

“The Access Initiative: Good Environmental Governance – a Prerequisite of Sustainable Development”

Minutes of the following meetings in Estonia:

1. Roundtable in SEI Tallinn, on August 21, 2008
2. Meeting in the Development Cooperation Summer School, in Roosta, Estonia, on August 26, 2008
3. Meeting in the Ministry of Environment, on Sept. 4, 2008

1. Roundtable in SEI Tallinn, August 21, 2008, 11.15 a.m.–12.30 a.m.

Participated:

Ms Taimi Alas, US Embassy
Ms Kersti Kikkas, Ministry of Environment
Ms Anne Kivinukk, REC Estonia
Ms Kadri Sirg, PhD Student
Ms Kaja Peterson, SEI Tallinn
Ms Piret Kuldna, SEI Tallinn

K. Peterson opened the roundtable meeting and introduced briefly the SEI activities in developing countries. P. Kuldna presented the TAI, the TAI and Development project, introduced the objectives of the roundtable and gave an overview of the main findings of the TAI assessment in Sri Lanka.

The presentation was followed by the discussion on the following issues:

1. Estonian development cooperation policy and the promotion of the access principles in developing countries.
2. Possibilities of using TAI assessment methodology in donor country decision-making.

The following suggestions were made during the discussion:

- TAI methodology on access principles could be used for analysing the target country situation and needs for Estonian development cooperation. On the basis of this methodology guidelines for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) can be developed. Estonian development cooperation should be aimed at promoting the access principles so that the good governance of the partner state as a whole will improve not only in environment sector.

- TAI could cooperate with the US AID, which is also monitoring the development assistance and the usage of development funds.

- The access principles could be integrated into the project proposals evaluation criteria, which are currently being prepared by MOFA for the projects to be supported from the development assistance funds.

It was agreed that Estonia could contribute to better access rights implementation in partner countries by offering capacity building and trainings on these issues.

2. Meeting in the Development Cooperation Summer School. August 26, 2008, 13.00 a.m.–13.45 a.m.

Participated:

Ms Marje Luup, MOFA, Development Co-operation Division

Ms Marju Kõrts, MOFA, Development Co-operation Division

Ms Nastja Pertsjonok, Estonian Fund for Nature

Ms Piret Kuldna, SEI Tallinn

The meeting was preceded by the summer school session where Estonian development cooperation policy was discussed.

Development cooperation has been one of the foreign policy areas in Estonia since 1998. Estonian objectives and priorities for development cooperation policy are outlined in the Principles of Estonian Development Co-operation, approved by the Parliament and in the Strategy of Estonian Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Aid 2006-2010, approved by the Government.

Estonia spends about 0,09% of Gross National Income annually (2008) on development co-operation. It will strive towards increasing its contribution to 0,17% of GNI by 2010. The priority partner countries for Estonian bilateral development cooperation are Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and Afghanistan. Minor projects have been implemented in other countries.

The strategic objectives of Estonian development cooperation are (1) to contribute to reducing global poverty and human development in developing countries, (2) to support peace and stability, the granting of human rights, the development of democracy as well as the promoting of good governance practices in developing countries, (3) to support economic development and the liberalisation of international trade system and (4) to support environmentally sustainable development.

Development of the ICT-sector and e-governance issues is a horizontal field.

P. Kuldna gave an overview of the TAI, the TAI and Development project and the outcome of the roundtable. The discussion followed on how the access principles can be integrated into the development cooperation decision-making.

The representatives of MOFA said that currently the new Government Regulation is being drafted on the procedure for the provision of the development assistance and humanitarian aid. The access principles could be integrated into the evaluation criteria of the environmental project proposals and following the access principles could give bonus points to the project proposals. It was agreed to discuss this issue further on later this year to elaborate on the methodology.

The requirement for the environmental impact assessment will be also added to the certain projects funded by the development assistance.

P. Kuldna proposed that TAI assessment methodology could be used for analysing the target country situation for Estonian development cooperation policy.

It was also suggested to contact the adviser of Toomas Savi, the member of the European Parliament from Estonia and the member of the EP's committee on development in order to brief him on the TAI and Development project and coming TAI Global Meeting in Ireland.

3. Meeting in the Ministry of Environment. Sept. 4, 2008, 10.00 a.m.–11.10 a.m.

Participated:

Ms Siiri Kerge (Ministry of Environment, International Co-operation Department)

Ms Piret Kuldna, SEI Tallinn

P. Kuldna introduced TAI, the TAI and Development project and the outcome of the previous two meetings.

S. Kerge gave an overview of the Estonian development cooperation in environment sector. Mostly there have been seminars and trainings for the officials of the Ministries of Environment (MoE) either in the target countries or in Estonia. She said that the main barrier for more active cooperation has been the shortage of human resources in target countries as well as in Estonia.

There has been no analysis done on the effectiveness of the development cooperation in environment sector.

The discussion followed on how the access principles can be integrated into the development cooperation decision-making.

The representative of MoE noted that the most important is how to get partner countries interested in access rights issues and to deal with them in more detail in development cooperation. So far it has not been a priority issue for them. The NGOs should also use the opportunity to initiate capacity building projects in partner countries.

It was agreed with the participants of the meetings to continue communication on the topic. P. Kuldna will inform them about the outcome of the project final conference and TAI Global Meeting.

Piret Kuldna

SEI Tallinn

Sept. 10, 2008