Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
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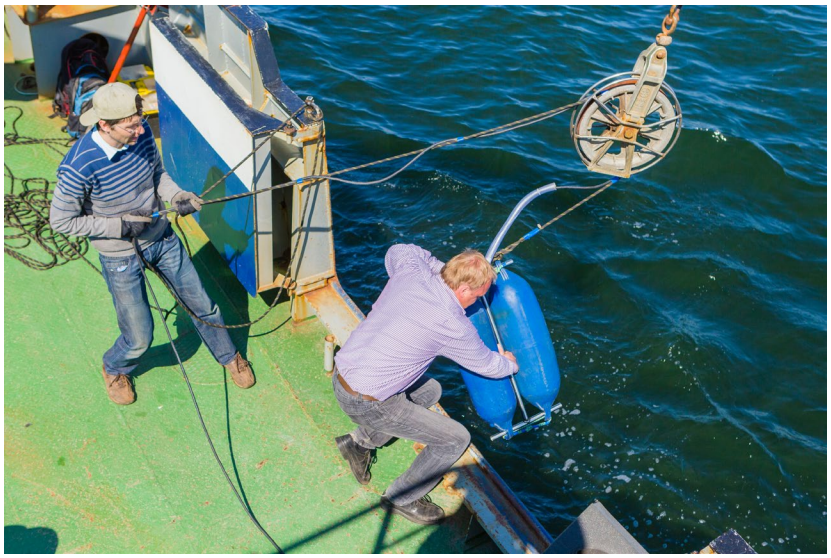
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO

ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING IN ESTONIA

ENHANCING THE RELIABILITY OF ENVIRONMENTAL DATA



Monitoring the development of sediment in the coastal region makes it possible to take measures to mitigate risks associated with climate change. © Arno Mikkor (photographer), National Coordination Unit, Estonia

Switzerland has equipped Estonian laboratories and monitoring stations with modern devices and financed the training of personnel. This has given Estonia comprehensive, reliable environmental data on water, air, radioactivity and natural disasters.

Estonia is sparsely populated and has vast swathes of virtually untouched landscape. The country is characterised by its proximity to water: Estonia has more than 1,500 islands and 1,000 lakes and its coast is 3,800 kilometres in length. Numerous marshes, upland moors and forests shape its landscape.

The collection of reliable environmental data is crucial to preserve this unique natural landscape, putting the Estonian authorities in a position to take well-founded decisions to protect the environment. For Estonia, high air and water quality, radiation protection and the prevention of natural disasters are especially important. For this reason, environmental monitoring has been improved in these areas in particular.

MODERN EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING

Switzerland participated in the purchase of modern measuring and analysis devices and the necessary training of staff. Switzerland contributed to a total of eleven environmental monitoring projects:

- The Estonian air quality monitoring network has been improved. New methods and analytic devices enable better measurements of harmful substances and fine particulates, and this in turn has enabled the development of action plans to deal with air pollution in urban areas. Swiss and Estonian experts conducted a measurement campaign together to enable Estonia to benefit from experiences already gathered in Switzerland.

- Thanks to training and new equipment, the specialists at the Estonian environmental research centre are now able to analyse 33 harmful substances in Estonia's waters. Among other things, the aim was to prevent harmful substances from getting into the food chain.

- Estonia's radiation monitoring system has been modernised. Older monitoring stations and the communication system have been updated so that Estonian environmental authorities can issue prompt, reliable warnings in the event of cross-border emergencies.

- A Swiss company supplied equipment to Estonia to allow satellite monitoring of contaminated sites and transportations of hazardous substances.

- Using funds from the enlargement contribution, researchers were able to purchase devices to monitor the sediment development in the coastal region and the quality of seawater. The data collected forms the basis for appropriate measures to protect water resources and manage the risks associated with climate change

Estonia commissioned a Swiss company to supply hardware and software for real-time surveying using GPS. © SECO

RELIABLE, COMPREHENSIVE, RAPIDLY AVAILABLE ENVIRONMENTAL DATA

Thanks to these eleven projects, Estonia has been able to improve its implementation of EU regulations on environmental monitoring. Data collection costs have fallen by 40%.

The analysis of hazardous substances in Estonia's waterways can prevent them getting into the food chain. Estonia's former environment minister, Keit Pentus-Rosimannus, at a media event. © National Coordination Unit, Estonia

THE PROJECT IN BRIEF

SUBJECT
Environmental monitoring

COUNTRY
Estonia

STARTING POINT / BACKGROUND INFORMATION
Estonia's laboratories are not as well equipped as those of other EU countries. Chemical analyses often have to be purchased abroad at great cost.

PURPOSE
The Estonian environmental monitoring system will become more reliable and efficient and cover more areas. Estonia is able to rely on comprehensive, reliable environmental data. The country needs this data not only to implement various EU regulations, but also to enable Estonian authorities to take well-founded, effective decisions to protect the environment.

ACTIVITIES
Estonian laboratories and monitoring stations have been fitted out with modern equipment, and staff have been trained to use it.

TARGET GROUPS
Eight state agencies and research institutes are benefiting from the installation of modern equipment and from training. The Estonian government and the entire population benefit from sound environmental data.

COSTS
Total project budget:
CHF 10 million
Swiss contribution:
CHF 8.5 million

RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION
Estonian Ministry of the Environment

DURATION
2011 – 2016