



Church Cooperation

Concept

Content

1. Summary	3
2. Origin of Church Cooperation and Fundamental Beliefs	4
3. Partner Churches	5
3.1 Central and Eastern Europe	5
3.2 Middle East	5
3.3 Italy	5
4. Context	6
4.1 Ecclesiastical-Theological Background	6
4.2 Diaconal Institutions	7
4.3 Socio-Political Environment	7
5. Programme of Church Cooperation	9
5.1 Objectives	9
5.1.1 Strengthening and Inclusion of Disadvantaged People	9
5.1.2 Strengthening Church Life	10
5.1.3 Maintaining Relationships between Partner Churches and Churches in Switzerland	11
6. Cross-Cutting Issues and Working Approaches	11
6.1 Participative Approach	12
6.2 Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA)	12
6.3 Systematic Approach	12
6.4 Gender Equality	13
6.5 Conflict Sensitivity	13
6.6 Resilience Building	13
6.7 Critical Dialogue	13
6.8 Security in Conflict Areas	13
6.9 Working within Networks and Knowledge Sharing	13
7. Management	14
7.1 Structures at HEKS/EPER and in Partner Countries	14
7.2 Management Tools	14
7.2.1 Planning, Implementing und Steering Projects	14
7.2.2 Controlling	14
7.3 Funding	14
7.4 Communications	14

Abbreviations

FMEEC	Fellowship of Middle East Evangelical Churches
HEKS/EPER	Swiss Church Aid
HRBA	Human rights based approach
CC	Church cooperation
NESSL	National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon
PCS	Protestant Church in Switzerland
UAECNE	Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East

1. Summary

In these times when churches are losing in importance, the question is increasingly what role they should play in society. HEKS/EPER (Swiss Church Aid), the aid organisation of the Protestant Church in Switzerland (PCS) is convinced that despite diminishing influence, the task of churches remains to work beyond the ranks of their members and to contribute to society. For this reason, the main objective of HEKS/EPER's church cooperation (CC) is to ensure that Reformed churches are perceived as organisations that are relevant within their societies, are open, and play an active and responsible role.

Together with development cooperation and humanitarian aid, CC is the third section of HEKS/EPER's international programme. These three sections complement one another, and the synergies contribute towards improving the efficiency, effectiveness and relevance of the entire HEKS/EPER international programme.

The CC concept identifies three sub-goals that contribute to strengthening the relevance of partner churches within society.

- **Strengthening and inclusion of disadvantaged people:** Through a large number of diaconal institutions, partner churches take care of those people who are excluded from society and/or neglected through lack of state support. In the Middle East, partner churches also make an important contribution to improving the cohesion of religiously fragmented societies. HEKS/EPER also supports partner organisations to institutionalise their services within the respective state social systems in line with the rights-based approach.
- **Strengthening church life:** If churches want to remain relevant organisations within their societies, active church life within parishes is vital. This includes programmes for children and youth, strengthening church life in parishes, as well as education and training programmes.
- **Maintaining relationships between partner churches and churches in Switzerland:** CC is a concrete sign of solidarity within the family of Reformed churches. It consciously promotes active dialogue between partner churches and Reformed churches in Switzerland. This dialogue takes place within partnerships between parishes, cantonal churches or church organisations, as well as project trips and conferences.

In accordance with the mandate of the PCS, cooperation with Reformed churches and their organisations is limited to certain geographical areas. The majority of partner churches are located in Central and Eastern Europe. The family of Hungarian-speaking Reformed churches in Hungary, Slovakia, Ukraine (Transcarpathia), Romania (Transylvania) and Serbia (Vojvodina) is the largest group. HEKS/EPER cooperates with the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren in the Czech Republic, while the Waldensian Church in Italy is the only partner in Western Europe. Since 2018, CC has also extended its mandate to the Middle East, where it works with reformed partners in Lebanon and Syria. While the partners within CC are clearly focused on church partnerships, it is nevertheless important to HEKS/EPER that mutual discussion and critical questioning of values and positions may take place within the framework of working relationships.

For the development and implementation of programmes and projects, the same principles, working approaches and guidelines apply to CC as part of the international programme, as for development cooperation. These include the human rights-based and systemic approaches, as well as gender equality and conflict sensitivity.



2. Origin of Church Cooperation and Fundamental Beliefs

Church cooperation (CC) is the third section of HEKS/EPER's international programme, together with development cooperation and humanitarian aid. The beginnings of CC go back to the founding year of HEKS/EPER in 1946 when the aid organisation commenced activities to assist "war-damaged sister churches" to rebuild following World War Two. This is why "Interchurch Aid" was the first mandate transferred by the PCS to HEKS/EPER in article 2 of the foundation's statutes.

HEKS/EPER is committed to a more humane and just world, and a life in dignity, in Switzerland and abroad.¹ As part of CC, HEKS/EPER collaborates with Reformed partner churches and their organisations through joint projects. The reason for the focus on Reformed partners is that the PCS and its member churches have a special responsibility for those churches that have a strong connection to the Swiss Reformation and that are characterised by it.² Both Johannes Calvin in Geneva and Heinrich Bullinger in Zurich were influential in the establishment of Reformed churches far beyond the borders of Switzerland. CC is therefore an expression of connection and solidarity within the community of Reformed churches.

Through CC, HEKS/EPER is committed to ensuring that Reformed churches are perceived within their respective societies as relevant organisations that are open to society, as well as playing an active and responsible role. HEKS/EPER encourages partner churches to understand the Gospel as a liberating message that applies to all people, and encourages them to work for the rights and well-being of all, and especially the disadvantaged, irrespective of identity markers such as religion, gender and others. For HEKS/EPER, it is

1 Cf. HEKS/EPER International Programme 2017-20

2 Limiting cooperation to Reformed churches is not a decision against other denominations. The fact is that Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, etc. churches are usually better connected and organised than Reformed churches.

important that partner churches show themselves open to other religious communities and social actors, and that they do not consider their positions to be immovable, but rather are prepared to reflect critically on them.

3. Partner Churches

Against the background of the emergence of HEKS/EPER and according to the mandate of the PCS, CC concentrated on working together with Reformed churches in Europe until 2017.³ The geographical focus of CC is in Central and Eastern Europe, with CC partners in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Ukraine (Transcarpathia), Romania (Transylvania) and Serbia (Vojvodina). In Western Europe, cooperation is limited to the Waldensian Church in Italy, which has cultivated numerous and diverse links with Reformed churches and parishes in Switzerland.

Partnerships with Reformed churches in Syria and Lebanon have been part of CC since 2018. As a consequence of the crisis in the Middle East, the Reformed churches in Syria and Lebanon needed increased assistance above and beyond the scope of the PCS missionary services, which had previously worked with those churches.

Although cooperation with partner churches is long-term, partnerships are evaluated from time to time and adapted to meet changing needs.

3.1 Central and Eastern Europe

The majority of the CC partner churches are located in Central and Eastern European countries. The Hungarian Reformed churches form the largest group. While Reformed churches are state-recognised in Hungary itself, other Hungarian Reformed partners cover areas in countries neighbouring Hungary. There are larger (Romania/Transylvania), smaller (Ukraine/Transcarpathia and Slovakia) and tiny (Serbia/Vojvodina) Hungarian Reformed minorities. In the Czech Republic, HEKS/EPER cooperates with the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren. Although the largest Protestant religious community in the country, it is still a minority church in the strongly secular Czech Republic.

3.2 Middle East

The Protestant churches founded in the 19th century in Syria and Lebanon are not only small, but have a relatively short history compared to older, more historical churches. HEKS/EPER maintains relations with the Fellowship of Middle East Evangelical Churches (FMEEC), the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL) and the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East (UAECNE). Both NESSL and UAECNE have communities in Syria and Lebanon. While NESSL is an Arabic-speaking church, the Armenian language and culture is an important part of UAECNE.

3.3 Italy

The partnership with the Reformed Waldensian Church in Italy has a special status. Since the Waldensian Church does not have its own relief organization operating abroad, it supports CC projects annually with large sums from the revenue of the state mandate tax ("otto per mille").⁴ HEKS/EPER takes part in Waldensian diaconal projects in Italy.

3 The mission societies of the PCS maintain partnerships with the churches on other continents.

4 Eight per thousand: (otto per mille) is an Italian law under which Italian taxpayers can choose to whom they give a compulsory 8 ‰ = 0.8% ('eight per thousand') from their annual income tax return; to an organised religion recognised in Italy or, alternatively, to a social assistance scheme run by the Italian State.



4. Context

4.1 Ecclesiastical-Theological Background

The partner churches have different strengths in their countries as churches. The Reformed Church in Hungary covers more than ten percent of the population and has parishes throughout the country. The other Hungarian-speaking partner churches in Eastern Europe are found in regions neighbouring Hungary, which were Hungarian until the end of the First World War. These churches are not only numerically in the minority, they also differ from the respective majority societies in their language and culture.

The Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren is also represented throughout the Czech Republic, however its membership numbers less than one percent of the population.

The Waldensians have been the ecclesiastical exception in Catholic Italy for centuries. In the Middle East, the Protestants themselves are a small group within the Christian minority, with communities almost exclusively present in large population centres.

As confessional and linguistic minorities, partner churches face an additional challenge due to falling membership numbers. Reasons include migration and aging memberships associated with low birth rates. Out-migration for economic reasons is an issue in all Eastern European countries. Partner churches in Ukraine, Slovakia, Romania and certain regions of Hungary are affected to a high degree, particularly in rural areas, where the working population has largely disappeared. In the Middle East, the absence of future prospects due to political uncertainty and war is behind much of the migration.

Structural adjustments are one consequence of shrinking partner churches. The merger of municipalities not only raises the question of how they can be looked after by a pastor as efficiently as possible, but also where and for which population groups the partner churches wish to be present. The history of many parishes goes back centuries and it is a difficult process to decide whether to withdraw from certain locations and regions

or whether to open the parishes to new populations, as is happening with the Roma in the rural areas of Hungary and Slovakia.

Despite their minority situation, partner churches often have an appeal that reaches out into society far beyond the ranks of their own members. In Italy and the Middle East, the Protestant churches have a certain amount of social freedom. As small communities, they are not suspected of trying to acquire power or influence, so they can allow themselves innovative approaches or mediate between religious communities; a task which is often harder for established churches. In Eastern Europe, especially in rural areas where there are no government services or they have ceased for reasons of efficiency and cost, parishes are one of the few reliable structures looking out for the well-being of the local population.

Theologically, CC partner churches in Eastern Europe tend to be characterised by a conservative piety. The Old Church Confessions, the Second Helvetic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism play an important role. Even today, it is still noticeable that partner churches were largely isolated during the decades of communism and that survival as a church community was pivotal. They have had little to do with new social developments to date. These days, partner churches are still characterised by being strongly anchored in tradition, consciously oriented to traditionally proven values and resistant to innovation. On the one hand with these attitudes, the churches are in tune with the mood of large sections of society in their respective countries. On the other hand, due to the post-communist or post-atheistic background of the societies, partner churches in Eastern Europe remain in a niche; the challenge is how to get out.

There is a danger that partner churches will remain preoccupied with themselves. Nevertheless, there are countless examples of their deliberate commitment to minorities and disadvantaged people, their contributions to reconciliation and peace, and their own position on sensitive issues such as refugee policy or inclusion (for example, of Roma communities).

4.2 Diaconal Institutions

The Reformed tradition of partner churches is also reflected in the fact that they work to an impressive extent in the service of others. With a large number of diaconal institutions, they are very conscious of their social responsibility. These services are primarily aimed at the disadvantaged and are open to all people, regardless of whether they are members of the partner church. The diaconal institutions confer recognition and social relevance on partner churches.

Most parishes provide traditional diaconal services, often discretely and straightforwardly undertaking social tasks that would usually be the duty of the state. By contrast, the institutional Diakonie has become more professional in recent years and is often a mainstay of the social system in the respective countries. It succeeds in varying degrees in applying the human rights-based approach and also in making the state financially responsible. While in the Czech Republic, diaconal institutions are largely financed using state funds, and in Hungary, the state designates the churches as strategic partners for certain social tasks, cooperation with the state is very unstable in Romania and is not possible at all in Ukraine to date. As a result of many years of work and the professionalisation of diaconal institutions, some church partners have successfully applied for and been able to implement EU projects and other state mandates.

The diaconal institutions of the partner churches form a wide-ranging network that facilitate the exchange of experience at national and international level.

4.3 Socio-Political Environment

After totalitarian rule and the extensive social marginalisation that accompanied it, churches in Eastern Europe have suddenly gained renewed influence on society and the reorganisation of the political environment following the end of Communism. Church leaders see the importance of addressing the changed role of churches in society, of advocating for disadvantaged people, and engaging in the socio-political dialogue. They are looking for ways in which the church can provide people looking for meaning with support and orientation, as well as encouraging coexistence.

In many places in recent years however, the spirit of optimism has given way to a certain amount of fatigue. The political process of liberalisation is taking more time at all levels than was previously expected, and it has been slowed down by corruption and clientelism. The economic differences between East and West remain considerable despite EU membership.

While the post-reunification policies of Eastern Europe were based on open values in Western Europe, governments have been showing increasingly authoritarian and nationalist-conservative characteristics for several years now. Led by Hungary, “illiberal democracy”⁵ as a form is gaining ground in Eastern European countries. Although the politicians are elected by the people, separation of powers and fundamental political rights are being restricted. One of the main triggers of this trend are different positions on migration policy. Eastern European countries see immigration as a threat to the security and coexistence of their societies and are therefore increasingly seeking isolation.

Authoritarian and populist currents in politics combined with nationalist tendencies are also having an influence on partner churches. It’s not just that their space for civil society commitment is shrinking. There is also the danger that they will withdraw and practise self-censorship.

Although the Bohemian brothers in the Czech Republic are consciously dismissing the policies of their country, the leadership of the Hungarian-Reformed partners largely share the position of their government. They also feel supported by statements that the government bases its policies on the preservation of Christian values. The socio-political positioning of the partner churches in the Middle East is particularly complex. It does not focus on the question of which values a government represents or whether it respects human rights. Rather, it is about how they can survive as a minority in a Muslim majority society and whether a government guarantees religious minorities their niches. Where this is the case, as in Syria with the Assad regime, partner churches feel obliged to demonstrate a certain level of solidarity with the government.

Regardless of challenging socio-political conditions, there is room and opportunity for all partner churches where groups or individual exponents distance themselves from the positions of their governments and realise the prophetic role of their churches. For example, some of the partner churches in Eastern Europe are committed to supporting refugees and are consciously approaching the Roma population. In the Middle East, partner churches are working to build bridges between the different religious communities and to cultivate exchanges despite the increasing fragmentation of the population.

5 The illiberal democracy is a particular form of representative democracy, in which politicians are elected by the people, but basic political rights are limited.



5. Programme of Church Cooperation

The main objective of CC is to strengthen partner churches and their institutions so that they are recognised as relevant organisations within their respective countries and by their populations, by being open to society, by promoting the social inclusion of disadvantaged people and by contributing to peaceful coexistence. Part of the working relationship between HEKS/EPER and partner churches is the self-critical reflection on values and theological positions, as well as openness to dialogue with other denominations and religious communities. HEKS/EPER is also committed to promoting relations between partner churches, parishes and national churches in Switzerland. This century-old relationship within the Reformed church family remains relevant in the present day. In addition to development cooperation and humanitarian aid,

CC is one of the three sections of the HEKS/EPER international programme. These sections complement each other and synergies between them help to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and relevance of the entire HEKS/EPER international programme. CC benefits from the professionalism of the other sections. At the same time, CC provides HEKS/EPER with access to populations and decision-makers in a different way to development cooperation and humanitarian aid.⁶

5.1 Objectives

5.1.1 Strengthening and Inclusion of Disadvantaged People

The unconditional care for one's neighbour is an early Christian concern expressed by Jesus in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 29-37) and in his call, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25.40). The Reformation in Zurich went one step further. Zwingli's Ordinances on Almsgiving not only envisaged helping the disadvantaged, but also changing the social system so

6 HEKS/EPER international strategy: see the HEKS/EPER International Programme 2017-20 document.

that “there is no poverty and no begging”⁷. Therefore, the first focus of CC is to strengthen the capacities of partner churches in the inclusion of disadvantaged people, as well as to support them to demand their rights and to institutionalise their services. With a large number of diaconal institutions, partner churches take care of those people who are excluded from society and/or neglected by the state support system. Thanks to an often dense network of parishes, partner churches are present in many places and know the needs of disadvantaged people. With their social projects, they have supported and continue to support the state social system.

In the Middle East, another focus of partner churches is building bridges between religious communities in religiously fragmented societies, promoting dialogue and thus contributing to a peaceful coexistence.

The target groups⁸ of social inclusion are:

- **Older people and people in need of care** / outpatient home nursing
- **Minorities and marginalised people** (such as Roma for example) with educational, social and employment-oriented support and inclusion in mainstream society
- **People with disabilities** with the promotion of their cognitive and physical abilities, inclusion in the majority society and employment
- **Victims of domestic violence** through counselling and shelters, as well as awareness-raising about domestic violence within populations and institutions
- **Refugees and migrants** through housing, counselling and inclusion in society
- **Members of different religious communities** through the promotion of relationships, dialogue and fellowship.

HEKS/EPER is involved in the development, implementation and expansion of projects. Wherever possible, partner organisations are also supported in institutionalising their services to ensure they are part of a state social system in line with the rights-based approach (see 6.2.). In terms of sustainability, it is the goal of CC that these projects are also (at least part) funded by the state. In dialogue with partner churches, HEKS/EPER is committed to ensuring that partner churches raise their “prophetic voice” – especially in places where the possibilities for civil society engagement are limited.

5.1.2 Strengthening Church Life

Declining memberships due to secularisation, discontinuation of traditions and emigration are major challenges for partner churches. If churches want to remain relevant organisations within their societies, an active church life in the parishes is an essential aspect.

The target groups for promoting active church life are:

- **Children and youth:** Providing programmes for children and adolescents enables partner churches to reach the generation of church members that will actively shape them in the future.
- **Congregations:** Church parishes often lack suitable rooms for a diverse church life. Renovations and new building have the goal of contributing to an active church life. Ideally, they also strengthen the diaconal mission. Thus, church buildings are not just an end in themselves, but serve to strengthen and promote church life. HEKS/EPER supports churches in the strategic planning of their infrastructure needs.
- **Pastors and other clerical employees:** Continuing education is designed to help pastors and other clerical employees to perform their role in the Church well and successfully face the new challenges of a changing society.

7 Zwingli’s Ordinances on Almsgiving brought about important social policy innovations in Zurich: From that time on, churches were no longer solely responsible for caring for the poor and the sick. The contemporaneous abolition of the monasteries meant that a rich fortune flowed into the public purse, enabling a generous and comprehensive policy on poverty (link in German: <https://www.zhref.ch/themen/reformationsjubilaem/allgemeine-informationen/huldrych-zwingli/zwingli-lexikon-von-a-bis-z-1/lexikon-a/almosenordnung>).

8 The list is not exclusive. It is an ongoing task of churches to identify excluded populations and to include them.

Partner churches have good opportunities to reach people outside their memberships with programmes for children and youth, as well as with suitable spaces / rooms. HEKS/EPER is committed to ensuring that partner churches' programmes for children and youth are open to members of other denominations and consciously include disadvantaged people such as Roma and children with disabilities. Ensuring open access to church programmes places the focus on community and acceptance. The transfer of the religious message occurs in openness and the participation of children and youth must never be made a condition of belonging to the denomination. Church spaces belonging to organisations or social projects outside the church should be used, too.

5.1.3 Maintaining Relationships between Partner Churches and Churches in Switzerland

CC is a concrete sign of solidarity within the family of Reformed churches. It is not limited to supporting projects, but also intentionally encourages active dialogue between partner churches and Reformed churches in Switzerland. This includes being aware of common historical roots, discussing current challenges, as well as critically examining respective values and positions.

The target groups for maintaining relationships between partner churches and churches in Switzerland are:

- **PCS:** CC is part of the external relations work of the PCS. It determines which partner churches HEKS/EPER is in contact with and maintains a work programme with.
- **Churches in Switzerland and abroad:** The dialogue between parishes in Switzerland and abroad brings about great enrichment for both sides. HEKS/EPER supports Swiss parishes in finding a suitable partner parish and provides advice on building relations. The parishes focus on maintaining the relationship, while HEKS/EPER is responsible for project work. Whenever possible, partnerships are arranged with parishes already working in cooperation with HEKS/EPER on projects. Partner parishes in Switzerland are encouraged to make a financial contribution to project work.
- **Cantonal churches in Switzerland and partner churches:** While partnerships between parishes focus on the local level, cantonal churches are encouraged to partner with partner churches at management level. For partner churches, this dialogue is necessary, especially in the context of various celebrations, at which the PCS is often unable to participate for capacity reasons. From a Swiss point of view, these relationships provide opportunities to maintain a lively dialogue at church leadership level. HEKS/EPER is not the right contact for this because it is a relief organisation. Finally, relations at church leadership level mean that CC may be institutionally anchored in the churches of Switzerland.
- **Church organisations in Switzerland and abroad with common goals:** Through their projects, partner churches and their organisations have repeatedly pursued similar goals to the churches in Switzerland – for example in the integration of refugees, in educational work or in dealing with disadvantaged people. Where it makes sense and provides added value, HEKS/EPER promotes the exchange of experience and organises mutual project visits.
- **Interested donors and other groups:** Within the scope of conferences, HEKS/EPER invites project partners to participate and enables donors to obtain first-hand information about aspects of the CC programme. On request – usually in the context of parish partnerships – HEKS/EPER organises group tours for members of partner parishes and other interested parties, offering them the opportunity to visit projects, experience local church life, and get to know a project country and its people.



6. Cross-Cutting Issues and Working Approaches

Since CC is part of the international programme of HEKS/EPER, the same principles, approaches and guidelines apply to CC as to development cooperation. The most important are briefly presented here.

6.1 Participative Approach

HEKS/EPER develops programmes and projects together with partner churches and/or church partner organisations. Care is taken to ensure that beneficiaries in particular, as well as other relevant stakeholders are included in the process in order to create ownership and sustainability.

6.2 Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA)

The cause of poverty and disadvantage is often that those affected are excluded from socio-political, cultural and economic structures. In order to improve the sustainability of project work, CC partners are committed to ensuring that all people have the same rights and that disadvantaged people can actively demand and exercise their rights. In line with the human rights-based approach (a fundamental principle of HEKS/EPER's work), CC partners engage in dialogue with governmental and private sector actors and support them in their responsibility to realise rights for all.⁹

6.3 Systematic Approach

In order to ensure that as many people as possible benefit from an improvement in their situation, HEKS/EPER endeavours to bring about a positive systemic change of structures in its projects, which is sustainable

9 Cf. HEKS/EPER Policy "Human Rights-based Approach"

beyond the duration of the project. In CC projects therefore, partners undertake to make sure that their work also brings about change at a higher level. This ensures that more disadvantaged people benefit from, for example, improved state health, nursing or school systems.

6.4 Gender Equality

HEKS/EPER is committed to equal rights of all people. Hence, women and men are to be treated equally, not only before the law, but also as creatures of God with regard to cultural and religious norms, values and traditions. In CC, this means that everyone involved in projects, as well as in partner churches, has equal rights and access to information and decision-making processes.¹⁰

6.5 Conflict Sensitivity

HEKS/EPER partner churches and partner institutions often operate in contexts that involve political and social conflicts. When developing cooperative working relationships with a wide variety of people in and outside the projects, it is important to ensure that partners are aware of conflicts and their own role in them, taking care that their interventions do not aggravate existing conflicts or even trigger additional conflicts. Effectiveness is assured when projects are able to manage and mitigate conflicts themselves.

6.6 Resilience Building

Crises and disasters are usually the result of negative social, political and economic developments. Experience shows that churches are often stable and trustworthy institutions in these situations. In its CC projects, HEKS/EPER aims to make a contribution to helping older and sick people, or even minorities, to act more independently and with greater strength in difficult situations. In addition to structural measures, faith or fellowship within a parish can improve resilience. When parishes and partners are more active and strengthened, they are more able to help each other, as well as other disadvantaged people outside the church, in times of acute need or in a permanently difficult environment.¹¹

6.7 Critical Dialogue

Through its programmes, CC encourages partner churches to be open to the world and social challenges. Values and positions are discussed and critically questioned. HEKS/EPER is committed to ecumenism, interreligious dialogue and collaboration in CC. It is not possible to cooperate with partners whose orientations and programmes contradict the values and basic convictions of HEKS/EPER, especially those with nationalistic, human rights-contrary and/or confessionalist tendencies.

HEKS/EPER focuses on critical dialogue in the context of practical project work. The dialogue on theological and ecclesiological positions must be led by churches and other institutions.

6.8 Security in Conflict Areas

The implementation of activities in conflict areas requires additional measures to ensure that the security of partner churches and partner organisations is not jeopardised. As a rule, partners are better able to assess their risk and decide how far they want to go. HEKS/EPER protects implementing partners as far as possible and is committed to their safety.¹²

6.9 Working within Networks and Knowledge Sharing

HEKS/EPER strives to promote dialogue and cooperation together with other church partner organisations because collaboration increases efficiency. For this purpose, other churches and organisations that support projects of the respective partner churches are involved in round tables in various CC countries. HEKS/EPER also encourages partner churches and church organisations to maintain contact and learn from each other through knowledge sharing.

10 Cf. HEKS/EPER Gender Implementation Guidelines

11 See HEKS/EPER Resilience Guidelines.

12 See HEKS/EPER Security Policy.

7. Management

7.1 Structures at HEKS/EPER and in Partner Countries

Church cooperation is the responsibility of the international division at HEKS/EPER. There are programme officers working at HEKS/EPER headquarters in Switzerland, who are responsible for collaboration with CC partners in the various countries. They work directly with project managers in the field. For large and complex projects, local programme and project managers may be assigned to coordinate field work and represent the interests of HEKS/EPER.

7.2 Management Tools

Developing and implementing projects is challenging. In order to improve results, it is important to analyse the work regularly together with partners, in order to make note of the successes and the difficulties, and to learn from them for further development. This process is also part of being accountable to both donors and beneficiaries.

7.2.1 Planning, Implementing und Steering Projects

Using the so-called project cycle management approach in CC, development cooperation and humanitarian aid, HEKS/EPER ensures quality of development and implementation, evaluation and steering of projects. The results of the work are described and analysed by means of annual reports, evaluations and using key HEKS/EPER indicators. The goal of project cycle management is to learn and improve, but also to be accountable to project participants, partners, donors, the PCS and the interested general public.

7.2.2 Controlling

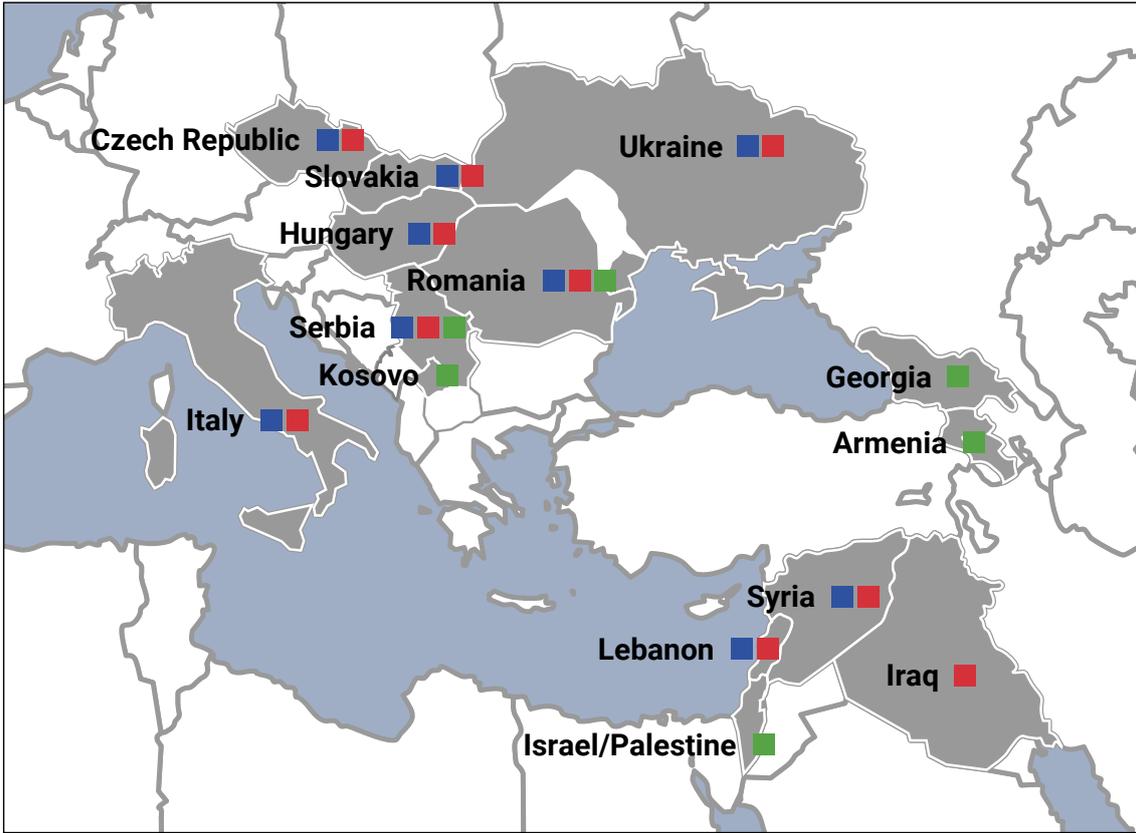
Financial and administrative guidelines ensure that projects are managed correctly and transparently according to the principle of "good governance".

7.3 Funding

As church partnership is central to CC, Reformed parishes in Switzerland, the cantonal churches and the PCS are the most important partners in supporting and funding this work. An important financial contribution is made by the Waldensian Church with funds from "Otto per Mille". Foundations are also asked to support CC projects.

7.4 Communications

Communications work actively promotes the interest of CC within the church environment. This field of work is based on the relationship between the different churches and is financed mainly by parishes and church institutions. In addition, CC is presented as part of the overall mission of HEKS/EPER to the general public and to major actors in international cooperation.



HEKS/EPER in Europe and the Middle East (updated march 2022):

- Countries with CC
- Development Cooperation
- Humanitarian Aid.



SWISS CHURCH AID – HEKS/EPER

Headquarters

Seminarstrasse 28
P.O. Box
CH-8042 Zürich
Switzerland

+41 44 360 88 00

info@heks.ch
heks.ch

IBAN CH37 0900 0000 8000 1115 1

HEKS/EPER is member of the

actalliance