

OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine

Deployment of Swiss experts

Background

Following the Russian annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of open conflict in eastern Ukraine, the Permanent Council of the 57 OSCE participating States decided on 21 March 2014, at the Ukrainian government's request, to send an unarmed civilian special monitoring mission of international observers to Ukraine for three months. The mandate of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) has since been extended twice, most recently until the end of March 2016. It has also been expanded to include additional staff, with the deployment of up to 1,000 international observers now possible since March 2015.

Mandate of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM)

The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission's mandate is to gather information on the situation in Ukraine in an impartial and transparent manner, to document incidents as well as violations of OSCE principles and commitments, and to report on its observations on a daily basis. In addition, the SMM is tasked with helping to promote respect for human rights including respect for the rights of minorities.

According to the Minsk Protocol and Minsk Memorandum of September 2014 and the February 2015 Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements, the SMM is furthermore charged with monitoring the ceasefire agreements and the withdrawal of heavy weapons, as well as observing the withdrawal of all foreign armed forces, military equipment and mercenaries from Ukraine. Due to access restrictions and the often volatile security situation, the SMM can only monitor withdrawal on a limited basis.

However, the SMM's work also includes coming up with solutions to emergency humanitarian situations – such as the establishment of humanitarian corridors to evacuate people

from areas under siege – and enabling prisoner exchanges by providing the various parties with lists of relevant names. Another of the SMM's objectives is to facilitate dialogue between the opposing sides and to help reduce tensions, e.g. by supervising local ceasefire agreements.

To fulfil their task and gain acceptance, mission members maintain dialogue and contact with all sides, with non-governmental organisations and with the various sections of local civil society.

Updates from the SMM are published in English, Russian and Ukrainian on the OSCE website:
<http://www.osce.org/ukraine-smm/daily-updates>.

Country

Ukraine

Theme

Peace and security

Project name

Peace and security

Objective

Help to reduce tensions and facilitate dialogue as part of efforts to foster peace, stability and security

Target groups

Parties to the conflict, civil society

Partner organisation

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

Total size

Up to 1,000 experts

Swiss contribution

Deployment of up to 16 Swiss experts as well as financial contributions to the mission

Cost

Around CHF 10,000,000 over two years

Expected duration

21 March 2014–31 March 2016

Size of the mission

The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission currently consists of around 500 to 600 unarmed experts from more than 40 OSCE participating States, and of local staff for translation, administrative and advisory purposes. If necessary, the Chief Monitor can increase the number of observers to up to 1,000. The mission is headquartered in the capital Kyiv and in operation throughout Ukraine with the exception of Crimea. The majority of observers are stationed in the eastern Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk. All the observers work in shifts, seven days a week.

Swiss involvement

Switzerland has been involved in the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission from the outset, seconding up to 16 experts and making contributions towards the cost of the mission. The Deputy Chief Monitor and a number of other thematic specialists also come from Switzerland in addition to the observers in the field offices. Over the mission's current two-year mandate, Switzerland's participation is expected to amount to around CHF 10 million.

OSCE monitors verify a temporary truce they arrange in Trokhizbenka, Luhansk, 23 November 2014.

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Monitors from the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine have been tasked to monitor the withdrawal of heavy weapons by both Ukrainian and anti-government forces.

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