

# Study Tour Guidelines

---

## Second Draft for Consultation

Shared experience: What have been highlights when conducting a study tour?

(question posed to participants of an experience sharing workshop at SDC in 2010)

- The vivid exchange between the delegation and Swiss partners
- The active engagement of Swiss experts, the hospitality of Swiss institutions
- The interest, even thirst for knowledge of the delegation
- The positive influence on the group dynamic
- It opened doors for future activities

February/March 2011

Dlgn members proposed the elaboration of study tour guidelines. The current text is an initial draft that will be completed based on the feedback of SDC and PD IV staff members. The draft will also be discussed at the dlgn F2F in Sarajevo.

## Table of Content

**Be selective:** Consult those parts of the study tour guideline that seem useful to you. If you are very limited in time, invest some time in thinking about objectives of the study tour and the major issues that shall be addressed (step 2 and 3) and consult the checklist in Annex 2.

### Part I: Organisational aspects - 10 steps

---

<a href="#">Step (1)</a> Conducting a study tour, yes or no?	5
<a href="#">Step (2)</a> Defining the objectives of the study tour	6
<a href="#">Step (3)</a> Understanding the issues at hand	7
<a href="#">Step (4)</a> Selection of relevant participants	8
<a href="#">Step (5)</a> Identifying the different tasks and roles, defining the timing	9
<a href="#">Step (6)</a> Selection of a supporting organisation, definition of their terms of reference, task clarification, budget	10
<a href="#">Step (7)</a> Defining the major elements of the program	11
Step (8) Briefing of participants and experts: Bridging gaps in context, experience and understanding	12
Step (9) Media, protocol, security, official events, accommodation, food, transportation, Translation	13
Step (10) Documentation, reporting and follow-up	14

### Part II: Content of Study Tours - 7 examples

---

#### Designing decentralisation and local governance

Issue (1) Should decentralised units be defined based on ethnic criteria or based on capacity?	17
Issue (2) What powers should the local level have?	18
Issue (3) How to accord financial autonomy?	19

#### Implementing decentralisation and local governance

Issue (4) When shall powers and funds be transferred?	20
Issue (5) How to create a multilingual local administration with equitable representation of different groups?	21

#### Living decentralisation and local governance

Issue (6) How to improve service-delivery in small municipalities?	22
Issue (7) How can the population be more directly involved?	23

### Annexes

---

<a href="#">Annex 1:</a> Background information	
<a href="#">Annex 2:</a> Checklist for the organisation of study tours with time line	
<a href="#">Annex 3:</a> List of supporting organisations	
<a href="#">Annex 4:</a> Elements of ToR	
<a href="#">Annex 5:</a> Tariffs and cost estimates	
<a href="#">Annex 6:</a> How to write Press Statements	
<a href="#">Annex 7:</a> Glossary on the Swiss political system for interpreters from Germany	

## **For whom are these guidelines?**

The study tour guidelines shall mainly serve SDC/PD IV staff and partners for organising meaningful study tours to Switzerland. The first section provides information, tips and tricks that are also useful for study tours to other countries than Switzerland. The study tour guidelines want to support SDC/PD IV staff and partners in designing, organising, conducting and monitoring study tours in such a way that the study tours are an integral part of the overall SDC/PDIV program and are oriented at effectively taking up issues that are of relevance for the country in question. The guidelines are based on the assumption, that SDC/PD IV will cooperate with a supporting organisation to realise the study tour.

## **What do the guidelines offer**

The study tour guidelines propose **10 steps** for organising study tours. The order of the steps will have to be adjusted depending on the concrete situation at hand. Amongst others the guideline provides useful links to SDC and PD IV internal information, e.g. to examples of terms of references, former study tour programs, lists for per diems, maximum costs for hotels and meals, information on protocol and security issues. Through this, the study tour guidelines can become a reference document and can make the otherwise sometimes burdensome and time consuming search for information much easier. In addition, there are sections with 'tips and tricks' and 'shared experience' extracted from the rich experience of SDC, PD IV and its partners.

This study tour guideline puts a focus on study tours that deal with issues of decentralisation and local governance. The study tour guideline aims at supporting the definition of an appropriate thematic focus for the study tour and provides ideas and information on possible program elements. For this, **seven issues** from different phases of a decentralisation process were selected that could arise as main issues for study tours.

## **Our principles**

Our objective is to promote study tours that contribute to positive change. In our understanding study tours should be

- Part of a broader, more comprehensive process, not a one-off event
- With clear aims and focus, shared by the major stakeholders
- Carried by strong ownership of the initiators of the study tour and the participants
- With the appropriate group of participants (those who can change something and are motivated), addressing the needs and demands of the participants
- Addressing issues of current importance for the study tour group and/or the country as such
- with a focus on issues linked to the participants needs, responsibilities and experiences
- presented in a way that participants can link them to their needs, responsibilities and experiences
- Based on a methodology that allows for reflection and open discussion and provides practical insights
- Conducted in a positive atmosphere
- with a vision of future follow-up

**Part I:**  
**Ten steps for organising study tours**

### ***Step (1) Conducting a study tour, yes or no?***

The decision whether to propose or to react positively to a demand for a study tour will depend on several factors. Answers to the below posed question can provide an indication whether to conduct a study tour. Of course the different question do not have equal weight. The weight given to each question will differ depending on the context at hand.

#### Tips and tricks: Key questions

- Who proposed the study tour? Are these relevant partners/stakeholders with the necessary influence, connections, knowledge of the context?
- Is the study tour supported by important stakeholders/the government/parliament?
- Are the initiators of the study tour/stakeholders clear about what they want to achieve and what they expect?
- Is the country in a conflict/post conflict situation? Can the study tour support conflict transformation? Is the study tour correspond in line with a "do no harm" strategy? (i.e. not increase the risk of open conflict?)
- Is the proposed topic/focus of relevance for the country, for institution-building within the country? Does it correspond to country priorities?
- Can experience or expertise in the host country (e.g. Switzerland) offer insights in respect to the topic/focus of the study tour?
- Does the study tour fit within the overall SDC country program?
- Is it expected that the study tour will help to achieve outcomes defined in the SDC/PD IV country strategy? (Based on what assumptions?)
- Is SDC/PD IV willing to engage with a mid- or long-term perspective with the stakeholders or on the topic at hand?
- Is the study tour part of a broader program/process? Is there follow-up planned so as to make use of the results (know-how, contacts) of the study tour?
- Can the study tour provide benefits that activities within the country cannot offer (so easily)?
- Will there be opponents to the study tour within the home country e.g. because of the thematic topic, political connotations, prospective participants, time away from the home country? Has this opposition been taken into account?
- Are there political sensitivities within the host country that have to be considered?
- Is budget available for the study tour?
- Does the desk officer have sufficient time to support the preparation and implementation of a study tour?

## ***Step (2) Defining the objectives of the study tour***

Study tours can have a variety of objectives. In many cases, the main objective will be the transfer of practice oriented, state of the art know-how. Further objectives can concern culture change within institutions, changes in respect to group dynamics, consensus-building among participants or networking between the delegation and counterparts from the host country. On the side of SDC/ PD IV objectives can include a better understanding of the context and of the challenges the country is facing as well as the way stakeholders react to and are addressing these challenges, the building goodwill and the creation of entry points for future activities.

The following questions can help to clarify objectives:

### Tips and tricks: Key questions for defining objectives

- Why was the study tour proposed? What was the major motivation for proposing the study tour?
- What shall be achieved with the study tour? What shall be different when the delegation returns home? What difference shall the members make once back home?
- What kind of changes shall occur within the delegation in respect to group dynamic, knowledge, motivation?
- In what way shall the study tour contribute to the overall SDC/PDIV program?
- When will the study tour be regarded as a success? What is different if the study tour was successful? Who will notice the difference?
- How would you / others know that you have achieved the objectives? Which are positive or negative effects if the objectives are reached and for whom?

Clarity about objectives is important for all stages of the study tour (from the decision whether to conduct a study tour, to its design, implementation and follow-up, incl. the selection of participants, location, program elements).

In addition, clarity of objectives will contribute to

- expectation management: there should be a minimum common understanding and motivation why the study tour is conducted and why the members of the study tour group participate in it,
- facilitate coordination: objectives will guide the definition of the design of the study tour and will help organisers to define the roles and priorities,
- define the appropriate indicators for evaluating the success of the study tour: The success of the study tour will depend on whether the objectives were achieved or positive steps were taken towards achieving the objectives. Therefore care should be taken that objectives and related indicators for success are realistic and based on sound hypothesis

Time used for the discussion on objectives is never wasted.

→**Read more:** [additional tips and tricks and learn about experiences: objectives](#)

### ***Step (3) Understanding the issues at hand***

Already in an early phase it is necessary to take a closer look at the context and the main issues that shall be addressed through the study tour. Study tours that aims at knowhow transfer should provide a good match between the issues and challenges that members of the delegation are facing in their home country and the experiences or expertise presented in the host country.

The desk officer, supporting organisation and other counterparts in the host country must be aware of the issues and challenges so that they can establish the study tour program accordingly, shape the visits and presentations appropriately and can engage in a meaningful exchange with the members of the delegation. They have to be aware of the political context so as not involuntarily being instrumentalized or being caught in political disputes and sensitivities. A short context assessment will also be necessary, e.g. : for official and semi-official meetings with participation of the SDC directorate, for high level counterparts, e.g. parliamentarians, for ToRs of a supporting organisation.

In most cases, firsthand knowledge about the context will be limited on the side of the host country. Therefore someone in the home country will have to explore the issues and challenges at hand. The one who prepares this short assessment should have good knowledge of the context and should still have enough critical distance and openness for assembling information that is relevant for the counterparts in the host country.

Tips and tricks: General key questions for gaining understanding of the major issues.

See also [Part II:](#)

[Study Tours on Decentralisation and Local Governance \(dlg\) to Switzerland](#) of these guidelines

- What are the issues that currently are of relevance for the country/for the cooperation with the country (general political (reform) agenda)?
- What issues/questions shall receive particular attention during the study tour?
- What issues in respect to the reforms are mainly debated/are most controversial/pose problems? Why are these issues raised?
- Does the current debate mainly centre on (1) political issues (objectives, major direction, ideology, power), (2) technical issues, for instance the appropriate institutional framework, legislation, approaches, procedures (3) the process of reforms, its stages, sequences, actors involved, the implementation of reforms?
- Do different political parties, government and opposition, civil society and interest groups have similar visions/demands concerning the identified issues or are there major differences? Do they identify the same challenges? In case of divergences, what is behind the differences?
- In the case of reforms, why are the reforms conducted? Is there general agreement on the purpose of the reforms?
- How is the reform process designed? What stages are envisaged? Who is involved (actor mapping)? Who can expedite, who can block the process?
- In which stage is the reform process at the moment? Is legislation prepared, did implementation commence or is the process in a stage of building political consensus, exploring issues and options?
- What are previous experiences, what worked, what failed in the past?
- What are other major reform agendas that are supposed to be conducted in parallel? Do the different reform agendas influence each other?

→ **Read more:** [Tips and tricks: Understanding the issues](#)

### ***Step (4) Selection of relevant participants***

Participants of the study tour are selected in view of the set objectives (see an [example](#)). Participants are normally selected by the home country or jointly by the home country and the Swiss. It is recommended that the Swiss organiser and the counterpart in the home country jointly establish criteria for the selection of participants in line with the objectives.

#### Tips and tricks: Some key questions for the selection of participants

- Who should participate in order to be able to best achieve the objectives?
- Who will have influence to promote change, at the centre, at the regional level, at the local level, within the institution?
- Who can contribute to the discussions in Switzerland with his/her knowhow and experience?
- Who has to participate so as to promote that participants can also learn from each other?
- Who should be included from a perspective of gender equity, representation of different groups, political parties?

#### Tips and tricks: Criteria for the selection of participants

- Number of participants: Delegations with more than 25 participants are difficult to manage (accommodation, transportation, transfer times, visits, time for discussion as well as costs). However, the optimal size should mainly be determined by the objectives of the study tour (e.g. need for inclusiveness) and not by organisational considerations only.
- Level of delegation: The level of the delegation will have influence on the programme (for instance, members of the delegation will expect to meet with (some) counterparts of the same level. If meetings at the same level will not be possible this should be explained in advance.) The higher the level of delegation the more focus can be put on other aims than pure knowledge and know-how transfer. The level of the delegation will also influence e.g. protocol, security arrangements, accommodation and choice of means of transportation. High level members might demand to bring their advisors or personal security.
- Professional background, education of participants: Members of the delegation should have a relatively similar level of understanding of the topics. The professional background of participants should be taken into account when the programme is established so that - if possible - every member of the delegation will meet a Swiss counterpart with similar professional background. In addition, language knowledge might be of advantage, however, for achieving the objectives it will often be more effective to work with interpreters than to exclude relevant persons because of a lack of language knowledge.
- Inclusiveness, Balance: Delegations should be composed in a balanced way, unless the purpose of the study tour demands a very targeted and homogeneous group (e.g. for fostering intra-group understanding). Depending on the context and topic, different criteria can be of relevance, e.g. ethnicity, religion, regional representation or party affiliation. Gender balance should be realised whenever possible.



## ***Step (5) Identifying the different tasks and roles, defining the timing***

### **Tasks, actors, and roles**

For organising a study tour there is a multiplicity of tasks. Different actors will be involved with a variety of roles. The desk officer will have to clarify tasks and roles of those involved in the study tour. The distribution of tasks will not yet define the roles. For instance, a supporting organisation can be mandated to organise the program from A-Z. This supporting institution can but need not automatically appear as the host of the study tour.

#### Tips and tricks: Key-questions for defining roles and relations among different actors

- Who will be doing what?
- What will be the roles of the various involved actors, e.g. who will be hosting the study tour (a supporting organisation, SDC or PD IV, another institution in the host country, e.g. a ministry, parliament), what will be the status of the accompanying person (assistant for organisational question, expert, moderator), will there be a head of delegation?
- How will the different roles be communicated in the home and in the host country?
- Who has the lead for various tasks, e.g. for deciding on the program, for organisational tasks, for communication with the press, for financial decisions? Who has the decision-making power? Who has to be involved in decisions?
- How will be reporting lines, lines of communication?
- How will good cooperation look like?

#### **List of Actors**

##### **In the home country**

- Swiss Embassy
- Swiss Cooperation Office, e.g. Head of Cooperation, National Program Officer
- Representative of the Political Division IV, of the SECO
- Co-organiser, e.g. GTZ, OSCE, UNDP, Worldbank
- local partners, e.g. partner institutions (e.g. parliamentary commission, bar association), local project implementing partner, International (Swiss) implementing partner in home country
- media
- others

##### **In the host country (Switzerland)**

- Department of Foreign Affairs, in particular (1) SDC in Bern, e.g. desk officer, thematic focal point, head of department, directorate (2) Political Division IV, other political divisions, (3) Information service, (4) Protocol service
- There might be co-hosts in host country, e.g. Parliament
- Supporting institutions in Switzerland
- Embassy of home country in Switzerland
- Experts, officials
- Media
- FedPol
- others

### **Defining the timing**

Quite often demands for study tours come on relatively short notice. The later the organisation starts the more time consuming it will be to organise the tour. Also political institutions in Switzerland plan relatively far in advance and high level meetings will be difficult to realise if requests are not made far in advance. In [Annex 2](#) there is a **checklist with a tentative timeline for organising study tours**. Timelines are of course only indicative and sometimes there is no other choice but to organise a study tour with less time. Another challenge concerns unexpected changes in timing. Here a certain degree of flexibility will be necessary.

**Find a checklist with a tentative timeline in [Annex 2](#).**

## ***Step (6) Selection of a supporting organisation, definition of their terms of reference, task clarification, budget***

It can be worthwhile to engage a supporting organisation that has the relevant experience and expertise and can give their full attention to the study tour. The SDC desk officer or staff of the Swiss Cooperation Office will remain engaged, e.g. for determining the objectives and the major focus of the study tour, for providing country background and reform assessments, for providing suggestions on program elements and facilitating contacts, for accompanying the delegation to some events or the whole time, as hosts for official events, as contact person for the media.

### **Selection of a supporting organisation**

The choice of supporting organisation will depend on the profile of organisation needed. Tasks of the supporting institution can include one or several of the following: (1) logistics and general organisation, (2) program design, interaction with the delegation and accompaniment, (3) practical insights and/or conceptual inputs.

In particular, if the supporting organisation prepares the program design, it is recommended to include the supporting organisation early on, for instance by already providing possibilities to give feedback on objectives or to conduct/assist in the reform assessment. Their close involvement in these early stages improve the chance that the study tours is tailor made to the needs of the delegation.

→ **Read more:** [Tips and tricks for the selection of supporting organisations.](#)

### **Terms of Reference and Task clarification**

Whenever an implementing organisation is engaged they need clear terms of reference. Roles and tasks have to be clarified.

→ **Read more:** [Tips and tricks: questions for task clarification](#)

### **Budget**

The supporting organisation will provide a budget for its own services and can also be asked to establish cost estimates for other costs related to the study tour. SDC and the Political Divisions have their own regulations on tariffs for food and lodging. These are also binding for supporting (see [Annex 5](#)).

**Find a list of supporting organizations in [Annex 3](#)**

**Find elements for ToRs in [Annex 4](#)**

**Find an overview of tariffs as well as cost estimates in [Annex 5](#)**

### ***Step (7) Defining the major elements of the program***

Major elements of the program are based on the objectives and the short assessment of the issues at stake. A good program will be designed by 'looking through the eyes of the participants'. The supporting organisation can be mandated to prepare a draft program (with a program description). This draft program can be consulted with the prospective participants of the study tour. A participatory process for establishing the program tends to improve ownership of the study tour group and can enhance the quality of the program. The prospective members of the delegation can propose changes or additional program elements to cater to their interests and needs if the consultations take place early enough. Participants will be clear about what to expect from the study visit.

#### Tips and tricks: Some key-questions

- What information do the participants need for understanding the system of the host country?
- What is of special interest to the members of the delegation?
- What are concepts/issues/functions/tasks they can relate to?
- What might be (wrong) preconceptions about the Swiss system due to differences in experience or the institutional framework the participants normally are confronted with?
- Does a particular focus have to be given to create a relaxed atmosphere in order to improve group dynamics?

There are a number of standard program elements which can be combined, e.g. practical and conceptual inputs, discussion and reflection, skill training, exchange and experience sharing, or sight-seeing. Depending on the set objectives, these program elements will receive different levels of importance and of course also the sequencing of different elements is of importance.

→**Read more** on the [program elements, their sequencing and look at shared experiences](#).

## ***Step (8) Briefing of participants and experts: Bridging gaps in context, experience and understanding***

### **Briefing of participants**

---

Participants should receive a briefing before they leave for the host country. This briefing will include information on the program as well as necessary logistic information (flights, hotels, transportation, weather in the host country). The briefing should include already all those issues that otherwise could create problems if not explained properly (e.g. language of translation, level of protocol or lack thereof, unavailability of the federal councillor/parliamentarians, small hotel rooms but in the city centre). The briefing can also include some information about the context of the host country. In addition, participants can already receive some background documents. They can be invited to reflect on lessons for their context during the study tour. It can also be discussed what kind of follow-up might be useful. This briefing is normally conducted by the SDC or PD IV representative in the country (together with a local partner organisation - if there is one).

### **Bridging function**

---

The main organiser in Switzerland will have the task to ensure that differences in context, experience and understanding are bridged. Experiences have to be translated in a way that their (potential) relevance for the country specific context can become apparent and that a common deeper understanding of the issues at stake, the underlying values and mechanisms can develop. In order to fulfil this function, the following is of importance:

#### Tips and tricks: Opportunities for bridging the gap

- The briefing of the experts so that they are aware of the key issues and questions as well as of sensitivities
- The briefing of the participants so that they have a general understanding of the Swiss context (see above)
- The moderation of presentations (introduction, moderation of discussion, conclusions)
- Other events particularly designed to bridge the gap, e.g. reviews at the end of the day, at the end of sessions, discussions on similarities and differences, joint workshops on specific issues)

### **Accompaniment**

---

Study tour groups will be accompanied by one or two persons. These will see to it that the logistics are working and that the schedule can be maintained. In addition, accompanying persons are recommended to take over the above mentioned bridging function. This will have consequences for the profile of the person: he or she must have good knowledge of the context of both countries, of the topics at hand and enough sensitivity and sense for the process to interact with the participants and to contribute to steering the process of learning and exchange.

**Read more:** [Shared experience: Accompanying person as 'interpreter'](#)

## ***Step (9) Media, protocol, security, official events, accommodation, food, transportation, Translation***

Many further aspects can be left almost entirely to the supporting organisation. Here issues are mainly addressed from the perspective of the desk officer.

### **Media**

---

Study tours can find the interest of Media. Therefore SDC/PDIV should consider whether they want to inform the media proactively through press statements, info packages, press conferences with or without the participants and how they want to react to demands for information by the media. SDC/PDIV, the supporting organisation and the participants might have conflicting interests concerning the visibility of the study visit in the media. Participants to the study tour are free to talk to the media of the home or the host country. If - for whatever reason SDC/PDIV - prefers low visibility it should be discussed with the participants to the study tour what and how to communicate. If the host facilitates meetings with the press for members of the study tour it has to be considered who participates in the press meeting and what message is given in the home and in the host country with the choice of participants.

Don't forget: SDC Info has to be consulted.

SDC offers a [guideline how to write press statements](#).

### **Protocol, security**

---

→**Read more:** [Tips and tricks and some shared experiences in respect to protocol and security](#)

### **Official dinners and other official events**

---

In most study tours there is at least one official event, frequently an official dinner. In many cases, the invitation for the official dinner comes from the host of the study tour. The host can also request another person, e.g. a parliamentarian to host the dinner. The list of invitees is established by the host. The level of invitees is determined by the level of the members of the delegation. The list of invitees normally includes representatives from different political divisions and SDC as well as the ambassador of the home country..

Other (semi-)official events or events in more formal settings can for instance include an exchange of a Memorandum of Understanding, the signing of an agreement, a meeting with a federal councillor or another high ranking personality. If such a meeting is only bilateral (e.g. between the head of delegation and the personality from the host country), it has to be determined whether there are accompanying persons. Usually, a high ranking official is accompanied by someone, e.g. an assistant.

→**Read more:** [Tips and tricks for defining the seating order and shared experience](#)

### **Accommodation, Food, Transportation, Translation**

---

If there is a supporting organisation, accommodation, food, transportation and translation are normally organised by the supporting organisation. Here only some tips and tricks are included in order to avoid problems.

→**Read more:** [Tips and tricks on accommodation, food, transportation and translation](#)

**Find guidelines how to write press statements in [Annex 6](#)**

**Find an example for a annotated glossary for interpreters in [Annex 7](#)**

## ***Step (10) Documentation, reporting and follow-up***

### **Documentation and reporting**

---

Corresponding to the responsibilities given to the supporting organisation, also the documentation and reporting can be delegated. The extent and form of both should be clarified in the ToR with the organisation. The reporting should make sure that lessons learned are available for others and thus that reporting can contribute to the institutional learning processes. It is also useful to have a CD Rom with all presentations and background information. Documentation and reporting in the form of videos and pictures can also be used as small gifts for the participants as well as for the different counterparts in the host country.

### **Debriefing of the delegation in the home country**

---

In addition to a discussion on impressions in the host country at the end of the study tour, usually, a debriefing takes place shortly after returning to the home country. Sometimes the ambassador of the host country wants to participate or even invites for a meeting with the delegation. Otherwise, the SCO/PDIV or the local partner organisation in the home country can do it. The debriefing could for instance include: What are lessons? Was this experience useful for the situation in the country? Have expectations been fulfilled? What were strengths and weaknesses of the study tour? What could further help to move forward in a specific topic/bring new insights? What's next? It is most productive if the participants to the study tour know of the planned debriefing even before the study tour starts.

### **Thank you to experts and speakers, debriefing:**

---

Sending a thank you letter to all the experts and speakers is an act of courtesy, which also helps to maintain a network of people who are willing to support such study tours in the future. In particular experts who had more intense interactions with the study tour group will be interested in hearing about the results of the debriefing of the delegation. In particular for the follow-up, it can also be useful for SDC/PDIV to learn about the insights the counterparts in the host country gained from the delegation.

### **Follow-up**

---

As pointed out, a study tour will be most effective if it is part of a longer term strategy. Depending on the overall program the follow-up will take different forms. Depending on the objectives, members can be used as multipliers for knowledge transfer, can open doors for the realisation of other activities, etc.

→**Read more:** [Shared experience: Follow-up](#)

**Part II:**  
**Study Tours on Decentralisation and Local Governance (dlg) to  
Switzerland**

## ***Selection of Issues for Reflection***

Based on a process-oriented logic, study tours are best built around those issues the study tour group is confronted with. This approach necessitates that study tours are tailor made and focus on the specific needs of the delegation. As a consequence the study tour guidelines

- will provide examples of possible issues from different stages of the decentralisation process (designing dlq, implementing dlq and living dlq)
- will reflect how issues can be translated into a study tour program
- by identifying relevant Swiss experience
- by proposing possible program elements.

Process	Issues for reflection
<p><b>Designing dlq</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decision-making on the design of dlq (process, involved actors, core values)</li> <li>• Defining territorial units</li> <li>• Defining local institutions</li> <li>• Distribution of powers between centre and local</li> <li>• Distribution of resources between centre and local</li> <li>• Information coordination, cooperation, and control mechanisms</li> <li>• Dispute resolution mechanisms</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Should decentralised units be defined based on ethnic criteria or based on capacity?</b></li> <li><b>2. What powers should the local level have?</b></li> <li><b>3. How to accord financial autonomy?</b></li> </ol>
<p><b>Implementing dlq</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process of implementation (sequencing, involved actors)</li> <li>• Establishing local institutions</li> <li>• reorganisation of the central administration</li> <li>• transfer of powers</li> <li>• transfer of resources</li> <li>• capacity building</li> <li>• coordination mechanisms for implementation</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>4. When shall powers and funds be transferred? When are decentralised units deemed ready to receive more powers, more funds? How to build the necessary capacities?</b></li> <li><b>5. How to create a multilingual local administration with equitable representation of different groups?</b></li> </ol>
<p><b>Living dlq</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• local planning and decision-making</li> <li>• budgetary processes</li> <li>• local spending</li> <li>• local service-delivery</li> <li>• coordination and cooperation between decentralised units</li> <li>• cooperation with the centre</li> <li>• control mechanisms</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>6. How to improve service-delivery in small municipalities?</b></li> <li><b>7. How can the population be more directly involved in planning processes? How to improve accountability of local officials towards the population? How to improve the responsiveness of politics to citizens' demands?</b></li> </ol>

[For gaining a better understanding on decentralization and local governance, consult Annex 1.](#)



## ***Issue (1) Should decentralised units be defined based on ethnic criteria or based on capacity?***

### **Issue as presented:**

Should decentralised units be defined based on ethnic criteria or based on capacity?

### **Background and potential underlying challenges (based on short assessment):**

- Fragile context
- Differences in objectives concerning decentralisation: decentralisation for internal self-determination or decentralisation for improved effectiveness/development.
- Demands for autonomy by groups facing some resistance by others. Disputes between majority and minorities with a risk of hardening of positions (either/or arguments)

*(Assumption:* an either/or discussion (capacity or ethnicity) will probably entrench divisions. The study tour can contribute to soften positions by moving away from either/or arguments)

### **Objectives:**

Know-how transfer in view of supporting the decision-making/negotiation process on the future territorial organisation

### **Participants:**

Representatives from different political parties, from different ethnic groups, one third of the group are women

### **Swiss experience:**

Swiss experience of state formation differs from the experiences of most other countries. For instance, when introducing federalism, a debate on how to design federal units was not necessary as the cantons already existed. However, at various times demands for changes to the territorial organisation arose. These might teach interesting lessons, e.g. on factors that contributed to stable boundaries (e.g. why could bilingual cantons survive), on reasons for demands for changes to territorial organisation (showing the complexity of motivations), on procedures/processes to find agreement and change the territorial organisation. Swiss experience can demonstrate approaches how small municipalities can survive despite of limited capacity or how different groups can be accommodated within one territorial unit.

### **Main program elements of study tour:**

1. History of the formation of Switzerland, Introduction to the Swiss political system, including power-sharing between different groups
2. Experiences with territorial reform in Switzerland

### **Further program elements to soften positions (how to promote capacity and accommodate diversity), e.g.:**

3. Strategies of small, financially weak municipalities to survive despite of limited capacity
4. Multicultural organization of municipalities to provide for integration of different groups.

→**Read more:** [Reflections and ideas for a study tour on "Should decentralised units be defined based on ethnic criteria or based on capacity?"](#)

## ***Issue (2) What powers should the local level have?***

### **Issue as presented:**

What powers should the local level have?

### **Background and potential underlying challenges (based on short assessment):**

- The country was so far very centralised.
- The political landscape is rather stable.
- Decentralisation is mainly regarded as a mechanism to promote more effective service-delivery and as a tool for democratisation.
- The Ministry of Local Government shall prepare a draft law on decentralisation. Currently they are working on the distribution of powers between the centre and local government.
- Main underlying question: What shall be criteria and principles for the distribution of powers?

### **Objectives:**

Provide technical knowhow, share Swiss experience

### **Participants:**

Civil servants from the ministry and some representatives from local government

### **Swiss experience:**

Switzerland has an old tradition of strong local government. The debate on the distribution of powers is vivid in Switzerland in recent years, in particular in the context of new schemes of financial equalisation. There have been constitutional revisions to reflect the changes in the distribution of powers between the confederation and cantons as well revisions of legislation at cantonal level in respect to municipal powers.

### **Main program elements of study tour:**

1. Introduction to the Swiss political system with a focus on the distribution of powers between different levels of state
2. Experiences with the distribution of powers and with changes to it
3. Experiences with drafting respective laws, with negotiating changes to the distribution of powers

→**Read more:** [Reflections and ideas for a study tour on "What powers should the local level have?"](#)

### ***Issue (3) How to accord financial autonomy?***

#### **Issue as presented:**

How to accord financial autonomy?

#### **Background and potential underlying challenges (based on short assessment):**

- Some years ago the country attributed some decision-making powers to local governments.
- However, so far local governments have very limited own resources. Almost all their revenue is coming from conditional transfers by the centre and the budgetary process remained highly centralised. Funds often arrive towards the end of the budgetary year so that local governments have difficulties spending them.
- The Ministry argues that local governments do not have the capacity for financial autonomy
- Local governments demand more own funds, more predictable funds and more liberty to decide how to spend them.
- There are huge differences in development and economic capacity between different local governments. Weaker local governments want a chance to catch up.
- The assessment shows that for effective reforms the whole system of fiscal decentralisation would have to change. This would have to involve various actors on different levels of government

#### **Objectives:**

Reflect on fiscal decentralisation, in particular the possible allocation of own revenues to local governments as well as on systems of financial equalisation in order to form a common understanding and to be able to lobby for a change of legislation.

#### **Participants:**

Mayors from local governments, some experts, some journalists

#### **Swiss experience:**

In comparison to most other countries, Swiss local governments have a very high degree of financial autonomy. In particular, they have rather strong powers in taxation, to define their own budgets and decide on their spending. In addition, there are systems of financial equalisation that allow to provide assistance to financially disfavoured local governments. Switzerland developed systems of cooperation between different levels of government. For instance, for the creation of reformed cantonal systems of financial equalisation cantons and municipalities cooperated.

Furthermore, over the years, expertise on fiscal decentralisation in developing countries was developed.

#### **Main program elements of study tour:**

1. Introduction to the Swiss political system with a focus on fiscal federalism
2. Main sources of revenues of local governments, budgetary processes, spending power
3. Systems of financial equalisation
4. Challenges: What happens when local governments cumulate debts?
5. Lobbying for more financial autonomy

→**Read more:** [Reflections and ideas for a study tour on "How to accord financial autonomy?"](#)

## ***Issue (4) When shall powers and funds be transferred?***

### ***Issue as presented:***

When shall powers and funds be transferred? When are decentralised units deemed ready to receive more powers, more funds? How to build the necessary capacities?

### ***Background and potential underlying challenges (based on short assessment):***

- Rather stable context
- Five years ago new decentralisation legislation was passed.
- In a first round, some powers and funds were transferred to local governments.
- A second round of transferring powers and funds was planned for this year, however the Ministry of Local Development and the Ministry of Finance came to the conclusion that several local governments were not ready yet.
- This led to disputes between the Association of Local Governments and the central government. Switzerland has good contacts to the Association (its partner for years) and relatively good contacts to the Ministries.
- A major challenge poses the still very centralised mind-set of politicians as well as the top-down approach to reforms

### ***Objectives:***

The main (and official) objective is know-how transfer. In particular the association hopes that the journey will also contribute to building common understanding between the two ministries and the Association. The ministries are at least not opposed to the second objective. The Swiss would like to give the delegation also some insights into the Swiss political culture

### ***Participants:***

Equal number of representatives from the Ministries and from the Association of Local Governments.

### ***Swiss experience:***

Switzerland has some but overall only limited experience on questions of a transition to decentralisation, including on transferring powers and funds. However there are relevant experiences on capacity assessment and capacity building. In addition, the Swiss political culture with its traditions of negotiation, consultation and participation of various stakeholders might provide interesting insights to the delegation

### **Main program elements of study tour:**

1. Introduction to the Swiss political system
2. The distribution of powers and of resources
3. Required capacities and capacity building
4. Transition experiences of other countries
5. Consensus-building

→ **Read more:** [Reflections and ideas for a study tour on " When shall powers and funds be transferred?"](#)

## ***Issue (5) How to create a multilingual local administration with equitable representation of different groups?***

### **Issue as presented:**

How to create a multilingual local administration with equitable representation of different groups?

### **Background and potential underlying challenges (based on short assessment):**

- So far the country had only one official language.
- Due to high pressures from other language groups within the country, other languages received an official status at the local level.
- In addition, within the administration of the country, including at the level of local government, there is a high overrepresentation of one group.
- Now the composition of the administration shall become more representative of all groups and at the same time the capacities of the administration to work in more than one official language shall be improved.
- A joint working group with government representatives from central and local level shall prepare a working plan for implementing the project 'multilingual local administrations'.

### **Objectives:**

Share experience on Swiss experiences with multilingual administrations

### **Participants:**

Members of the working group (includes persons from different ministries belonging to different political parties, representatives from the centre and the local level, including minority parties). Head of the working group and of the delegation is a secretary of state.

### **Swiss experience:**

Switzerland has experiences of multilingual administration on all state levels (centre, cantons, municipalities). It knows about some of the technical (and emotional) challenges that language issues can pose.

### **Main program elements of study tour:**

1. Introduction to the Swiss political system with a special focus on mechanisms to accommodate linguistic groups
2. The Functioning of Multilingual Administrations in Switzerland

→ **Read more:** [Reflections and ideas for a study tour on “How to create a multilingual local administration with equitable representation of different groups?”](#)

## ***Issue (6) How to improve service-delivery in small municipalities?***

### ***Issue as presented:***

How to improve service-delivery in small municipalities?

### ***Background and potential underlying challenges (based on short assessment):***

- SDC implements a program on improving service-delivery in a number of small rural municipalities. Focus of the Swiss cooperation is in particular on water and on garbage collection. Mayors from these municipalities requested to interact with counterparts in Switzerland.
- Service-delivery is hampered amongst others by the limited resources of small municipalities.
- There are only few fulltime staff.
- The relations with the centre are difficult. The centre remains omnipresent because most funds are earmarked for certain services, the centre sets minimum standards for service-delivery and the local governments have to provide reports.
- Pressure on mayors to perform well is high.
- Upward accountability is high.
- There is some debate to change the territorial organisation so as to create bigger municipalities.

### ***Objectives:***

Experience sharing and know-how transfer on increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of service-delivery of small municipalities. The Swiss would also provide the participants with some impressions on the cooperation between cantons and municipalities

### ***Participants:***

Mayors and project partners

### ***Swiss experience:***

Switzerland is confronted with a high number of small municipalities. Many of them face challenges in respect to service-delivery. Municipalities developed their strategies to overcome them. They include cooperation among municipalities for know-how and service delivery. In addition there are mechanisms to provide financial support to weaker municipalities. Several cantons are pressuring that small municipalities merge in order to create bigger more efficient local governments.

### **Main program elements of study tour:**

1. Introduction to the Swiss political system
2. Challenges of small municipalities in respect to service delivery, approaches of small municipalities to improve service delivery
3. Cooperation between municipalities and mergers of municipalities

→ **Read more:** [Reflections and ideas for a study tour on “How to improve service-delivery in small municipalities?”](#)

## ***Issue (7) How can the population be more directly involved?***

### ***Issue as presented:***

How can the population be more directly involved in local planning processes? How to improve accountability of local officials towards the population? How to improve the responsiveness of politics to citizens' demands?

### ***Background and potential underlying challenges (based on short assessment):***

- Decision-making is strongly party driven. The citizens have limited influence on the politicians because they are elected based on closed party lists.
- The centre sets priorities for local development. Municipalities have to reflect these priorities in their planning processes
- Budgetary processes and planning processes are not well harmonised, districts often already submitted their budgets before the planning of villages is concluded.
- Consultations of civil society during planning takes place, recommendations are however often not included.
- NGO sector is weak and the few active NGOs are aligned to political parties
- SDC proposed a citizens' council to improve participation of citizens.

### ***Objectives:***

Learn about participation of citizens in planning processes in Switzerland. Gain some common understanding on how to foster participation of citizens in the home country.

### ***Participants:***

Representatives of NGOs, local public administration, district administration, central government

### ***Swiss experience:***

Switzerland has developed very strong citizen participation in almost every aspect of political decision-making. Whether in consultation phases during the legislative processes, via referendum and popular initiatives on all three levels, the citizens can give their opinion.

### **Main program elements of study tour:**

1. Introduction to the Swiss political system, with a focus on participation and direct democracy
2. Municipal autonomy in respect to planning, Mechanisms of direct democracy and participation at the local level
3. Excursus: Election system and direct democracy and their influence on the party system in Switzerland

→**Read more:** [Reflections and ideas for a study tour on “How can the population be more directly involved?”](#)