industry and Management</u>	partly	many	fuzzy
4 <u>Business development in Estonia</u>	yes	few	clear
5 <u>Forestry sector in Poland</u>	partly	-	-
6 <u>NGO's in Estonia and Roumania</u>	partly	few	clear
7 <u>Polish labour market</u>	partly	many	clear
8 <u>Air pollution Riga</u>	partly	many	clear
9 <u>NGO's eastern Europe</u>	partly	many	clear
10-16 Bio-energy conversions	yes	few	clear
17-18 Radiation Protection	-	few	fussy
19-21 Baltic coordinating meetings	n.a	n.a	n.a
22-23 Board of Health and Welfare	-	few	clear
24 <u>Municipalities in cooperation</u>	partly	many	clear
25 <u>Transport and communications</u>	partly	few	clear
26 <u>Banking training programme</u>	partly	few	clear
27 <u>Training in board work</u>	partly	few	clear
28 <u>Scania Corps</u>	partly	few	fussy
29 <u>G-24 Environment sector</u>	partly	many	fussy
30-31 Environmental protection	partly	few	clear
32 Nuclear power programme	yes	few	fussy
33 "Russian roulette"	no	few	fussy
34 Policy advice Russia	yes	few	clear
35-36 Industry's comments	n.a	n.a	n.a
37-44 Security and sovereignty	partly many	clear	
45 <u>St Petersburg labour market</u>	yes	few	clear
46 Credit guarantees	n.a	n.a	n.a
47 Russian military technology	yes	few	clear
48 Management training, Klaipeda	yes	few	clear

between firms. The evaluators said that the second objective was hardly reached, the third was perhaps reached to some extent (38% of the firms had established contacts), but the first objective could be said to have been met (although, as I describe in chapter 2, it would be possible to argue that this objective was really not met at all). Still, the evaluation says that one objective was reached and two were partially reached; consequently, I list it in the category where objectives were reached partly.

When the objectives were met partly, this is still a conclusion which is relatively positive. It could be taken as an indicator that the programme has been moderately successful (more about this later). But some that are grouped in this category have really been regarded as rather poor by the evaluators. For example, in respect of the programme called "Municipalities in cooperation" (no 37), the evaluators conclude that on the programme "...few of the municipalities have been able to account for any real effects. Sometimes the activities are not yet concluded, and for many of the activities, such as training, it is difficult to see any effects at all."

Can we really trust such an exposition as table 3? Well, it is important to read it correctly and to understand the complexities involved in the aggregation. The most problematic issue is the nature of the objectives themselves. To give an indication of them, I have added two more columns to the table. Some of the projects may have had only one simple objective - to establish business contacts, for example, or to conduct a number of training programmes.

Other projects have had several objectives; to train people, transfer equipment, install computer systems, establish contacts with Sweden, etc. Obviously, it is more likely that a project which has only one objective will reach that objective, than it is for a project with multiple objectives to reach all. Thus, the more objectives an activity has, the less likely is it that an evaluation comes to the conclusion that objectives were reached.

But it is not only a question of how many objectives there are, but also how they are expressed. Consider one of the objectives for the nuclear power programme (no 32): "the objective is to reduce the risk of a nuclear accident with large disbursement of radioactive material, as far as possible within the economic constraints, up to the closure of the plant". When can it be established whether the objective was reached?

The key issue is to assess when the conditions that can be described as "as far as possible within the economic constraints" are reached. I would say this is impossible to tell or to verify. No evaluator could empirically conclude that such an objective has been achieved. (Unless one takes an extreme point and says that as long as no accident occurs, the objectives are always reached).

The project on labour market training in St Petersburg (no 45) is another example. One objective was to assist in the development and improvement of labour market mechanisms. The evaluator presented a

qualitative assessment of whether the objectives were reached, and it is not a very complex task to find a number of indicators whether it did. These two examples show the obvious; that some objectives are fussy to the point where they are meaningless, and others are concrete and specific.

It is almost impossible for a structured inquiry to come to the conclusion that the objectives were achieved, if the objectives are of the nature shown in the first example above (no 32). But if the objectives are verifiable, then it is more likely that the conclusion will be that they are reached. The reader who peruses chapter 2 discovers that the objectives at project and programme level often are ambiguous, fussy, meaningless or tautological. The evaluators often have a hard job to assess whether objectives are reached, and it is not surprising that they seldom answer "yes" or "no". The evaluation process is biased against concluding either that objectives are achieved, or that they are not achieved.

Furthermore, the nature of the objectives can be correlated to the level of achievement. Those projects that have reached their objectives have clear and few objectives; or rather, five of them had few and clear objectives, one had few but unclear objectives. As for the other categories, they are not correlated to any particular statement of objectives; suffice it to say that the more objectives and the more vaguely stated they are, the less likely is it that an evaluator will conclude they were reached.

How does the quality of evaluations relate to the conclusions in respect of immediate objectives? It is interesting to note that those evaluations that answered the question with an unambiguous "yes" were of a high quality. Even though the high quality evaluations generally speaking were less likely to find that policy objectives were reached, immediate objectives reached and that efficiency was high, there were still some of them that concluded that objectives were met.

The puzzle can be explained if we understand the context of inquiry. First, these three projects had few and clear objectives. An evaluator with an unstructured inquiry and with no empirical data, would probably not dare say anything except that objectives appear to be met, or that they are partly achieved - because he or she would not know (which follows from the lack of method).

The two columns that indicate the nature of objectives show that objectives are a poor starting point for evaluations, still most evaluators do conclude something in respect of objectives. Why do they bother? It is quite clear that many of those designing projects or programmes do not state objectives, or relate project objectives to policy objectives, or any of the other procedures that lie at the heart of rational project management. I would expect that everybody knows that clear and precise formulation of objectives may be helpful in management (The subject of rationality is treated extensively in the theory on decision-making, see for example Rombach, 1991). I cannot answer the question why people do not pay more attention to

formulating objectives, but I can provide some answer to why evaluators try to discuss achievements in terms of objectives.

A minority group within the evaluation profession argue that evaluations must be goal-free; that is, a project must be assessed according to merit, value, success and the equivalent. Whether they reach objectives or not is virtually uninteresting. A project might be quite stupid and a waste of money even if objectives were achieved - because the objectives might have been misconceived, unambitious or simply writ up in advance to prove success at a later stage.

Similarly, a project might have done a lot of good even if the objectives were not met; intervening factors may have led to delays that could not be foreseen, or the planners were too ambitious and did not get enough money to conclude activities - but still did not change objectives. The minority group in the profession thus argue that an evaluation must go beyond objectives and assess the merit of activities independently.

However, most evaluators take a more passive stance, and it is easier to stick to an evaluation of objectives - if the objectives are rather clear and measurable (and perhaps otherwise too). It is deeply ingrained in the mind of most evaluators to take objectives as the starting point - and the final criteria for success or failure. In theory it would be safe, it requires less work and less skills in the subject to be evaluated, and it would be a standard which most stakeholders would find acceptable.

But that is theory; the question is if it is practically viable, ethical and whether it leads to accurate statements about the activities? Considering the nature of objectives that we see here, my answer to the question would be "no". For example, one must wonder how an evaluation can first establish that there are no objectives, and later conclude that the programme appears to have reached objectives to some extent?

Yet another question concerns possible side-effects of the programme. Some of the reports mention positive and negative side effects. The evaluation of management training in Poland (no 1) notes that one of the training centers that was to be strengthened could not be sustained, but still large numbers of people had been trained. The project has obviously not reached the objective to establish the centre, still there were perhaps some positive effects as those persons applied their newly gained knowledge. At other times the side effects are negative, as noted in evaluation no 6, where a credit scheme might have lured farmers into a debt trap.

To account fully for the aid programme in this meta analysis, I should have included yet another table listing positive and negative side effects. I have not done so for two reasons. One is that most evaluations have very little to say about side effects and there is no effort to treat them comprehensively. The second reason is that those side effects that are mentioned more have the character of casual guesswork than empirically based conclusions.

In summary, the answer to the question whether the projects and programmes have reached their immediate objectives consists of three parts:

1. Only seven reports came to the conclusion that the objectives were reached.

2. Those projects that reached their objectives were rather small, and they had few and clear objectives. Large programmes with many and fussy objectives were not likely to score highly in this respect.

3. It is not quite clear what function objectives have in the development cooperation with Eastern and Central Europe, but they do not serve as valid criteria for evaluations.

3.4 Was implementation effective?

Information on the process of cooperation can be found in two ways; either directly, when the author of the report comments on implementation, or indirectly, as a conclusion based on the catalogue of issues or problems that surface in the text. In table 4 I have summarized what the reports and evaluations have to say about effectiveness. There are three types of answers; that effectiveness was high, mixed or low. In addition there are some reports that do not comment on effectiveness.

In respect of 8 programmes, the reports conclude that effectiveness was high; and in respect of five, the reports conclude that effectiveness was low. In another 7 cases, the reports conclude that effectiveness is mixed, and in 12 cases the reports have nothing to say. There is no emerging trend. At first one might think that projects and programmes that are small - or contain many small projects - more often are found to be effective (nos 4,5,10-16,22-23,24,6 and 9 - but note that the latter two are overlapping). But on the other hand, many of those found to have low effectiveness are also small, or consist of rather small parts (nos 3, 28 and 29).

The projects that were ranked as effective cover total amounts of 308 million SEK, whereas the projects that had low effectiveness amounted to 113 million. It seems as if reports come to the conclusion that implementation was effective three times as often as they find it ineffective. There are some reports that found implementation ineffective, but where we do not know how much money was involved.

Table 4. Effectiveness of implementation.

	Overall conclusions effectiveness	Implementation shortcomings			
		budget	delay	mgmt	local part
1 <u>Management development Poland</u>	mixed	no	yes	yes	yes
2 <u>Cooperation with Poland</u>	mixed	yes	yes	yes	yes
3 <u>Industry and Management</u>	low	yes	yes	yes	yes
4 <u>Business development in Estonia</u>	high	no	no	no	no
5 <u>Forestry sector in Poland</u>	high	no	yes	yes	yes
6 <u>NGO's in Estonia and Roumania</u>	high	no	no	yes	yes
7 <u>Polish labour market</u>	mixed	no	no	yes	no
8 <u>Air pollution Riga</u>	mixed	no	yes	yes	no
9 <u>NGO's eastern Europe</u>	high	no	no	yes	no
10-16 Bio-energy conversions	high	no	yes	yes	no
17-18 Radiation Protection	-	no	no	no	no
19-21 Baltic coordinating meetings	mixed	no	no	no	no
22-23 Board of Health and Welfare	high	no	no	yes	yes
24 <u>Municipalities in cooperation</u>	high	no	no	no	no
25 <u>Transport and communications</u>	-	no	no	no	no
26 <u>Banking training programme</u>	-	no	no	no	no
27 <u>Training in board work</u>	mixed	no	no	yes	yes
28 <u>Scania Corps</u>	low	no	no	yes	yes
29 <u>G-24 Environment sector</u>	low	yes	yes	yes	yes
30-31 Environmental protection	-	yes	no	yes	yes
32 Nuclear power programme	-	no	no	no	no
33 "Russian roulette"	low	yes	yes	yes	yes
34 Policy advice Russia	-	no	no	yes	no
35-36 Industry's comments	low	yes	yes	yes	no
37-44 Security and sovereignty	-	yes	yes	yes	yes
45 <u>St Petersburg labour market</u>	high	no	no	yes	yes
46 Credit guarantees	-	yes	yes	yes	no
47 Russian military technology	-	no	no	no	no
48 Management training, Klaipeda	-	no	no	no	no

One of these reports was no 29, commissioned by the European Community and covering support to the environment sector. The evaluation was quite clear in its conclusion, and very critical of the process of implementation in development cooperation. It also covered Swedish assistance, and thus it lends additional weight to the critical conclusions of reports covering environmental cooperation.

How should one interpret the conclusion of reports no 35 and 36, comments from industry in Sweden on the implementation of development assistance? The remarks in those papers do not refer to any particular project or programme, and thus there is no monetary value assigned to it. The conclusions are not supported by empirical data. Does it only indicate that the industrial organization would like to see more funds channelled to - or via - Swedish industry? Does it mean that the representatives from industry do not understand issues of technology transfer in general and support to public administration, popular movements and environmental causes in particular? In either case, the conclusion cannot be accepted at face value, but may be taken as a serious question concerning implementation.

What do evaluators and report writers mean when they say that effectiveness is low? There is considerable confusion in respect of the terminology. Some speak of efficiency and others of effectiveness, or sometimes cost-effectiveness or cost-efficiency. Only projects no 4, 7, 27 and 45 had figures to support their conclusion, and even these were preliminary. One evaluator based the indications of cost-effectiveness on the cost per person trained under the programme, without any indication of quality or impact of training. The figure as such is relatively meaningless as long as it is not based on the merit of the training. Who would not have a good programme costing 20.000 per participant, rather than a bad programme costing 10.000?

Out of the reports that concluded effectiveness was high, five did not account for how they came to that conclusion - and those projects covered 286 million SEK. It is alarming that three of these reports were written by external, independent evaluators/evaluation teams who were commissioned to investigate cost-effectiveness, among other things. When a project manager writes in a quarterly report that the effectiveness of his or her programme is high, we may accept that as an opinion that might be tested later. But in an evaluation one would have to substantiate the conclusion, show how it was derived and present the standards of measurement.

As I said, the conclusions regarding effectiveness often are - conclusions (out of the blue). Effectiveness is treated as a purely qualitative measure, except in the cases noted above. So what does it mean? What do the authors mean when they say that a programme has been effective and efficient? My hypothesis is that they (the evaluators) have the impression that people take action quickly, that there are no unnecessary delays, and that the different inputs are cheap - or at least not strikingly expensive. As far as I have seen, there is really no more substance to the assessment of effectiveness. For example, the evaluator commenting on assistance via NGO's in Eastern Europe

interviewed around 50 people but did not examine accounts or purchase lists, did not look at hourly or weekly wages, did not quantify impact, did not present any calculations at all, but still concluded that a programme of 230 million SEK was effectively implemented.

The organizations who commission evaluations must accept some responsibility for how issues of efficiency and effectiveness are treated. The terms of reference for evaluations often say that the evaluator should assess efficiency and effectiveness, without stating what they really are interested in knowing, and without giving the evaluators the means necessary to undertake a careful and professionally adequate job.

Would it be possible to assess effectiveness of the programme to support NGOs in Eastern Europe? Yes, but not in a few weeks time while at the same time giving a full account of what was done, where and at what impact in terms of policy objectives and project achievements, and simultaneously presenting a strategy for future support! It is worth pondering how seriously interested those who commission the evaluations really are in getting accurate answers.

A measure of effectiveness also presupposes that the evaluator applies a standard. Let us look at an example. Development of commercial contacts is often an objective. Evaluation no 4 came to the conclusion that the project to develop commercial links with Estonia was effective in this respect. The evaluators calculated the cost of the programme to be 300.000 SEK, and that this had generated a business volume of 30 million SEK. In addition, a contract for delivery of peat from Estonia at a total value of 100 million SEK was being signed, though the business was not realized at the time of the evaluation. The Swedish funds had thus generated business to a value of 30 million SEK, which was verifiable, and another 100 million was to be realized. The evaluators found that this multiplier effect was considerable, and concluded it was a cost-effective use of money.

This can be compared to another project, to create commercial links to exploit Russian military technology for peaceful use. At the end of that project, 10 potential business contacts were established, but nothing had been realized. There was no multiplier effect at all yet. But the cost of the programme was 1.6 million, and to be comparable to the Estonian activities, it would have to create a real business volume of at least 160 million SEK within a year and a half. Unless another and lower standard of accomplishment is adopted.

As the conclusions are of such limited reliability, it is very difficult to extend the discussion much further. Still, I wondered whether there is any connection between effectiveness in implementation and reaching objectives; that is, are those projects that are found to be effective also the same as those that reach their objectives. Table 5 below summarizes the information from tables 3 and 4. Each mark in the table signifies an evaluation or a report.

It is interesting to note that all projects that reach their objectives clearly and without doubt or reservation also are effectively implemented, but effective implementation do not always lead to that the objectives are reached. The one programme which was found to have low effectiveness did not reach its objectives at all. The emerging hypothesis would be that high effectiveness is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition to reach the immediate objectives of the project.

Table 5. Effectiveness and impact.

	Do the projects reach their objectives?		
	Yes	partly	no
Effectiveness: High	II	IIII	-
Mixed	-	IIIII	-
Low	-	-	I

Table 4 did not only present the evaluators' overall conclusion on effectiveness, but also summarized the presence or absence of some common problems in implementation. I have grouped these under four headings, those that concern the budgets, those that concern timing, those that are caused by management and those that are concerned with local participation. Let me elaborate more on what type of problems I refer to.

Problems concerning budgets are not so common, they are only listed in eight of the reports. Budget problems are of several kinds, and may signify different shortcomings. One is that the budgets are simply not enough, or that the projects exceed their costs. It is not common that budgets are exceeded and that the organizations implementing the assistance turn back to the donors asking for more money to complete the projects.

A few times, the Swedish organizations face budget problems, for example parts of the public administration have had domestic budget cuts and thus they cannot fulfill their agreement according to contracts. At times, the book-keeping of the partners was found to be poor and thus the evaluators could not verify costs and expenditures. However, few comment on the issue and it does not emerge as a major problem. Two evaluations note a high degree of corruption among organizations taking part in the cooperation, but one concludes that the evaluators found no major incidence of funds used inappropriately or for illegal purposes.

A frequent issue brought forward in the more general studies or reports is that the recipient organizations lack funds for investment. Technology transfer might be good in itself, but if the recipient

organizations cannot take action to implement changes, which they need money for, then the efforts are wasted. The recipient countries often give voice to this; technical assistance is fine, but will be wasted if investments do not follow suit.

In fact, many point out that technical assistance already has been wasted, and that there were far too many consultancy studies, feasibility studies, sector analysis etc that do not lead anywhere because the recipient organizations simply do not have the money to act on recommendations. The signal is basically that the imbalance between technical and financial assistance is severe, and has been severe all the time since cooperation started.

The problems with delays, and timing in general, are more frequent. When cooperation starts, the partners usually write a plan for when things are to take place, and then delays occur. So far there is nothing unusual about it. However, the evaluations and reports here raise the issue when delays are so significant that they affect the outcome of the project.

For example, people are trained in computer programming, but the computers do not arrive until people have long since forgotten what they learnt. Or managers wait for a policy analysis which is a precondition for action, and nothing is allowed to happen as long as the policy study is not completed. Or the partners set targets, but while they wait for funds - which perhaps takes half year to get approved - things change and the first targets are no longer interesting or realistic. However, even though some of the reports find that bureaucratic procedures among the donor organizations hamper effectiveness, the majority still commend them for rapid procedures and quick responses to requests for money.

Management problems are the most commonly occurring issues in the evaluations. This broad category covers many aspects of how projects are implemented. Flexibility is a key word, either the lack of it, or as something which has contributed to success. It is very important that the partners in cooperation can agree to switch funds between budget posts, that they can change plans according to circumstances and that they have an opportunity to adjust what is happening according to experiences.

If the project was planned to have five people trained, but it is found that another two need training, then the first agreement should not be an obstacle to adjust. However, such flexibility presupposes that objectives really are shared and that the partners do not have any hidden agendas (for example, to sell services of one kind rather than another).

Several of the evaluations also discuss the issue of project ownership. Whose idea was it, and specifically, to what extent is the project designed to suite the commercial interests of the Swedish partner rather than the interests of the recipient. It is interesting to note that few of the concrete evaluations have found evidence that the

cooperation is defined by the supplier. However, at a more general level, this is a very frequent complaint. Are the evaluators afraid of antagonizing project personnel? Or is the whole issue a myth that cannot be verified? These evaluations do not resolve the issue.

Irrespective of where the project idea was conceived, the question remains of who controls the implementation process. Here too, the evaluations provide hints and touch upon problems without pursuing them to conclusion. Neither reports nor evaluations teach us anything about how the cooperation was organized, how labour was divided, how the different inputs were coordinated, processes of decision-making nor any of the other design variables that might relate to effectiveness and outcome.

One of the evaluations did note that Swedish project managers were in command (no 3) and concluded that it would be desirable to transfer power to the recipients. Two other evaluations (no 6 and 45) found that decisions on project implementation were taken in common, and that the whole process was characterized by cordial and smooth relations between the partners.

One of the important tasks of management is to relate activities to the external world. The evaluations often find that projects are not sufficiently well understood in the surrounding community; for example, they may lack support from central government bodies or from other organizations that they depend upon. To manage such relations is a task of the project leaders, and failure is thus basically a management failure.

Some projects are part of a larger organization in the recipient country, and at times the corporate leadership does not really support the cooperation - at least not actively. Again, it is difficult to say how grave the problem is, or how often it occurs. The evaluations are simply not very concrete and they do not point at individuals or organizations that may be at fault. They speak of the problem in general terms, and it is difficult for the external reader to know how significant the problem is.

Yet another type of management failure concerns the design of activities. In one case, equipment was installed in parts of the organization but personnel to use the equipment was trained in other parts - and the two did not match. Both inputs were wasted, or had a limited effect. In other cases, manuals to machines were either not available, were in Swedish, or were translated incomprehensively.

One evaluation found that credit schemes did not reach the target groups because of the choice of implementing agency in the recipient country, and another evaluation found that the recipients were simply not interested in the activities that were implemented. The whole impression is that evaluations do find several shortcomings, but real magnitude and effect is not fully analyzed: is it simply natural that nobody is perfect, and the evaluator notes marginal shortcomings in the hope that somebody will learn and implementation will get better,

or should one conclude that the programme in its totality is weak and lacks an ability to learn?

Coordination is another management task, which relates to the issues noted above. The more general the evaluation, and the broader its coverage, the more likely is it that the evaluator will recommend that the different projects and programmes be better coordinated - with each other, with other activities in the recipient country and with other donors. Some note that the whole programme is fragmented and that the result is a low impact in terms of the policy objectives (nos 2, 9 and 24, for example).

The evaluators argue that decision-making be more centralized and that some parts of the programme should be given priority. On the other hand, some evaluators regard the multiplicity of actors almost as an objective, and I have shown above that the multitude of contacts and the fragmented implementation almost has the appearance of an end in itself.

It is not the task of this evaluation to conclude whether the level of coordination is too high or too low, nor to say how different coordination instruments may be used to produce a coordinated assistance programme while still preserving the positive aspects of many and independent decision-makers. However, so many evaluators - and other reports - come to the conclusion that more coordination is needed, that we may safely assume that they are right. If there are other virtues connected to a decentralized and fragmented approach there is a price to pay. This price is found in the opportunity cost of effectively implementing the projects. It is urgently needed that somebody explains why and to what extent these opportunity costs are necessary.

Let us now turn to the problems associated with local participation. Again, these are of different kinds. First of all, the evaluators find that training programmes often are implemented with fewer participants than expected. A project proposal might promise that 30 people are to be taught the principles of the market economy, but only 20 appear in the class room. At first, this means that the costs per person trained is almost doubled, or anyway higher than expected. Second, it might be taken as an indication that the whole activity receives low priority in the recipient country, or that word has spread that the lectures are not worth listening to.

Several of the evaluators found that many projects had some form of counterpart system, where people in key positions worked together with advisers from Sweden. The project proposal might have specified that 10 teachers were to be trained during the process of cooperation. But the cooperating institution could only find three to take this role. Either the plans were not realistic, or the local partner quickly evaluated the use of the training and withdrew.

Yet another problem is that personnel turnover is high in the cooperating organizations. People that were trained disappear to new

and better jobs. In a sense, this may not be a problem if they apply their learning in a new setting, but the problem is that nobody knows whether they do so. Besides, the training was often supposed to be part of a larger program to strengthen an institution, and if people leave then the institution building effect will never materialize.

This list of problems may also be viewed as a checklist of issues to consider when planning assistance, and to look for when conducting an evaluation. They are pervasive enough to merit concern at a general level. Even though the reports and evaluations do not make the connection, I would launch the hypothesis that the poor results in respect of policy objectives as well as project objectives, and the rather low verdict concerning effectiveness, is connected to these factors.

Before concluding, I will summarize what the evaluations have found regarding implementation.

1. The majority of evaluations do not arrive at the conclusion that implementation was effective, only eight of the projects were considered effective by the authors.

2. The concept of effectiveness is poorly analyzed by most of the authors of these reports, and mostly it means that they have found implementation rather fast and smooth, and the costs reasonable.

3. The projects that reached their objectives were also effectively implemented, had clear and few objectives and were of small size. But there were many small projects that were not effectively implemented and that failed to reach the objectives.

4. The most frequent shortcomings in the cooperation process concern lacking coordination, low local involvement, insufficient attention to project design, low flexibility, and declining interest on behalf of the recipients.

3.5 Concluding remarks

In the first chapter I noted that meta-analytical procedures serve to aggregate research findings. All material should be included, irrespective of whether the author agrees to the findings or not. That is how I have worked, and I have not changed the conclusions or findings of the different authors and evaluators. On the pages above, I have presented what they have to say on the programme for development cooperation with Eastern and Central Europe.

The picture that emerges is one of a programme with significant shortcomings. Very few reports have been able to find any indication that the practical activities had an impact in terms of the government's policy objectives. If the policy objectives have played any role in the design and implementation of the programme, it is at least not documented how and to what effect.

Few of the projects and programmes reached their own direct and practical objectives, for example in terms of technology transfer or institution building. Seven projects were reported to reach their objectives fully, but only two of them were confirmed by independent external evaluations. The process of implementation suffered from many shortcomings, and again it was not more than six programmes that were reported to have been effectively implemented.

However, the accuracy of a conclusion normally depends on the quality of input data. The merit of meta-analytical procedures would lie in that small mistakes here and there are automatically adjusted when all the information is put together. The question is if the aggregate picture of development cooperation with Eastern and Central Europe that has emerged above is reasonably correct. There is no doubt that the quality of input data is low. Many of the evaluations suffer from significant shortcomings. Their measurement of impact and effectiveness is often superficial.

In which direction then are the reports biased? First, the reports that give clear and unambiguous answers - a yes or a no - tend to be of a high quality. They are not many, but they are often well researched. To be clear means to be exposed to criticism, and those writers who choose to expose themselves also tend to present data that can be defended.

Many evaluations find that the projects have some impact in terms of policy objectives, or that the projects objectives were reached to some extent. Some of those evaluations are of a high quality, and the subject matter is such that it is almost impossible to produce a clear-cut, precise answer. When reality is complex, even a brief analysis will have to reflect that complexity.

Within this middle field, there are a number of serious evaluations that do not refrain from entering into the complexity and pursue difficult answers. But there are also those who note that objectives were partially met, things were reasonably effective etc, because they lack the energy, skills or resources to find out the real truth. The former evaluations may of course be trusted, but there is a risk that the latter group of evaluations understate the problems. When they say that a programme was reasonably effective, it might in fact be rather ineffective. When they conclude that objectives were partially met, the truth might be that they were not met at all, but the evaluator did not bother to gather sufficient evidence to defend a conclusion that would be attacked by most readers.

In sum, there is a risk that the evaluations and reports reviewed here claim the development cooperation is better than it really is, but I do

not think there is any risk that they overstate problems or that they underrate the achievements. The whole programme is likely to be less effective than the evaluations conclude.

Aid to eastern Europe started in 1989, when the first sums were allocated for cooperation with Poland. We are now in the middle of 1994, so we have less than five years experience to evaluate. The first evaluations date from late 1992, some from early 1993 and most of them from the autumn of 1993 and onwards. Is it realistic to expect an impact in so short a time? I think the answer depends on the activities. Certainly, there are many activities that it would not be likely to find an impact from until some years have passed.

Yet many of the projects and programmes that were covered by these evaluations were of a short duration, and they were explicitly designed to last no more than a year or two. The funds have most of the time been allocated on the assumption that effects could and should be produced directly. It was assumed that the recipient institutions had the absorptive capacity to use the inputs provided by their Swedish partners immediately. Unlike development cooperation with the Third World, these activities were to be of short duration and consequently they should produce results directly. As this was the ambition, the achievements must be judged according to this vision. But it is another question whether it was a realistic ambition.

Evaluations may fulfil many functions; for example to improve management, to provide an account to stakeholders how the money was spent, and to help people learn from experience. Is there any indication that these evaluations have facilitated learning for those who are engaged in the cooperation programme? Basically no, the problems that are reviewed and described 1994 were the same as 1992.

There is no indication that deficiencies in design and implementation are addressed systematically - at least not as it appears in the reports and evaluations. The first three evaluations in this review mentioned all the problems that occur, and these are repeated, varied and elaborated by the evaluations that follow. If the lessons had been learnt, then I would assume that evaluations one year later would not find the same problems. (Of course, I take for granted that the reports and evaluations immediately lead to changes on the projects and programmes they report on, my question is whether the knowledge is transferred to other programmes and organizations)

There are many reasons why the lessons are not learnt, and one of them certainly has to do with the poor quality of the evaluation reports themselves. Some of the other reasons might be the fact that responsibilities are widespread and the actors are so far separated that they cannot learn from each other. Perhaps there are no channels to send information: based on my experience in this assignment I can testify that it is not easy to get hold of evaluation reports - even for someone who tries hard. Yet other factors might relate to the fragmented structures of implementation and the lack of coordinating mechanisms generally.

It is one thing for the partners in cooperation with Eastern and Central Europe to learn from their own experience, and yet another question if they learn from other experiences in development cooperation. Indeed, the question is if there is anything to learn. Opinions are divided, there are those who explicitly claim that development cooperation in Europe is different and those who have experience from cooperation with the Third World actually have a handicap when it comes to working on the other side of the Baltic.

Several of the evaluations reviewed above say so, and at times they are supported by feedback from organizations in the recipient countries. But there are also evaluations that show how the implementation problems were better foreseen and countered by firms and individuals with experience from other development cooperation, in particular by designing projects that were more likely to produce results in terms of real transfer of technology.

A review of technical cooperation from the 1970s would read much like a list of the problems concerning the projects above. Even though there are many problems left in the aid programmes to the Third World, and even though the experiences cannot be directly transferred, there is much to be learnt. Even though not all the knowledge is useful, not all can be applied, and what can be applied must be modified anyway - it is quite certain that the only thing which will not help improve the programme is a systematic refusal to learn from experience.