



Contracting Authority:
European Commission

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

Title of the action:	EU-CoE Programmatic Co-operation Framework in the Eastern Partnership Countries CRIS number: ENI/2014/037-347
Number and title of lot	N/A
Location(s) of the action:	Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine)
Name of the applicant	Council of Europe
Nationality of the applicant	N/A

Dossier No	
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Co-applicant	None
Affiliated entity	None

Applicant's contact details for the purpose of this action	
Postal address:	Palais de l'Europe Avenue de l'Europe F – 67075 Strasbourg, France
Telephone number: (fixed and mobile) Country	+33 (0)3 88 41 20 00

code + city code + number:	
Fax number: Country code + city code + number:	+33 (0)3 90 21 53 19
Contact person for this action:	Verena Taylor, Director, Office of the Directorate General of Programmes
Contact person's email:	verena.taylor@coe.int
Address:	Palais de l'Europe Avenue de l'Europe F – 67075 Strasbourg, France
Website of the Organisation:	http://www.coe.int http://jp.coe.int

1. THE ACTION

Reinforcing the rule of law, enhancing the respect of human rights and promoting democratic governance are at the centre of EU cooperation priorities with the countries of the Eastern Partnership. Given its mandate and its specific role in defining the relevant normative and institutional systems the Council of Europe (CoE) has always been a privileged partner for the EU in providing support to these countries in these fields of cooperation.

The present Programmatic Co-operation Framework (PCF) was developed by the European Commission and the Council of Europe as a new modality of co-operation between the EU and the CoE in the EU financial perspective 2014-2020, allowing to bring EU-CoE Joint programmes to a new qualitative level.

This proposal derives from the **Statement of Intent** signed on the 1st of April 2014 by the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe and the EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy. The decision to frame the EU - CoE cooperation in a programmatic document also follows the 2012 Evaluation Report of the Commission's cooperation with the CoE, which recommended a more specific and predictable cooperation framework conducive to sustainable results and greater impacts. The need to "foster a more focused, coordinated and transparent EU approach in cooperating with the CoE", "searching for added value and better use of existing resources" in areas of common interest, was also reflected in the adoption by the Foreign Affairs Council of their biannual EU priorities for cooperation with the Council of Europe in 2012-2013 and in 2014-2015.

The PCF builds upon the CoE and the EU policy priorities in the context of the Eastern Partnership and on the CoE expertise in standard-setting, monitoring and cooperation. It is intended to help addressing the identified issues in the countries concerned and fill critical national gaps. The CoE has a particular expertise, political and moral authority and benchmarking role in the areas of cooperation covered by PCF and is uniquely placed to ensure long-term engagement with the countries concerned (which are all its Member States, with the exception of Belarus) on issues and in areas where other implementing agencies would not be acceptable to governments.

Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia signed the Association Agreements with the EU in 2014. The agreements provide for privileged relations between the respective countries and the EU in specific areas of development, and for the consolidation and increasing stability and effectiveness of democratic institutions. Countries are required to implement reforms and respect democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law. The actions proposed under PCF take into account the following EU documents:

- EU - Armenia Action Plan
- EU - Azerbaijan Action Plan
- EU Council conclusions on Belarus, October 2012
- EU - Georgia Association Agreement and Association Agenda
- EU - Moldova Association Agreement and Association Agenda
- EU - Ukraine Association Agreement and Association Agenda

Moreover, the PCF translates priorities of co-operation identified within the framework of the CoE country-specific Action Plans, developed in close consultation with the targeted countries' national authorities and adopted by the CoE Committee of Ministers.

To enable implementation of the PCF, the Commission has committed to providing an indicative support of up to EUR 30.4 million over a three year period (2015-2017) (an average of approximately EUR 10 million per year) for realising regional objectives in the Eastern Neighbourhood. The amount of the funding takes into account past performances as well as the results of the CoE evaluation of 2012. In 2016 a mid-term evaluation will be held, upon which the EU support to the Council of Europe for the following three-year period will be determined, depending on the level of achievement of the objectives and results.

Title of the action:	EU-CoE Programmatic Co-operation Framework in the Eastern Partnership Countries
Location(s) of the action:	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine
Duration of the action (months):	36 months
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EUR 10.0 million from the general budget of the European Union for 2014 - EUR 10.0 million from the general budget of the European Union for 2015, subject to the availability of appropriations following the adoption of the relevant budget - EUR 10.4 million from the general budget of the European Union for 2016, subject to the availability of appropriations following the adoption of the relevant budget <p>The action is co-financed in joint co-financing by the Council of Europe for an amount of EUR 3.4 million.</p>
Co-financing ratio	EU: 90%; CoE:10%
Objectives of the Action	<p>In the first phase of the implementation of the Programmatic Cooperation Framework (2015-2017), the Council of Europe will provide expert assistance, capacity-building and support to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in the areas of protection and promotion of human rights, ensuring justice, combating threats to the rule of law, addressing challenges of the information society and promoting democratic governance.</p> <p>These priorities will have to address the needs, avoiding overlaps with already funded activities, and ensuring complementarities with existing and planned activities in the EaP countries.</p>

Objectives and expected results

Theme I “Protecting and Promoting Human Rights”

Thematic programme I.1: Strengthening the implementation of European Human Rights standards at national and regional level

Specific objective I.1.1. Support the alignment of Human Rights policies and practice by ensuring compliance of legislative and regulatory frameworks with European standards and capacity-building for legal professionals and National Human Rights Institutions, including the reinforcement of Ombudsmen Offices.

Expected results:

I.1.1.1 Relevant national legislation is in place and/or amended in line with European Human Rights standards (criminal justice, social rights, non-discrimination, data protection, social rights);

I.1.1.2 Institutional mechanisms and structures are in place and/or operational (e.g. Human Rights Centers, Focal Points and mechanisms as required by conventions, institutionalized consultation procedures);

I.1.1.3 Relevant professional groups have knowledge about human rights standards and are able to apply them in their work;

I.1.1.4 Relevant national training organisations have strengthened capacity to continuously and sustainably train their target groups on human rights standards;

I.1.1.5 Interaction between civil society and authorities in the democratic decision-making process is reinforced;

I.1.1.6 National parliaments have increased awareness of the necessity to revise national legislation and bring it in line with the European Social Charter (revised) as ratified by their country.

Specific objective I.1.2 Support the full execution of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) judgments through reinforcement of parliamentary involvement.

Expected results:

I.1.2.1 Increased awareness of members of parliaments (MPs) in the EaP countries’ on the existing parliamentary mechanisms to ensure execution of European Court of Human Rights judgments;

I.1.2.2 Increased compliance of the national legal

framework with the European Convention of Human Rights and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights;

I.1.2.3 Parliamentary committees' staffs have better capability to assist MPs in ensuring compatibility of national legislation with the ECHR and compliance with ECtHR case-law.

Thematic programme I.2: Protecting national and ethnic minorities' rights

Specific objective I.2.1. Improve protection of the rights of national minorities by ensuring the effective implementation of European standards.

Expected results:

I.2.1.1 The legal framework on minority protection and promotion is in conformity with the European standards;

I.2.1.2 The implementation of the European standards of minority protection is improved;

I.2.1.3 Creation of an environment in which civil society organisations (CSO) of national minorities can participate in the democratic decision-making process, including on issues concerning them.

Thematic programme I.3. Promoting equality and human dignity

Specific objectives I.3.1. Achieve progress in the elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination against women.

Expected results:

I.3.1.1 In each of the five Eastern Partnership countries, national research studies are developed, and specific legal and procedural, as well as socio-economic and cultural, obstacles to women's access to justice are identified;

I.3.1.2 Recommendations are formulated for possible further development of national standards for women's access to justice, including in the field of data collection;

I.3.1.3 The capacity of Eastern Partnership countries to design measures to ensure that the justice chain is gender-responsive and addresses the needs of the most disadvantaged women (poor, illiterate, from rural areas, minorities and disabled) is enhanced;

I.3.1.4 Professionals involved at the different stages of the justice chain (judges, prosecutors, lawyers, law enforcement) have improved knowledge and skills on gender equality, women's rights and non-discrimination;

I.3.1.5 Gender equality advocates from civil society have better access to knowledge and resources for the legal empowerment of women.

Thematic programme I.4: Promoting Human Rights Education and Democratic Citizenship

Specific objective 1.4.1 Promote the integration of human rights issues in national education systems.

Expected result:

1.4.1.1 In 6 EaP countries, educational policy and practice are strengthened in line with Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE) standards.

Theme II "Ensuring Justice"

Thematic programme II.1. "Strengthening the independence and efficiency of justice"

Specific objective II.1.1. Strengthen the independence and efficiency of the judiciary

Expected results:

II.1.1.1 Increase in the degree of compliance of national legislations and regulations concerning the composition, role and mandate of self-governing bodies, in corresponding target countries, with European standards and CoE recommendations;

II.1.1.2 Improved training methodology and curricula of judicial training institutions in corresponding target countries;

II.1.1.3 Improved time management and decrease in volume of court backlogs; strengthened national capacity to assess the performance of court systems in corresponding target countries.

Specific objective II.1.2. Strengthen the role of courts in delivering user-oriented justice

Expected result:

II.1.2.1 Enhanced quality of judicial services in line with European standards through the practical

application of the CEPEJ tools in corresponding target countries.

Specific objective II.1.3. Improve the quality of the profession of lawyer (advocate)

Expected results:

II.1.3.1 Increased compliance of national legislations and regulations concerning the mandate and functioning of Bar Associations, in corresponding target countries, with European standards and CoE recommendations;

II.1.3.2 Training institutions in corresponding target countries put in place a short-term and long-term strategy of development, a developed system of course accreditation, and coherent and comprehensive training programmes with coherent teaching methodology.

Thematic programme II.2: “Strengthening constitutional justice”

Specific objective: II.2.1 Strengthen constitutional courts in the EaP region.

Expected result:

II.2.1.1 Judges and legal advisors are able to deliver/prepare judgments in conformity with European standards of constitutional justice (independence of the judiciary, separation of powers, protection of human rights and the rule of law).

Thematic programme II.3: “Promoting penitentiary reforms (from a punitive to a rehabilitative approach)”

Specific objective II.3.1 Support enhancement of the legislative and regulatory framework and practice, in order to improve the treatment and rehabilitation of prisoners.

Expected result:

II.3.1.1 The legislative framework and national policy are developed in line with European standards to ensure the improvement of treatment and rehabilitation of prisoners;

Specific objective II.3.2 Reinforce the legislative powers and operational capacity of the national oversight mechanism (internal and external).

Expected result:

II.3.2.1 National mechanisms for monitoring and inspection of places of detention, as well as the

independent external/internal mechanisms for the review of prisoners' complaints, are reviewed;

Specific objective II.3.3 Combat prison overcrowding and support use of community sanctions and measures.

Expected result:

II.3.3.1 Regional co-operation is established, and a strategic approach on prison overcrowding and on alternatives to imprisonment is developed.

Theme III "Combating Threats to the Rule of Law"

Thematic programme III.1: "Fight against corruption and fostering good governance; fight against money-laundering"

Specific objective III.1.1 To improve the framework and capacity to fully implement legal aspects of prevention and criminalisation of corruption, particularly in terms of implementing relevant GRECO recommendations.

Expected result:

III.1.1.1 Legislative and institutional frameworks are improved and the capacity to fully implement legal aspects of prevention and criminalisation of corruption is reinforced.

III.1.2 To strengthen the capacity to prevent corruption in public administration, judiciary, prosecution, and law enforcement authorities.

Expected result:

III.1.2.1 Mechanisms are introduced to prevent corruption in public administration, the judiciary, the prosecution, and law enforcement authorities.

Specific objective III.1.3 To improve legal frameworks concerning: ethics and codes of conduct; conflicts of interest; prohibition or restriction of certain activities; declaration of assets, income, liabilities and interests, political finance, white collar crime, and immunities of high-ranking public officials.

Expected result:

III.1.3.1 Legislative and institutional frameworks concerning ethics, codes of conduct; conflicts of interest; declarations of assets, political financing, white

collar crime, and immunities of high public officials are set up.

Specific objectives III.1.4 To focus the fight against corruption on specific areas (i.e. education and health sector): To support the development of prevention and integrity mechanisms for the practicing professionals and to increase good governance when delivering public services as such;

Expected result:

III.1.4.1 Integrity Mechanisms are introduced to prevent fraud while the quality of public services in certain sectors is improved (i.e., education, health).

Specific objective III.1.5 To facilitate public interest disclosures (whistle-blowers): through the normative institutional and judicial framework for the protection of whistle-blowers and to strengthen capacity-building in applying these frameworks.

Specific objective III.1.6 To develop regional capacity and cross-border co-operation on identified common challenge areas in the fight against corruption, where cross-border and international co-operation is necessary to combat corruption as a criminal offence, and other forms of economic crime;

Expected result:

III.1.6.1 At least a co-operation agreement is established and exercised between all six EaP countries concerning either anti-corruption agencies; or public administration; or law enforcement.

Specific objective III.1.7 To strengthen the national capacity to detect and to combat financial and economic crimes, particularly in terms of implementing relevant MONEYVAL recommendations

Expected result:

III.1.7.1 Capacities are reinforced to implement country and regional recommendations based on the country MONEYVAL evaluations and compliance procedures.

Specific objective III.1.8 To strengthen the capacity of financial intelligence units, law enforcement authorities, as well as supervisory bodies, in identifying money laundering/ terrorism financing activity and cases of non-compliance with relevant legislation

Expected result:

III.1.8.1 Capacities increase in financial intelligence

units, law enforcement authorities, as well as supervisory bodies, concerning efficient handling of anti-money cases and procedures.

Thematic programme III.2. “Criminal justice action on cybercrime”

Specific objective III.2.1 To enable efficient regional and international co-operation on cybercrime and electronic evidence.

Expected results:

III.2.1.1 Authorities responsible for mutual legal assistance have their capacities enhanced with regard to cybercrime and electronic evidence;

III.2.1.2 The effectiveness of 24/7 points of contact will be enhanced;

III.2.1.3 Draft amendments to rules and procedures on mutual legal assistance will be available for adoption.

Theme IV “Addressing Challenges of the Information Society”

Thematic programme IV.1: “Improve freedom, independence, pluralism and diversity of media”

Specific objective IV.1.1 To review media legislation and regulation to bring these in line with European standards, including ethical standards for media professionals;

Expected result:

IV.1.1.1 National legislation and media regulation is in compliance with European standards, notably in the following areas: public-service broadcasting; independence of broadcasting regulators; access to public information; concentration and transparency of media ownership; freedom of expression, including on the internet, in at least **3 of 6 target countries**.

Specific objective IV.1.2 To support the implementation of legal frameworks, including remedial actions

Expected result:

IV.1.2.1 Public service, media governance and management are assessed and measures are taken to align them with Council of Europe standards;

Specific objective IV.1.3 To promote the safety of journalists

Expected result:

IV.1.3.1 Awareness of CoE standards, in particular Articles 2 and 10 of ECHR, among members of parliaments is increased.

Thematic programme IV.2: “Information society and internet governance”

Specific objectives IV.2.1 National legislation and/or policy related to internet governance is improved in line with the European Convention on Human Rights and relevant Council of Europe standards

Expected results:

IV.2.1.1 National Internet legislation and policies are in line with CoE adopted standards on Internet and human rights;

IV.2.1.2 Internet users are aware of the remedies and redress available when human rights online violations occur;

IV.2.1.3 A national Internet governance multi-stakeholder dialogue is established/supported in each targeted country;

IV.2.1.4 A regional Internet governance campus is established and becomes sustainable;

IV.2.1.5 EaP countries Internet stakeholders’ take active part in global Internet governance dialogue and policy discussion.

Thematic programme IV.3.: “Enhance the right to data protection”

Specific objective IV.3.1 To support the further development of right-based legislative and regulatory frameworks on data protection

Expected results:

IV.3.1.1 There is enhanced coverage of data protection legislation, regulations and policy in line with international and European data protection standards, to secure the highest level of protection of individuals, including through the effective oversight of the implementation of the legislation in all EaP countries;

IV.3.1.2 Assessment is made of data protection legislation in respect of Convention 108 and other

relevant standards in the field and proposals for alignment where it appears necessary.

Specific objective IV.3.2 To support effective implementation of data protection principles in the region

Expected results:

IV.3.2.1 The capacity of the supervisory authority to secure the highest level of protection for individuals and effective oversight is enhanced;

IV.3.2.2 Effective functioning of the supervisory authority entrusted with the task of overseeing the implementation of the data protection legislation.

Theme V “Promoting Democratic Governance”

Thematic Programme V. 1: Electoral assistance: reforming electoral legislation and practice

Specific objective V.1.1. Align electoral legislation and its implementation with the principles of the European Electoral Heritage

Expected results:

V.1.1.1 Electoral legislation that meets international standards is adopted:

- Shortcomings in the electoral legislation are identified;
- Legislation on elections and/or political parties is amended in conformity with international standards;
- Institutional and operational capacity of election administration to organise electoral process in line with the CoE standards is enhanced.

Specific objective V.1.2 Ensure that electoral practice is compliant with the principles of the European Electoral Heritage

Expected results:

V.1.2.1 Shortcomings in the electoral practice are identified and measures to address them are taken:

- The institutional set-up and capacity development of Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) is strengthened.
- Electoral Justice is enhanced through better quality

of complaints

- Domestic observation becomes professional and domestic observers fully aware of Council of Europe and other international election standards
- Civic and voter education is enhanced through increased participation of women, minorities and other disadvantaged groups as voters and candidates;
- Awareness of Council of Europe relevant standards in the areas of democratic elections is increased among the members of Parliaments and parliamentary staff of the EaP countries. Members of Parliaments and parliamentary staff improve their understanding of the amendments to be adopted in the national legislation on elections and political parties.

Thematic Programme V. 2: Strengthening institutional frameworks for local governance

Specific objective V.2.1. Support the ongoing process of reform of local government in participating countries

Expected result:

V.2.1.1. Consistency of the legislative framework is improved and new by-laws are streamlined in at least three beneficiary countries and targeted recommendations are developed for the joint use.

Specific objective V.2.2. Promote ethical behaviour by locally elected representatives in the region

Expected result:

V.2.2.1. More efficient, transparent and ethical governance at local level is developed in at least three EaP countries.

Specific objective V.2.3. Support the improvement of financial and human resources management of local administrations based on European standards and benchmarking processes

Expected result:

V.2.3.1. European standard local finance benchmarking tool is further developed and the adapted domestic versions are available. They lead to improved legislation, local regulations.

<p>Main activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of legislation, policies and regulatory frameworks and formulation of recommendations in view of their compliance with the CoE standards and establishment of best international practice; • Expert support in drafting documents, procedures and policies; • Expert advice on establishing new processes, institutionalising improvements and ensuring sustainability; • Developmental and operational support to national and regional networks of professionals, authorities and civil society; • Awareness-raising activities and capacity-building at regional and national level for authorities, professionals, civil society on CoE standards and best international practices; • Regional peer review and benchmarking; • Needs assessments; • High-level conferences, seminars, workshops, etc.; • Training, training of trainers, practical workshops; • Working groups - discussion fora for arriving at mutually agreed steps for regional and country specific actions; • Surveys to measure awareness/perception; • Guidelines and manuals development; • Designing and implementing pilot actions to exhibit implementation of recommendations at a local level, to provide feedback to policy-making about good practices and challenges on the ground; • E-materials and tools adapted to country specifics, web pages; • Assistance for national on-line systems for registration of discrimination complaints; • An independent helpline providing legal aid and counselling to journalists, press and media organisations; • Pre-electoral observation missions and related activities; • Study visits for national trainers to the CoE and the ECtHR; • Financial assistance for equipment; • Grants schemes. <p><i>(list of activities is non-exhaustive)</i></p>
<p>Stakeholders and Target group(s)</p>	<p>Governmental bodies at all levels, including ministries of justice, finance, interior, health, education, labor and social protection, ministries responsible for public administration, parliaments, public structures with specific responsibilities in the relevant areas such as anti-corruption and anti-money laundering bodies,</p>

	central electoral commissions, ombudsmen, the judiciary, judicial professions and judiciary supervisory bodies, media, NGOs, academia.
Final beneficiaries	Citizens of the beneficiary countries, including women, minorities, youth.

2. EXTENDED DESCRIPTION

2.1. Operationalisation

The PCF is structured into five programmatic priority areas agreed between the European Commission and the Council of Europe. Within these priority areas a set of sub-themes (thematic programmes) with related interventions, both on national and regional level, have been identified. Each intervention is project-based and is defined through specific objectives, expected results, related activities, baseline information and indicators identified and agreed in the PCF Matrix.

The implementation of the strategic framework will be accompanied by the Annual Plans of Action to be agreed at the annual Steering Committee meetings.

In developing the PCF, strategic analysis of target countries' and regional needs was carried out, taking into account CoE monitoring reports relevant to the thematic areas. Thematic programmes were designed in consultation with national stakeholders and national authorities in the framework of the Council of Europe's country-specific Action Plans. Each country-specific intervention of the PCF corresponds to a project developed within a CoE Action Plan, or to a recommendation from the national authorities. As relevant and necessary, country-specific interventions will be detailed further, through specific needs assessments and additional consultations with the national stakeholders and the EUDs.

2.2. Complementarity of the Action

o Complementarity with EU initiatives

At the early stages of PCF development, the EU Delegations (EUDs) in the Eastern Partnership countries have been consulted on the areas that were to be prioritised for the forthcoming cooperation. Such areas as human rights, justice and the prevention and fight against all forms of corruption have been identified as the main areas where CoE co-operation interventions will be needed.

Following further feedback from the EU Delegations, coordination and complementarity will need to be ensured with EU bilateral actions through constant coordination throughout the implementation period.

The Council of Europe will start each project by systematically meeting the relevant EU Delegations. A first meeting will be organised with each of them in January 2015 to share information regarding the implementation of the 2015 work plan and create the conditions for a good cooperation and coordination on the field with due attention paid to fully factor in all relevant bilateral assistance both on-going and planned. This will be reflected at project level in a list of the main EU-funded actions in the same theme/sub-theme where a CoE regional or

country-level activity is planned, with the indication of the specific areas of synergies and possible overlap and the means to maximise the former and avoid the latter.

The Council of Europe has undertaken to mobilise its PCF activities in coordination with, in complementarity to and in support of EU specific interventions in target countries. The Council of Europe will seek complementarities and avoid overlaps and exclude any double-financing with the EU bilateral assistance in the target countries in the specific areas in question. The role of CoE Field Offices will be primordial in this respect. The Council of Europe will ensure that its Field Offices and the Delegations of the European Union in the partner countries remain in close and regular contact for the preparation of the Annual Plans of Action and throughout the implementation of the activities. In particular, the concerned Delegations will be consulted on the country interventions foreseen in the draft APA submitted to the Steering Committee.

Results achieved towards division of labour and concrete synergies will be reflected in CoE annual reports to the Steering Committee.

o **Other complementary actions and donor coordination**

When agreeing on the policy priorities and activities, the Council of Europe and the European Commission have taken into account other donors' interventions. Further donors' co-ordination will be ensured both in the field through Council of Europe field offices and from headquarters. The Council of Europe undertakes the responsibility to avoid any overlaps in the financing of its activities be it from other donors' or the partner governments.

The Council of Europe has Field Offices in the five Eastern Partnership countries that are Council of Europe Member States as well as an information office in Belarus. One of their main tasks is to ensure overall co-ordination with other international organisations and Council of Europe Member States present and active in the field in the same areas of competence as the Council of Europe. For international organisations and Council of Europe Member States which do not have a presence in Eastern Partnership countries, co-ordination is ensured via the respective headquarters through regular meetings organised for mutual information and co-operation. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, and in particular its Group on Democracy, allows for exchanges with other Member States, as well as on co-ordination issues.

2.3 Mainstreaming and Cross-cutting issues (see also Appendix I)

All the proposed areas of co-operation are central to the European Consensus on Development and the EU Agenda for Change. In addition, they will have a direct positive influence on **gender equality and the rights of minorities** which will be taken into consideration in the organisation of activities on for example ensuring access to justice, ensuring their participation to decision making, and achieving progress in the elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination against women. Whenever relevant, reports on results achieved should be disaggregated by sex.

Achieving gender equality being central to the protection of human rights, the functioning of democracy, and the respect for the rule of law, the highest organ of the Council of Europe, the Committee of Ministers, has also adopted a strategy on Gender committing to gender equality in all areas of action of the Council of Europe. All Council of Europe decision-making, advisory and monitoring bodies should indeed support and actively contribute to the achievement of the goal and the strategic objectives of the Gender Equality Strategy. The

Council of Europe Gender Equality Commission has been set up to follow closely the implementation of the Strategy.

Rights based approach will also be mainstreamed and based on the principles of non-discrimination, equality, access to services and inclusive participation, and focus **on vulnerable groups and minorities including women and children, people in disadvantaged situation and those living in rural areas**. The Steering Committee co-chaired by Development and Cooperation DG - EuropeAid and the CoE will ensure that this approach is taken across all projects implemented throughout the different priority areas identified whenever relevant.

CSO involvement will be ensured predominantly at the level of the design and implementation of the projects' activities. CSOs will be consulted from the beginning for determination of the needs of the national stakeholders and areas of intervention, either through their published reports or meetings during the fact-finding missions. In addition, CSO will be one of the target groups for the implementation of activities and invited to contribute to conferences, workshops, trainings or roundtable discussions.

The cooperation with the Council of Europe is also expected to be neutral on the **environment**. The protection and promotion of human rights as well as the strengthening of the independence, efficiency, and transparency of the justice system in the Eastern Partnership countries is even expected to positively contribute to the implementation of the Aarhus convention, notably its third pillar "access to justice on environmental matters".

2.4 Sustainability

The aim of the PCF is to have the process "owned" by the national partners, their involvement and support will be crucial. The actions are focused on development/improvement of national legal frameworks, national institutional capacities and enhancing the professional skills and knowledge of the staff members and encourage them to place the newly acquired skills and knowledge at the centre of their work.

Sustainability will be achieved by ensuring that the adopted national legislation is in line with European standards, a strong institutional framework and the presence of trained national human resources. The PCF will contribute to building up the knowledge and capacity of the target groups, so that they may promote the objectives among their peers throughout the country and also beyond the duration of the PCF. Whenever the participant partners' networks are created, the follow-up will be maintained and taken care of through the networks.

The national actors involved will be the key state institutions playing a decisive role in the implementation of the reform. As the reform is a priority for the national government, and the themes are part of the country CoE Action Plans the continuity and sustainability of the outcomes will be enhanced.

2.5 Risks and mitigation measures

Political instability in various forms, such as military or other conflicts and changes of government, may slow down or stop the implementation of the foreseen activities. This is the main risk in Eastern Partnership countries, as it can bring about changes in the authorities' approaches to reforms, their willingness to adapt their standards in the fields of human rights and democracy, in line with EU and Council of Europe norms and standards.

Economic instability can affect stakeholders' capacities to provide sufficient resources, both quantitatively and qualitatively, to implement the activities planned and ensure their follow-up.

The Council of Europe has significant experience in such circumstances, and an adequate supply of expertise and staff availability. This, together with a reasonable degree of flexibility in the implementation of the PCF, should allow for effective risk management except in extreme situations.

The membership of five Eastern Partnership countries in the Council of Europe and the growing contacts that the Council of Europe has with Belarus will allow it to build the respective cooperation on a wider political basis and with closer political and technical contacts, thus minimising risks.

3. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

3.1 Governance arrangements and coordination

Implementation of the PCF will be steered and monitored by a Steering Committee co-chaired by the European Commission (Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation – EuropeAid, and as of January 2015 Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations) and the Council of Europe. It should include representatives of the European External Action Service and of any other concerned Directorate-General of the European Commission.

The Steering Committee will be responsible for examining and approving the Annual Plans of Action and monitoring the implementation of the PCF on the basis of the activity reports presented by the Council of Europe.

The Steering Committee will meet at least once a year in the first trimester of the year.

An important part of coordination tasks under transversal component will be dedicated to enhancing the role of the national co-ordinators, facilitating their active involvement in implementation of PCF, in providing feedback, advice and guidance. Annual National Co-ordination Platforms will be set up at countries' level and will meet at least once a year to ensure coordination of country-specific interventions under PCF¹. The meetings will involve national coordinators, the EU Delegation, the Council of Europe, relevant NGOs and State representatives. Furthermore, through the organisation of at least one National Coordinators' Information Exchange Meeting per year, the PCF will ensure regular communication between the national co-ordinators, EU and CoE Secretariats. The CoE Field Offices will be fully involved in the implementation of the PCF along with beneficiaries and will seek to enhance communication so that appropriate and necessary feedback is provided from those involved at the national level.

Also, within the framework of the actions' activities, communication with national counterparts and stakeholders will be ensured in the day-to-day work by the project teams in the partner countries. The role of the CoE Field Offices will be of particular importance in ensuring such co-ordination and consultation.

¹ In countries where only few activities take place, the mentioned frequency of meetings could be adjusted and reduced accordingly.

3.2. Transversal component

Besides the above mentioned 5 thematic priority areas, the PCF includes **Transversal Component on Co-ordination and Management**, which is meant to ensure PCF management, co-ordination with a variety of stakeholders, monitoring of the action as well as the tasks related to the PCF communication and visibility strategy.

More specifically, the purpose of this component:

- To prepare consolidated Annual Plans of Action for review and approval by the PCF Annual Steering Committee meetings;
- To establish an effective internal and external monitoring system (inspired *inter alia* by the Result-Oriented Monitoring methodology - professionalised monitoring);
- To provide a comprehensive reporting on PCF to the Steering Committee (once a year) and presentations to coordination structures involving national stakeholders (at least once a year);
- To provide every two months up-dates on progress in implementation to the EU PCF Task/Project Manager;
- To ensure regular communication of the PCF results to the EaP Platform 1 meetings;
- To develop a PCF communication strategy and work plan in co-ordination with the EU; to organise visibility campaigns for the PCF and its thematic programmes; to organise media and visibility events; set up and maintain the PCF web-site and develop an IT tool related to the PCF programmes implementation;
- To enhance co-ordination of the PCF implementation with the EU in HQs and in the field, as well as with the international organisations/donors' policy for the EaP countries
- To ensure transversal co-ordination between the CoE Main Administrative Entities, monitoring bodies, PACE, CLRAE, CHR, Venice Commission, the Field Offices in the EaP countries, as well as with the EaP countries' Permanent Representatives to the CoE and national co-ordinators/stakeholders.

3.3. Reporting

Annual activity reports shall be drafted and structured on the basis of the results/outcomes that have been achieved and be presented to the Steering Committee which will meet in the first three months of the year. The reports should be consolidated, concise and result-oriented. Additionally, regular communication /information exchange will be established at operational level and will take form of brief narrative reports, to be submitted every two months to the PCF EU Task/Project manager. This will allow all significant issues affecting implementation to be signalled in time.

3.4. Management mode

The PCF will be implemented in indirect management in accordance with Article 58(1)(c) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012.

The CoE will be in charge of implementing actions in the priority areas stated above in order to reach predefined objectives and results. In this context, the Council of Europe will undertake budget implementation tasks - procurement and granting schemes (to be specified at the level of Annual Plans of Action).

3.5. Monitoring, evaluation and control measures

Monitoring of the implementation of the PCF will be carried out by the Council of Europe, using inter alia, the Result-Oriented Monitoring methodology.

Specific control measures will be performed on selected interventions as necessary and in accordance with CoE relevant rules and practices.

By mid- 2016, an independent evaluation will be commissioned by the EC, whose terms of reference will be drafted in consultation with the CoE, to review the results achieved under the PCF for the first phase (2015-2017) and assess the need for any adjustment of the PCF for the second phase. A revised PCF may then come into force in 2018, covering the remaining three years of the PCF (2018-2020).

3.6. Communication and visibility

The PCF communication and visibility strategy (see Annex VI of the contract) builds on the aims and objectives co-ordinated by the CoE and EU through effective means, selected to keep the beneficiaries and national stakeholders informed through a systematic use of communication tools, Council of Europe Field Offices and those involved in the PCF implementation in the EaP countries.

The visibility strategy will aim to keep those who stand to benefit from the PCF as well as the PCF stakeholders, the EaP countries and EU fully aware of the effects and implementation of the policies and Actions, while at the same time ensuring that information about the key principles, activities, benefits and impact of the Eastern Partnership reaches the right audience and notably final beneficiaries.

In order to achieve this, the CoE and EU will implement the comprehensive communication strategy using a number of communication tools that have consistently proven to be effective, in order to guarantee the delivery of messages and close co-ordination among the various partners involved.

The Council of Europe will produce newsletters and videos for the external audience. Visibility materials and comprehensive information will provide the basis to engage a wider audience that will thus be informed about the PCF Actions' aims, objectives and achievements and will become aware of the re-occurring events in the participating countries and of activities that are being carried out both regionally and country-specific.

The PCF will work towards promoting communication with the EU Delegations through the CoE Field Offices.

Appendices to DoA:

Appendix I: Mainstreaming and cross-cutting issues

Appendix II: 3 years Result Matrix

