Council of Europe, Directorate of Internal Oversight

# EVALUATION OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S REGIONAL PROGRAMMES

## Final report

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# Abbreviations used

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| BiH | Bosnia and Herzegovina |
| CoE | Council of Europe |
| DG I | CoE Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law |
| DG II | CoE Directorate General of Democracy |
| DG-PROG | CoE Office of the Director General of Programmes |
| DIO | Directorate of Internal Oversight |
| EaP | EU Eastern Partnership |
| ECHR | European Convention on Human Rights |
| EU | European Union |
| FO | Field Office of the CoE |
| FYROM | "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" |
| FOMA | Finance and Office Manager |
| HOO | Head of Field Office |
| HQ | CoE Strasbourg Headquarters |
| IPA | EU Instrument for Pre-Accession |
| JP | EU/CoE Joint Programme |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |

# Contents

## 1. Executive Summary

The 2014 Work programme of Directorate of Internal Oversight (DIO) of the Council of Europe (CoE) included the evaluation of the CoE regional programmes. The purpose of this evaluation is to inform future decision making on the conditions under which it is advisable to initiate regional joint programmes, and on how best to design and manage them. Regional programmes are characterised by a great diversity of models and situations. The evaluation focuses on regional programmes funded jointly by the CoE and the European Union.

Regional programmes have a high potential in supporting the fulfilment of CoE standards and advancing CoE priorities. While such programmes tend to achieve economies of scales and appreciable outcomes as compared to parallel bilateral programmes, they require more time, coordination efforts, as well as more financial and human resources than bilateral programmes, because the diversity of actors involved considerably increases the complexity of programme.

The effectiveness of these programmes depends on the topic addressed, and the respective situation and needs of the countries covered. The CoE therefore needs to carefully tailor them to each particular situation, after thorough needs assessments. When this is the case, regional programmes can deliver optimal results: they can accommodate large and comprehensive regional components.

The constraints posed mostly by the donor regarding the choice of countries, the programme duration and the allocation of resources, limit the CoE's ability to design regional programmes with a high added value regional component. Several programmes target national-level objectives, through a mix of bilateral and regional components. To optimize their overall impact, these programmes need to limit the scope of their regional component.

The complexity of regional programmes as well as resource and time constraints, require a high level of programme management performance. With the deployment of the CoE Programme Management Methodology, the planning and budgeting of regional programmes will need to further adapt, in order to ensure that decisions are made upfront with a high level of consultation.

While the CoE has gradually adapted its programme management frameworks, financial management has caused delays in several regional programmes. In order to achieve a satisfactory level of efficiency, regional programmes require increased, yet precisely framed delegation of financial responsibilities. The CoE should create one hub office per geographic area. In these hub offices, programme managers of regional programmes, once trained in financial management, should have authority to approve expenses defined at activity level in the programme's budget, and under a certain amount to be determined on a case-to-case basis by ODG-PROG. Other expenses would continue to be approved, as is the case currently, by the Head of Office, and in the case of human resources-related expenses by ODG-PROG. These offices should receive one additional Finance and Office Manager, ideally financed by the donor, to support these procedures.

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 Evaluation approach

The 2014 Work programme of Directorate of Internal Oversight (DIO) of the Council of Europe (CoE) included the evaluation of the CoE regional programmes.[1]

Regional programmes are defined mostly by the presence of **a regional component: a set of regional activities covering several countries of a region**, within the programme design. For the purpose of this evaluation a region is defined as two countries or more within a geographic area, which enables to identify five main regions most commonly targeted by regional programmes.[2]

In accordance with its Terms of Reference, and for the sake of comparability among the reviewed regional programmes, this evaluation covers regional European Union (EU)/CoE Joint Programmes (JPs) started after January 2011 and targeting South Eastern Europe and Turkey, as well as in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and the Russian Federation.

Such programmes represent, depending on the years, approximately 15% to 30% of the overall number of CoE's Joint Programmes. In the future, they are expected to represent also 15% to 30% of the total number of actions under the Programmatic Cooperation Framework (PCF) and Horizontal Facility funded by the EU. They are funded by the EU Commission from Brussels. Other Joint Programmes, which represent a large majority of CoE/EU initiatives are funded by the EU Delegations in the relevant country and constitute bilateral programmes.

During the period examined by this evaluation, an analysis of the evaluation sample[3] shows that, while the average number of regional programmes per year remains stable around nine, the funding dedicated to them has increased significantly during the past two years as compared to 2011-2012.[4]

| Year | Allocated costs |
|------|-----------------|
| 2011 | 4 832 000.00 |
| 2012 | 4 879 000.00 |
| 2013 | 6 793 000.00 |
| 2014 | 6 650 000.00 |

**Figure 1: Costs allocated to regional JPs in the regions considered, calculated on a straight line basis (EUR)**

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[1] GR-PBA(2014)2

[2] This understanding corresponds to the regions listed in DG-PROG's report on Joint Programmes between the CoE and the EU in 2013 (ODGProg/Inf(2014)1 rev) as well as to the regions addressed by the EU external action.

[3] See Annex 1 – Terms of Reference, and its annex 1 - Table of evaluation sample

[4] Calculation method: the budget of each programme whose implementation period included any part of 2011, 2012. 2013 or 2014 was divided by the number of months covered by the programme, then monthly costs were multiplied by the number of months for each year. The results for each programme were added for each year. Results rounded up to the closest thousand Euros.

The evaluation pursues three objectives:

1. To understand what distinguishes regional programmes from others in terms of advantages and challenges;
2. To identify success and failure factors of regional programmes;
3. To use the model of regional programmes as one of the most challenging ones as an opportunity to identify lessons learned about the CoE's decentralization, programme management capacity and adaptation to the CoE and European Union cooperation framework.

To this end, this report seeks to answer the following questions defined in the Terms of Reference of the evaluation:

| Evaluation question 1 | Evaluation question 2 | Evaluation question 3 | Evaluation question 4 |
|---|---|---|---|
| • *To what extent does the regional approach offer advantages and disadvantages in terms of results, needs and fulfilment of objectives?* | • *To what extent do regional programmes present specific management challenges and opportunities?* | • *To what extent do regional programmes affect the CoE's programme management and implementation capacity?* | • When is it worth adopting a regional approach? |

## 2.2 Methodology

The evaluation team, composed of two DIO evaluators, has chosen a combined data collection approach. For each evaluation question the evaluation team combines several sources of data for triangulation (cross-checking of findings through at least three different sources):

1. Existing primary qualitative data (Description of action, interim and final reports of the programmes
2. Existing secondary qualitative data (EU result-oriented monitoring reports)
3. Primary qualitative data from different and complementary sources: semi-structured interviews with sources determined by stakeholder map (CoE internal/external; programme staff/beneficiaries; international/local stakeholders); focus group with programme managers.
4. Primary quantitative data: survey.

Throughout the evaluation, a Reference Group composed of representatives from the Administrative Entities concerned[5] has provided feedback to the evaluation team. The Reference

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[5] DG I, DG II, ODG-PROG, Private Office

Group members were consulted through plenary and individual meetings, correspondence, comments on the Terms of Reference, Inception Report, and Final Report of the evaluation. The Reference Group convened twice, respectively after the preparation of the Inception Report and Final Report.

### 2.2.1 Document collection

In order to collect documentation on regional programmes, the following documents have been requested from ODG-PROG and from programme managers in the operational DGs:

1. Any preparatory work such as needs assessments, feasibility studies or other documents (stakeholders meeting reports, preparatory missions reports, e-mails, etc.) prepared before the beginning of activities by CoE staff, EC staff and other partners and stakeholders that contributed to take the decision of conceiving and launching the intervention;
2. Programming documents (Logical Framework, "Description of the action" or other "design" documents) and other contractual documents;
3. Information related to any relevant previous interventions, evaluation reports, or recommendations of advisory groups;
4. Interim reports, Result-Oriented Monitoring (ROM) reports, monitoring and progress reports, relevant parts of CoE Progress Review Reports, financial reports, mission reports, providing information on inputs used, activities implemented, outputs produced, results achieved and any issue or problem encountered during the implementation;
5. Other documents, as relevant.

### 2.2.2 Case studies and field missions

The evaluation examined four programmes as case studies:

1. Eastern Partnership (EaP) Facility Programme;
2. Joint Programme on Strengthening the lawyers' capacity for domestic application of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and of the Revised European Social Charter (RESC) (Lawyers' Programme);
3. Regional Support for Inclusive Education programme;
4. Regional Cooperation in Criminal Justice: Strengthening capacities in the fight against cybercrime (Cybercrime@IPA).[6]

Since the EaP Facility component on fight against cybercrime and the Cybercrime@IPA programme address the fight against cybercrime through a similar regional approach, in two different geographic areas, the evaluation team decided to analyse them in one single case study.

For each programme, the evaluation team visited two countries:

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[6] Instrument for Pre-Accession of the European Union (IPA)

| Case study | Countries |
|---|---|
| **Eastern Partnership Facility** | Georgia, Moldova |
| **Strengthening the lawyers' capacity** | Georgia, Moldova |
| **Inclusive Education** | Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia |
| **Cybercrime** | Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia |

**Figure 2: Case studies and missions for the evaluation of the CoE regional programmes**

### 2.2.3 HQ interviews, survey and focus groups

The evaluation team organised group and individual meetings with the Office of the Directorate General of Programmes (ODG-PROG), and programme staff involved in case studies from the Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law (DG I) and the Directorate General of Democracy (DG II).

1. The evaluation team deployed a survey of all staff involved in regional programmes from the full sample of regional JPs:
2. ODG-PROG staff
3. DG I and DG II programme managers of regional programmes, and their supervisors
4. Programme officers and Programme assistants of regional programmes
5. Heads of Field Offices (HOOs) concerned by regional programmes, their Deputies and their Finance and Office Managers (FOMAs).

Finally, the evaluation team held two focus groups with headquarter-based staff with regional programme experience.

## 3. Findings

### 3.1 Designing regional programmes

### 3.1.1 Key variables facilitating a regional approach

The first striking feature of regional programmes is their great diversity. Each constitutes a unique case in one or the other way, based on:

1. The countries covered,
2. The topic addressed, the objective(s),
3. The size and nature of the regional component and its activities,
4. The management model of the programme.

These constitute key variables for regional programmes, which, when combined, can contribute to its success or difficulties.

*FINDING 1: The combination of countries and topics is key to optimal regional programmes*

A coherent choice of countries is preferable, e.g. they face similar challenges or have common opportunities, they have compatible visions for a shared future, they have certain geographical, cultural, historical or linguistic communalities, and/or they share a common legal heritage. Case studies and focus groups have pointed to a greater coherence of the South-Eastern Europe area as compared the Eastern Europe and the Caucasus area, chiefly because of South Eastern European countries' shared objective of EU integration, which supposes greater harmonisation of law and practice.[7]

Alternatively, the selected countries may at least be coherent for a particular topic: the usefulness of the regional component then depends on these countries' ability to build partnership, cooperation and exchange on a specific topic. There is no group of countries which is always unsuitable for regional activities on all topics. Focus group discussions and feedback from interviewees with different backgrounds have concluded that countries can only be matched meaningfully on specific topics. A group of countries may be optimal for a programme on prison reform, while a programme on anti-corruption would benefit better from a different group of countries.

A generally conducive topic is also preferable, for instance a trans-border issue. According to the survey, the most suitable topics are: threats to human dignity such as trafficking in human beings; cultural diversity and intercultural exchanges; promoting equality and combating racism; anti-corruption and money laundering; protection of minorities and vulnerable persons; organised crime and terrorism. A topic may be particularly relevant for regional cross-fertilisation among a certain group of countries. For instance, the topic could constitute a common challenge which requires mutual assistance. It could be a matter of consensus among the countries concerned, or correspond to the implementation a legal instrument of the CoE which requires cooperation.

*FINDING 2: Objective and activities need particular tailoring to the group of countries and topic*

When these conditions exist, a regional programme is most effective if it pursues a genuinely regional objective. Genuine regional objectives are few. From focus group and case study analysis, three types of regional objectives can be identified: practical cooperation among countries, harmonisation of legislation/policies/practices with precise standards among a group

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[7] However, for South Eastern-Europe, the decision whether to include Turkey is usually challenging, because it is very different from other South-Eastern European countries in terms of size (geographical aspect), relationship to the EU (vision), as well as historical and legal heritage.

of countries, and regional reconciliation. Regional objectives need to match the topic and the ambition of the countries covered.

In such situations, the regional component of the programme has more impact if its activities are varied and far-reaching in terms of cross-fertilisation among the countries. In this area, the CoE has great opportunities for enhancement. When asked what they would change in a given regional programme, partners very often considered that hands-on activities such as peer-to-peer assessments, exchange of civil servants (using the secondment model), or simulation workshops multiply the effects of the regional component. More commonly used modalities, such as conferences, roundtables and joint events were considered less effective. However, the type of regional activities which bring the best results will depend on the topic and the countries. A group of country may be ready for peer-to-peer assessment on a sensitive topic such as the reform of criminal prosecution, while another group would benefit more from a joint training. Some countries with close relations may be ready for exchanging civil servants, while others will prefer conferences.

## FINDING 3: Regional programmes require significant resources and time

The implementation of regional components requires time, because the inception period for programmes involving multiple country partners is longer than for bilateral programmes. They also require a suitable level of human resources, especially as concerns coordination and programme management. Finally, they require sufficient financial resources, because activities covering several countries commonly generate additional costs, as compared to bilateral ones.

**Choice of countries:**
- Common challenges
- Common vision
- Geographic proximity
- Common obligations
- Legal/cultural similarities...

**Choice of topic:**
- Trans-border issues
- Topics which elicit political /international consensus
- Challenging issues requiring assistance...

Choice of countries and topics match

**Regional objective:**
- Cooperation
- Harmonization
- Reconciliation

There is a clear regional objective

**Large regional component with varied activities:**
- Conferences
- Joint trainings
- Peer assessments
- Study visits
- Staff exchanges
- Co-drafting of strategic/legal documents...

Regional component is comprehensive

**Implications:**
Time
Human resources
Financial resources

Time and resources are commensurate

**Figure 3: Ideal conditions for regional programmes**

## 3.1.2 Benefits

*FINDING 4: Successful regional programmes have a high potential for fostering change*

Under suitable conditions, there is an overall agreement among interviewees from the CoE, EU and beneficiaries, confirmed by programme reports and survey results, to say that the regional components offer unique benefits:

1. **Emulation**: mutual inspiration and peer scrutiny boost commitment to implementing standards. Regional activities reveal good practices. They offer the opportunity to share experience and learn from one another's successes and mistakes.[8]

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[8] Out of the 47 CoE staff who answered the survey, 30 rated "identification of regional good practices" among the five most important advantages of the regional approach.

2. **Cooperation/mutual support**: the regional activities implemented by these programmes offer the opportunity to create networks of like-minded professionals working with the same guidelines and standards. These activities also foster the development of standardized material (e.g. handbooks, guidelines) enabling cooperation. In some areas where trans-border cooperation is a necessity for beneficiaries to reach their objectives and fulfil their mission, these advantages are essential.

3. **Champions of change**: regional networks support champions of change in their endeavours within their respective country. In very specialized technical areas where practitioners are few, regional events are rewarding and one of the rare avenues to exchange with peers.

4. **Acceptance**: the political acceptability of recommendations emanating from regional activities, and the likelihood of their implementation, are increased by regional consensus and peer pressure. Participants may accept more easily the advice received from peers who share similar problems.

5. **Sensitivity**: some sensitive topics, if addressed though bilateral programmes, could be perceived by country representatives as a negative label given to their countries. A regional programme may defuse this sensitivity and provide an entry door to tackle the issue.

6. **Reconciliation**: some interviewees, from various points of view considered that regional programmes can promote reconciliation through practical cooperation among countries with past or current conflicts;

7. **Piloting**: most regional programmes successfully pilot useful solutions to common problems, which, if followed-up with national-level replication, can improve the fulfilment of standards.

Conscious of this potential, interviewees and focus group members from the DGs value regional programmes positively, as also do a number of respondents from the concerned countries.[9]

### 3.1.3 External conditions determining CoE regional programmes design

*FINDING 5: The choice of the regional coverage is donor-led*

As pointed out by interviewees in ODG-PROG, the CoE chiefly considers its member states on an individual basis, within the framework of the standards committed to. However, the same interviewees wish to see some parallel progress on key reform issues in certain groups of countries. The EU, on its end, has defined groups of countries in its neighbourhood, and

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[9] However, beneficiaries and partners in the countries would spontaneously tie the regional approach to the coherence of the topic and the group of countries, which they qualify as key success factors – a position which is much less frequent among CoE staff.

manifested an interest in fostering comparable reform results within these groups by finding common solutions to problems that are perceived as common.

There has also been a wish of the EU Commission Directorate General for Cooperation (DEVCO), the then EU Directorate General for Enlargement, and in some cases CoE to finance some JPs with EU Commission central funding instruments. Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) or Eastern Neighbourhood Partnership Initiative ENPI) funds are available only for regional programmes, whereas bilateral programmes were normally funded by EU Delegations' funds. These funds are only intended for programmes having a regional coverage.[10]

These conditions de facto create donor pressure to adopt a regional approach for a number of programmes. Depending on the case, this interest may or may not be shared by the CoE. Among the four case studies, three were regional programmes because the donor conceived them as such (sometimes with the CoE's assent, other times for certain components or entire programmes in spite of the CoE's recommendations) while in one case the regional approach was fully an initiative of the CoE. At the same time, the survey respondents do not consider donor satisfaction as an important advantage of a regional programme: only 2 out of 47 survey respondents ranked donor satisfaction among the five main advantages of a regional approach.

Once opting for a regional approach (and the corresponding funding instrument) for a programme on a given topic, the CoE faces constraints in the key aspects of programme design. The choice of countries to be included is highly dependent on donor priorities. In practice, the CoE regional programmes do not necessarily achieve an optimal match of topic and countries.

## FINDING 6: Timelines and resources are donor-constrained

The EU is prevented by its internal rules from financing programmes lasting more than three years. This is not always compatible with the time required for regional components to be established and deliver results. There also seems to be a general donor expectation that regional programmes will achieve significant economies of scale in terms of finance and human resources. While it is true that regional programmes achieve economies of scales (one regional programme is usually less expensive than six bilateral ones), these are limited.[11] In fact, the design and budgeting of regional programmes typically overestimate possible economies of

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[10] The EU Commission DEVCO and Enlargement Directorate Generals are now partly merged into the Directorate General European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), while a reduced DEVCO subsists. However, this new structure does not affect the criteria for allocating central EU Commission's funds: individual bilateral programmes remain funded through the EU Delegations, while multi-country packages such as the new Programmatic Cooperation frameworks between the EU and the CoE will continue to be funded centrally, by DG NEAR.

[11] Together with donor satisfaction, costs savings through economies of scales is the least often quoted as one of the top five advantage of regional programmes.

scales. Interviewees across the board (CoE staff, experts, beneficiaries, civil society partners and other country partners), constantly qualified regional programmes as *"under-funded", "in dire lack of human resources", "over-ambitious"* or *"over-burdened"*. In other words, human and financial resources may not match the objectives of these programmes for the number of countries covered.

### 3.1.4 Consequences for regional programmes under suboptimal conditions

*FINDING 7: When key variables are not optimal, regional programmes tend to focus on national objectives, topped with a regional component*
Faced with these constraints, but tied by the regional label of these programmes, the CoE staffs in the DGs and ODG-PROG adapt the programme designs: they accommodate a regional component within programmes that chiefly address the national level. Therefore, in practice, most regional programmes actually target national objectives through bilateral activities, but they have a regional coverage in the sense of the EU definition (multi-country programmes in a geographic area), and are topped with a regional component.

The programme teams and partners then use gradations of two main approaches, to make the most of this mix of regional and national level activities: [12]

1. In some cases, they minimize the relative importance of the regional component. The number of regional activities is small, they consist mostly of conferences and other regional meetings, and there is a clear attempt to contain the budget and human resources dedicated to it;
2. In other cases, the programme team and partners embrace the regional approach despite challenging conditions, by multiplying the avenues for regional exchange, resulting in a proportionally larger regional component.

*FINDING 8: Most beneficiaries find shortfalls in regional components addressing national objectives*
Beneficiaries, experts, and some CoE staff argue that topping the core bilateral actions with a secondary regional component tends to create discrepancies between the programme objectives and the distribution of budgetary and human resources. As reported by all programme staff, regional activities tend to be more expensive (due to travel and interpretation costs) and more

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[12] It is noteworthy that, for the same programme, the perception of the respective proportion of regional and national activities varies a lot depending on the stakeholders: while beneficiaries playing a coordinating role in their country, and CoE programme staff, tend to consider regional activities to have a significant share in the programme, technical-level beneficiaries and ODG-Prog give them a less prominent place.

labour intensive (due to exponential negotiation and coordination efforts) than bilateral ones. Many beneficiaries considered that, in a context of finite resources, the regional component deflects resources from bilateral activities, whereas bilateral activities achieve higher impact.[13]

Interviewed beneficiaries usually report that they enjoy the process of regional activities and the exchanges they have with other participants; however they point out that these activities have limited concrete impact and added value in their respective countries. Where the programmes address topics pertaining to the core sovereignty of countries, or issues on which the respective countries have starkly different approaches, some respondents underline their difficulty to meaningfully work with their counterparts from the region.[14]

The most challenging cases concern capacity-building programmes covering a diverse range of countries, especially when their topics flare national sensitivity: capacity-building activities such as continuous advice, tailored training and coaching require deep and tailored engagement at national-level, which these progammes try to achieve through several parallel bilateral actions. The regional component added to these bilateral activities is sometimes qualified by beneficiaries as "artificial" or "not adapted", because regional activities are not the most intuitive means to achieve national-level capacity building (not just training) in a heterogeneous group of countries. Beneficiaries of such programmes often consider that a bilateral programme would have made more of a difference to their country's reforms.

### 3.1.5 Optimizing regional components

In the future, with the new PCF (EU Eastern Partnership area) signed with the EU, and the expected EU-CoE Horizontal Facility (South-Eastern Europe and Turkey) programmes funded centrally by the EU will become larger and more frequent. Within these framework documents, regional programmes are expected to represent, depending on the region, up to a third of the envisaged actions.[15] To date, the existing documentation does not prescribe the exact content of these regional actions, which offers more flexibility for the CoE to determine the optimal proportion and nature of regional activities under each action.[16] There is a need and an opportunity to better define regional components, with the view to making the most of them.

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[13] As several beneficiary interviewees put it: "*While they are organising conferences, the experts and CoE staff are not advising us – and we would benefit more from advice than from a regional conference, no matter how interesting this conference might be*."

[14] This argument is for instance developed in Moldova and Georgia regarding justice reform or elections: a large proportion of these respondents pointed out that regional activities elicited limited input from other countries where these reforms have been implemented later and/or at a slower pace.

[15] For instance, the Action Plan for 2015 under the 2015-2017 PCF for the countries of the EU Eastern Partnership envisages 13 regional actions out of a total of 38 actions. The allocated budget is not possible to estimate based on this document, as budgetary allocations are presented thematically, rather than per action.

[16] In the PCF documents, "actions" correspond to what in the CoE is commonly referred to as programmes.

*FINDING 9: In optimal conditions, it is worth investing the most in carefully tailored regional component*

Where key variables facilitating the regional approach are present (which is expected to be more often the case in South-Eastern Europe, or when a regional action constitutes a follow-up to a pre-existing regional programme) optimising the regional component will mean diversifying regional activities, in order to multiply avenues for cooperation and cross-fertilisation among the countries covered. In this framework, regional activities would constitute the bulk of a regional action. This implies that the bulk of human and financial resources of the corresponding regional programmes are dedicated to regional activities.

These programmes could use good practices piloted by some of the case studies, such as the anti-cybercrime programmes (programmes chiefly geared towards cooperation, building upon success in individual countries which have championed changes through previous bilateral programmes), the Inclusive Education programme (creation of lasting networks of practitioners and policy makers), or the Eastern Partnership Facility (use of peer-to-peer assessment techniques). Where key variables are conducive, the regional approach is particularly successful when it forms part of an overarching strategy: bilateral programmes and regional programme are then complementary.

In order to minimize the coordination and information sharing burden, these programmes require real-time information sharing platforms accessible to all the partners, expanding on the examples of the Inclusive Education and Eastern Partnership Facility websites. Whereas the websites created so far were mostly geared towards the dissemination of information, web platforms for future regional actions could serve more for communication among the partners, and between the partners and the CoE, as well as a tool for coordination and organisation of activities.

*FINDING 10: In less-than-optimal conditions, regional components should be contained*

Where key variables are not conducive to a regional approach, and where regional programmes pursue mostly national-level objectives, it is reasonable to limit the budget and human resources dedicated to regional activities, while focusing these activities on the topics that offer most exchange opportunities. Limiting the regional component to a minimum ensures adequacy between the key objectives of the programme, and the allocation of resources.

The bulk of the programme budget would therefore logically be allocated to national activities. In this context, programmes affording lower ranking programme staff for implementation of activities in the field seem to benefit from a distinct advantage, due to the proximity with direct partners and beneficiaries at national level.

Importantly, interlocutors point to the so far under-used possibility to create extended cooperation opportunities within a group of countries covered by a regional programme: by creating a flexible platform for enhanced regional activities for countries having similar objectives on a particular topic, regional programmes could overcome the limitations linked to the disparity of countries.[17] In this case, the regional component would be two-fold: limited regional activities covering all the countries of the programme, and more extensive regional activities for a sub-group of countries volunteering for extended cooperation. The PCF and horizontal facility could offer an opportunity for such modular country coverage under regional actions.

## FINDING 11: All regional programmes require a thorough preparation phase for tailored programme design

In order to assess the key variables, and to best define the regional components of these programmes, the CoE staff involved in their design first require the time and resources to conduct thorough needs assessments.[18] More than any others, regional programmes require an intensive preparation phase involving needs assessment and tailoring.

This process demands extensive consultation, so that the multiple stakeholders typically engaged in regional programmes have increased ownership of the programme objectives and knowledge of the programme design. This is necessary to alleviate the complicated coordination processes necessarily entailed by multi-country programmes. Typical stakeholders include:

1. The donor;
2. ODG-PROG;
3. The relevant DG(s);
4. The monitoring bodies relevant to the issue at hand, where applicable,
5. The relevant FOs;
6. The main partners in the countries.

The design of the regional programmes needs to be particularly tailored. Overall, regional programmes which use relatively simple intervention designs and avoid the use of over-complicated architecture (e.g. multi-pillar programmes with several components, programmes

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[17] This viewpoint is also presented, in a different geographic area, in the EU-commissioned evaluation of the joint programme "Strengthening democracy in the Southern Neighbourhood"
[18] Survey respondents ranked extensive needs assessments country by country as the first precondition for successful regional programmes.

based on multiple pilots requiring future generalisation, or multi-level programmes addressing local, national and regional levels) tend to be more successful.[19]

More complex designs take time to launch, so they lengthen the programmes, and often require a follow-up phase: in such cases the CoE should seek early agreement with the donor. The new PCF and horizontal facility with the EU, which foresee two programming periods of three years each, could be an opportunity to secure the continuity necessary for more complex regional programmes.

## 3.2  Management of regional programmes

Beside programme design issues, optimizing the regional component of these programmes implies an increase of the implementation efficiency. The management of regional programmes therefore needs to aim for high performance. The implementation of the new Programme Management Methodology (PMM) is expected to facilitate these exercises, with corresponding procedures and templates. However, the degree of adaptation of the new PMM to the specificity of regional programmes will need to be assessed against experience.

### 3.2.1 Programme management capacity

*FINDING 12: Regional programmes are most complex to manage*
Due to their level of complexity, regional programmes constitute a "stress test" for the implementation capacity of any organisation. They hinge on intense efforts, and tend to take more time than others. The survey results are particularly explicit: most often quoted among the top five challenges of regional programmes are high coordination efforts (23 answers out of 47), and difficulty to measure impact (23 answers out of 47). 19 respondents also placed the difficulty to accommodate different constraints from different countries among the top five challenges. There are several reasons to this:

1.  They usually entail a large range of stakeholders from several countries, with different and sometimes contradictory constraints and conditions in terms of legislation, policy, culture, resources, agenda or travel. Coordination efforts are intense, and particularly challenging where the CoE does not possess FO.
2.  Some regional programmes combining regional approach and national objectives resort to very complex designs and structures, which complicate planning.

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[19] Despite considerable resources constraints, the Lawyers' training programme has performed relatively well, thanks to a simple programme design: the stakeholders' list was relatively limited, the level of action was focused, and activities were similar in every country.

3. Most regional programmes require the engagement of human resources both in HQ and in the countries: remote and modular teams are difficult to manage.
4. Regional programmes are time consuming and characterized by particularly long inception phases, because it takes time to get the many partners on board. In addition, the typical activities of regional programmes (such as peer assessments, or design of recommendations through regional platforms) presuppose the establishment of a cooperation networks which take time to establish.[20]

In order to comply with the timeline and budget allocated by the donor, the staff involved in regional programmes therefore needs to reach particularly high levels of performance. So far, regional programmes have typically featured heavy workloads for all involved.

*FINDING 3: Programme teams, cost centre managers (CCMs) and FOs face a heavy workload*
According to focus groups and to interviewees from both the CoE and country partners, the multiplicity and complexity of activities under regional programmes would require higher management resources than for bilateral programmes. However, this is not favoured by the donor, who usually prefers to dedicate human and financial resources to beneficiary-oriented tasks in the field.

The External Presence and Programme Support Department in ODG-PROG, as well as HOOs who were delegated CCM authority,[21] and these HOOs' Finance and Office Managers (FOMAs) in FOs, have all acknowledged that the financial approval for regional programmes' activities places them under a particularly heavy workload. This workload is all the more difficult to handle as they are often unfamiliar with the content of the programmes, and remote from most of the programme activities (as opposed to bilateral programmes, whose CCMs are posted in the country where all programme activities take place.)

Because they need to accomplish a lot within a short timeframe, many regional programmes rest upon an extra effort for programmatic staff. FOs regularly provide both administrative and content support when regional programme events take place in their country. Several HOOs complained that the requested support at times exceeds FOs' limited capacities, that they only

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[20] For such reasons, several regional programmes have required no-cost extensions or extensions without additional activities.
[21] According to the Memorandum "Réorganisation de la gestion financière" of 18 January 2001 (DGAL 12 – EB(2000)30), updated by the document of the Executive Board "Modalités de la gestion financière décentralisée en 2003" of 14 November 2002 (EB(2000)31), and the Memorandum of the Directorate of Programme, Finance and Linguistic Services of 21 November 2001 (DPFL 2012/412), the Secretary General delegates her/his financial responsibility to one Commitment Officer in each major administrative entity, following which each Commitment Officer may delegate this authority to one or more Cost Centre Manager(s). Delegation is done by a Letter of Delegation, which, in the case of the CCMs, must detail the conditions of the delegation (delegation limitation to certain type of expenses, certain budget lines, certain ceiling in amount, etc). The CCM is assisted by an Assistant CCM, and may appoint a substitute in case of absence.

received information on regional programmes when their support was needed, or that they received requests for support at the last moment. They felt that the implementation of regional programme activities in their respective countries often caused disruptions to the FO's regular operations and management.

### 3.2.2 Programme management architecture

*FINDING 14: Division of responsibilities for the management of regional programmes has evolved along with the decentralisation process*

The Council of Europe has administered regional programmes from the onset of its technical co-operation in 2001, but their management structure has evolved over time. At first, regional programmes' implementation was based in Strasbourg and all activities were supervised by the relevant operational directorates both in terms of content and financial oversight. Since the beginning of the de-centralization reform in 2010, some regional programmes have been de-centralized to the Council of Europe's field offices. At initial stages, this meant that financial oversight of the programmes was ensured by the Directorate of Political Affairs, replaced by the ODG-PROG upon its creation in 2011. Meanwhile, content supervision was, as previously, ensured by the relevant operational directorate.

As de-centralization progresses and the administrative capacity of field offices was enhanced, the financial oversight of new regional programmes was delegated by ODG PROG to one or several heads of field office, while the content supervision remained in Strasbourg with operational directorates. In some cases, content management has also been partially decentralized through the placement of programme managers in the field offices under general supervision of the relevant operational directorates Strasbourg headquarters. In addition, ODG-PROG provides oversight of programme reporting and is in charge of interactions with donors. The following diagram demonstrates the change in management structure:

**Figure 4: Evolution of the division of responsibilities for regional programmes in relation to the decentralization reform, from 2001 to 2014**

*FINDING 15: Three programme management architectures have been tested so far*

In practice, the CoE has tried three main models of regional programme management: centralization in Headquarters, multiple decentralisation to several FOs (used only once), and hub office (used so far for two regional programmes). The table below presents a comparison of these models.

| Model | Centralisation in Headquarters | Decentralisation to multiple FOs | Management in a hub FO |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Case study/ies** | Cybercrime programmes (EaP and IPA) Eastern Partnership Facility | Lawyers' Programme | Inclusive Education |
| **Financial management location (location of the CCM/Assistant CCM** | In ODG-PROG (Eastern Partnership Facility) or DG (Cybercrime@IPA) | HOOs in 7 FOs | HOO in 1 hub FO |
| **Advantages** | + Proximity with content management and content supervision increases efficiency of financial signatures. <br> + No extra workload for FOs. | + Relieves ODG-PROG and DGs of financial management burden. | + Relieves ODG-PROG and DGs of financial management burden. |
| **Shortfalls** | - Heavy workload for the CCM, particularly when CCM is in ODG-PROG. CCM may check respect for rules, but might not be able to check legitimacy /reasonableness of the | - CCMs lack real time information on budget status, leading to overspending. <br> - CCM in an FO where a regional event is organised likely to spend funds earmarked for national | - Heavy workload for the CCM, particularly when CCM is in ODG-PROG. CCM may check respect for rules, but might not be able to check legitimacy/reasonableness of the spending without creating |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | spending without creating serious delays. | activities elsewhere.<br>- Programme manager and supervisor do not have access to budget status information. Collecting such information from several CCMs is lengthy | serious delays.<br>- FOMA and CCM unfamiliar with rules applicable in countries outside of their FO, as well as to activities conducted outside of their FO. |
| Rating[22] | 2+/1- | 1+/3- | 1+/2- |
| Content supervision location | DG in Headquarters | DG in Headquarters | DG in Headquarters |
| Advantages | + Closeness to standard setting and monitoring on thematic area | + Closeness to standard setting and monitoring on thematic area | + Closeness to standard setting and monitoring on thematic area |
| Shortfalls | - Remoteness from countries' situation and partners | - Remoteness from countries' situation and partners | - Remoteness from countries' situation and partners |
| Rating | 1+/1- | 1+/1- | 1+/1- |
| Content management location | Core or programme staff in DG in Headquarters | Programme staff in DG in Headquarters | Programme staff in hub FO |
| Advantages | + Closeness to standard setting and monitoring on thematic area | + Closeness to standard setting and monitoring on thematic area | + Closeness to field needs, situation and direct counterparts in one country |
| Shortfalls | - Remoteness from direct counterparts and field needs, situation<br>- Remoteness from activity implementation | - Remoteness from direct counterparts and field needs, situation<br>- Remoteness from activity implementation | - Remoteness from standard setting and monitoring on thematic area<br>- Political sensitivity of selection of the hub office, particularly in post-conflict or conflict-affected areas |
| Rating | 1+/2- | 1+/2- | 2+/2- |
| Activity implementation location | Programme staff DG in Headquarters | Programme staff in several FOs | Programme staff in several FOs |
| Advantages | + Proximity with programme supervision and management | + Closeness to direct counterparts and field needs and situation<br>+ Ability to closely monitor activity implementation | + Closeness to direct counterparts and field needs and situation<br>+ Ability to closely monitor activity implementation |
| Shortfalls | - Remoteness from direct counterparts and field needs and situation | - Remoteness from programme management and supervision | - Remoteness from programme management and supervision |
| Rating | 1+/1- | 2+/1- | 2+/1- |
| Overall rating | 5+<br>5- | 5+<br>7- | 5+<br>6 - |

**Figure 5: comparative table of regional programme management architectures**

[22] Total number of advantages (+) and shortfalls (-)

*FINDING 16: Under current conditions, centralisation of content and finance in Headquarters has been slightly more efficient*

The experience of these case studies, confirmed by focus group results, reveals two lessons:

1. The financial management needs to be centralized somewhere (whether in headquarter or a hub Field Office), rather than being dispatched in several locations as was the case once (Lawyers' Programme);
2. The content management and financial management of the regional programmes are more efficient when they are handled in the same location.

The question is therefore to determine what is the best location (headquarters or FO), and whether there is adequate capacity there to take on the task.

Most interviewees concur to say that the placement of content management in headquarters or a hub Field Office has little impact on the implementation of the programme activities. Either way, the programme manager is placed in one location centralising content management: either in headquarters (distant from the countries covered) or in a hub (distant from all but one country covered). Both options have advantages and shortfalls, which overall appear to cancel each other.

In terms of financial and administrative management, regional programmes, managed from headquarters and from a hub FO alike, suffer from a lack of human resource capacity, and from the CCM's lack of familiarity with the content of the programme. Burdened with multiple requests for financial signature which exceed their capacity if they check all documentation and reasonableness, CCMs face a dilemma:

1. Either they process financial clearance quickly, limiting their checks to merely formal criteria. In this case, their actual level of control over the reasonableness of expenses as well as the respect of all applicable rules is reduced, hence reducing the benefits of the separation of content and finance management,
2. Or running thorough checks, which can considerably delay the implementation of activities, in a context of already severe time constraint.

The Inclusive Education Programme, which piloted the hub office structure, additionally suffered from typical pioneering problems, such as clarification of new procedures and processes. Even when neglecting these effects of first-time piloting, there seems to be a marginal advantage with centralized programmes in headquarters under the current conditions, because the management capacity of FOs to date is insufficient to handle several regional programmes in one hub. In addition, CCMs in headquarters tend to make their checks with content supervision directly, whereas in a hub the verification of requested financial clearance tends to take extra steps involving FOMAs, programme manager, central finance and administration, or other FOs.

Therefore, in the short run, as long as the capacity of FOs envisaged for hubs is not significantly strengthened, regional programmes would need to be examined on a case-by-case basis, and the largest ones, particularly involving a large regional component, could remain centralised.

*FINDING 17: In the long run, the hub office structure is more likely, but will imply additional investments in designated FOs*

In order to optimize management of the regional programmes, there is a need to increase the human resources dedicated to financial management either in foreseen hub FOs, or in headquarters. Since there is very little chance that the donor would finance an increase of administrative capacity in headquarters, and because systematic centralisation of regional programmes is at odds with the CoE decentralisation policy, it is likely that the CoE will elect the hub office formula in the long run.

This option does not come without costs. The generalisation of the hub structure hinges on investment into the capacity of the FOs to manage the finances and administration of regional programmes, through the introduction of at least one additional trained FOMA dedicated to regional programmes in at least one designated hub per region. These costs need to be negotiated with the donor. Such development of hub offices' capacities is likely to take time. Therefore the generalisation of the hub office structure can only be envisaged in a long-term perspective.

## 3.2.3 Efficiency

As pointed out above, the complexity of regional programmes coupled with the constraints posed by the donor, particularly the time constraint, require high efficiency during programme implementation. This evaluation has found room for increasing the efficiency of regional programmes implementation in two key areas: financial management, and result management (planning, monitoring and reporting).

*FINDING 18: Financial management of regional programmes requires strong budget planning*

Case study analysis cross-checked against interviews with other HQ staff and audit results, shows that financial clearance procedures, which dissociate content and finance management, do not afford regional programmes a sufficient level of efficiency to tackle existing constraints.

Unlike bilateral programmes which are implemented and administered by the team of one FO and within the context, laws and procedures of one country,[23] regional programmes require adjustment to the conditions of several countries during activity implementation. Regardless whether the CCM is located in headquarters or in a hub office, s/he cannot be familiar with the practice of all countries covered by the programme. Neither can the CCM have a complete, real-

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[23] This concerns the level of prices, event management practices, common practices of communication with domestic officials, as well as regulations regarding customs, value-added tax or publications.

time overview of the programme implementation status, such as which activities have or have not been implemented, or what activities are ongoing simultaneously in several countries – as opposed to bilateral programmes, where the HOO CCM can reasonably be expected to have an overview of CoE activities going on in the country.

Yet, the CCM of a regional programme is expected to approve the disbursement of all expenses, which represents a sizeable workload. Given the time pressure weighing on regional programmes, their CCMs have therefore been assigned a considerable task, without necessarily having extensive information at hand to swiftly make informed decisions. In practice, several CCMs report that they either run merely formal checks (which most consider being of limited value in terms of risk management, efficiency and effectiveness of programmes), or they spend a disproportionate amount of their time running substantive checks for regional programmes (which take a long time as well as multiple verifications with the programme supervisors in the DGs). This situation has caused significant delays, misunderstandings, and overspending in at least two case study programmes.

So far, this problem has been compounded by the insufficient level of detail of planning and budgeting. Planning and budgets were not sufficiently detailed at activity level, leaving much of budget allocation and scheduling to be decided during the implementation phase: under these conditions, the CCMs of regional programmes have not been able to use project planning documents for the verification of requested disbursements.[24] To palliate this shortcoming, some programme supervisors have established quarterly activity plans earmarking all expenses. The PMM, which envisages activity-based budgets and precise programme schedules, presents similarities with this practice. The PMM should considerably ease the CMM's oversight of programme spending. However, for the purpose of regional programmes, there might be a need to adjust some of the PMM procedures and templates based on experience. Once the PMM is deployed and further refined to match the requirements of regional programmes, delegation of CCM authority to the programme manager, as recommended by Audit, would further increase the efficiency of financial management.

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[24] Improved planning, if communicated and used beyond the programme staff to procurement services for instance, could also ease some very practical obstacles to smooth implementation of regional programmes. CoE staff reports that the existing framework agreements with companies in the countries where regional programmes are implemented are not suitable for the provision of services covering several countries. For instance, window contracts with translation and interpretation companies only include the language of the country concerned, whereas local contracting of such services for a regional programme requires translation and interpretation in several languages. As window contracts cannot be amended without a new tender procedure, this means decentralized regional programmes had to operate with Strasbourg-based interpretation companies, the only ones having multi-language window contracts with the CoE, but with much higher fees, travel expenses and delays than would have been the case with local companies. As a result, some programmes have incurred costs and delays which could have been avoided had contracting policies or existing contracts been better suited to regional programmes. Some framework contracts are currently being adapted, however this adaptation followed the decentralisation of regional programmes. With stronger planning, these difficulties could have been anticipated and window contracts prepared with regional programmes in mind in the first place.

*FINDING 19: Within this framework, financial management of regional programmes requires delegation of financial approval*

The 2013 Audit on decentralisation[25] recommended that "*For the new projects to be managed by the Field Offices, MAEs create adequate project management structures in the field, which would enable the delegation of financial authority and responsibility for project implementation to the field*". Recommendation 7 of the same Audit report reads: "*For new projects to be run through the field, we recommend ODGPROG in cooperation with MAEs create appropriate project management structures in the field, which would enable the delegation of financial authority and responsibility to the field. This will consist of: (…) a. Placing project managers in the field; b. transferring to project managers the decision-making power for work plans and expenditure within a certain limit for their projects without the need for visa from HQ-based supervisors; c. delegating to CCMs in the field the authority to take project decisions and approve expenditure within a certain limit (e.g. €15,000).*" Although accepted, this recommendation was not fully implemented, at least when it comes to regional programmes.

Applied to regional programmes, this would amount to limited delegation of financial authority by the Commitment Officer of ODG-PROG to the programme managers. Programme managers would become secondary CCMs for their programmes, within certain limits. Above the ceiling determined by the Commitment Officer, the HOO would retain financial authority as primary CCM.[26] Human resources-related expenses would continue to be approved by the CCM in ODG-PROG.

The implementation of the PMM, which foresees precise activity-based budget for programmes, would further frame the programme managers' financial authority. In this setup, the HOO as primary CCM would have to sign the programme's activity-based budget, so as to ensure s/he has all necessary information to monitor the programme manager. Any expenditure departing from the project activity-based budget and schedule, would also require approval from the HOO as a primary CCM. ODG-PROG could retain financial authority for expenses related to human resources, as is currently the case.

The letters of delegation, intended for defining the limits within which financial authority is delegated to a CCM by the Commitment officer, would specify these conditions. This delegation could be withdrawn at any point in time, should monitoring by the HOO and ODG-PROG prove that financial management by an individual programme manager is not satisfactory.

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[25] Ibid
[26] In some cases, where the relevant DG and ODG-PROG consider it appropriate, the primary CCM would be located in ODG-PROG, or in the relevant DG, *mutatis mutandi*.

This setup would of course require sufficient training on CoE financial management rules for programme managers, which could be conveniently added to the already foreseen training on PMM.

This setup would liberate some capacities of the HOO, DG project supervisor, and ODG-PROG, who could instead invest more time in the oversight of the regional programmes' spending rates, results and reporting. In practice, this measure would displace financial control, from day-to-day activity implementation, towards programme planning and monitoring. It is expected that the level of control would in fact be higher than before.

Importantly, this measure would increase programme performance. The time necessary for financial clearance would diminish. Programme managers, having increased access to financial information, would also have a clear, real time view of both the expenditure plans (through quarterly implementation plans) and of the budget status, hence preventing overspending and making more fully informed decisions.

*FINDING 20: Monitoring and reporting procedures for regional programmes require further clarification*

According to survey results and interviews, regional programmes are most difficult to monitor, and their results are most challenging to measure. Regional programmes' reports often report at activity level, which could also be a testimony to this difficulty. The staff involved in regional programmes has also underlined the difficulty to share information on programme results, either by lack of information sharing avenues befitting the multiplicity of stakeholders, or because they lacked consistent monitoring, reporting and information sharing guidelines.

The programmes' websites have partially supported reporting and eased the information exchange. By giving access to stakeholders in the countries, they complemented the governance and reporting schemes of some programmes. However, they do not yet amount to real time information platforms, so they do not yet fully optimize the information flow. The new PMM reporting templates and guidelines are also expected to facilitate results-based reporting, but they will need to be tested against experience in the years to come.

## 4. Conclusions and recommendations

### 4.1 Conclusions

The appellation of regional programmes covers a very diverse reality in terms of country coverage, topics, regional versus national objectives, types of activities and management framework.

While they have a high potential, regional programmes are particularly complex and demanding to manage. To fulfil their potential, regional programmes hinge on key variables, chiefly the coherence of the choice of countries for the topic addressed: to make the most benefit out of regional programmes, the CoE needs to tailor regional components based on thorough assessment. Besides, due to the multiplicity of actors, regional programmes typically require more time and resources than they are afforded. The donor usually determines country coverage regardless of the topic, and imposes stringent constraints related to field-based human resources, economies of scale and short programme duration. In many cases, this places regional programmes under sub-optimal conditions. These regional programmes mainly pursue national objectives, but are bound by a regional label. While this formula is possible, it is costly, and reduces the programmes' ability to attain their objectives, leaving the expectations of some beneficiaries unfulfilled.

Because of their complexity, and because of these constraints, regional programmes demand higher efficiency than bilateral ones. A lot has already been done in terms of clarifying procedures. However, if the CoE goes along with the donor's conditions it also needs to negotiate with the donor the financial implications of these choices. To optimize regional programmes, the CoE requires investment in management capacity at field level. Regional programmes also require special treatment as regards certain key business processes such as financial management, planning and monitoring of results.

## 4.2 Recommendations

DIO recommends that:

1. The DG I and DG II programme supervisors develop tailor-made and result-oriented project descriptions based on thorough needs assessment, demonstrating the pertinence of the topic in relation to the countries covered, within the PMM template 1.7.

2. The DG I and DG II programme supervisors ensure that, if a regional programme/regional action chiefly pursues national-level objectives, its regional component is kept to a minimum in terms of budget and workload for the programme staff.

3. ODGP progressively decentralise regional programmes provided the development of financial and administrative management capacities in designated hub offices allows.

4. Programme managers for regional programmes be hired in the A category and trained on CoE financial procedures.

5. As decentralisation proceeds, ODGP Commitment Officer delegate financial management authority to the HOOs in the hubs in charge of regional programmes, for expenses within a certain range, to be determined in the delegation letter.

6. ODGP Commitment Officer delegate where possible limited financial management authority to programme managers of regional programmes placed in the hubs for expenses up to a certain amount and budget variations within a certain range to be determined in the corresponding delegation letter.

7. ODGP ensures that the final PMM Manual includes a project planning and monitoring tool which outlines task-level budgets for each activity, and a time schedule.

8. ODGP coordinate a needs assessment with a view to a future updating of expiring framework contracts on conference services, interpretation and translation for packages covering several countries and languages.

# Annex 1 – Proposed management framework for regional programmes

Future recommendation for decentralisation



Legend:
- Core staff with programme tasks
- Core staff
- Programme staff
- Design
- Planning
- Content
- Finance clearance

Donor

DG
Programmatic entity
Core Program Coordinator

DG Prog
CCM for HR

Hub FO
HoO | FOMA
D/HoO for programmes CMM
Programme manager  D/CCM
Programme officer

FO 1
HFO
FOMA
Programme officer

FO 2
HFO
FOMA
Programme officer

Council of Europe
Directorate of Internal Oversight

# Evaluation of Council of Europe Regional Programmes

TERMS OF REFERENCE

## 1. Introduction

The 2014 Work programme of Directorate of Internal Oversight (DIO) of the Council of Europe (CoE) foresees the evaluation of the CoE regional programmes.[27] The Work Programme highlights that such programmes "are complex in their design and management. The evaluation will look into, particularly, efficiency issues (design, planning, working methods and management) as well as results achieved. It will have both audit and evaluation aspects. The selection criterion concerns c: the potential of the evaluation in identifying and addressing programme specific risks."

Bearing in mind the complexity of the issue, the DIO has taken on two separate exercises to address this ambition: an audit, and an evaluation of regional programmes. While the audit and evaluation teams will ensure coherence and synergies, these endeavours will be distinct from each other in terms of methodology.

The regional programme evaluation is particularly relevant to the on-going strengthening of the CoE's cooperation and programme management capacity, in particular through updated tools and approaches such as the program cycle methodology, national action plans and the upcoming new cooperation framework with the European Union (EU). Regional programmes cumulate the challenges inherent to any programme with particular constraints relevant to the regional approach, both in terms of substance and programme management: learning ways to ensure optimal efficiency and effectiveness of these particularly challenging programmes is expected to be useful not only to regional programmes, but to enhancing general programme management capacity.

The evaluation will also be anchored in the on-going process of decentralization and strengthening of the CoE field offices, as regional programmes show a pattern of gradual

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[27] GR-PBA(2014)2

decentralization. Understanding the dynamics of decentralization for such complex programmes is expected to have wider benefits.

These terms of reference set out the concept and organisation of the evaluation of regional programmes. They provide a background on the CoE regional programmes, outline the evaluation's purpose, objectives and scope, and define a draft methodology and work plan for this evaluation.

# 2. Background information

## 2.1 Definition of Regional programmes

**Region**

A region could be defined in three different ways:

- Two or more countries with a common border
- **Two countries or more within a broad geographic area**
- Two countries or more.

For the purpose of this evaluation, the DIO has chosen to apply the second definition, which enables to identify five main regions most commonly targeted as such by regional programmes:

- South Eastern Europe and Turkey;
- Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and the Russian Federation;
- European Union (EU) Member States;
- Southern neighbourhood;
- Central Asia.

This understanding corresponds to the regions listed in ODG Prog's report on Joint Programmes between the CoE and the EU in 2013 (ODGProg/Inf(2014)1 rev) as well as to the regions addressed by the EU external action.

**Regional approach to cooperation**

Like other programmes, regional programme address the beneficiary countries' needs for cooperation. However regional programmes cover a region, as opposed to bilateral programmes covering a single country and multilateral programmes covering a multiplicity of countries without a regional character.

They differ from multilateral or bilateral programmes in their design, in that they approach an issue or an action through a regional perspective. In general, this regional approach is based on one or more of the following rationales:

- The issue addressed by the programme is regional and/or trans-border in nature, such as cyber-criminality, the presence of national minorities, or ecological diversity;

- The issue addressed by the programme is common to a group of countries, which also share certain institutional, legal or other patterns which are relevant to domestic action on the issue addressed – for instance social security provision or the need for inclusive education in South-Eastern Europe. In this case, some countries may are successfully addressing the issue and serve as emulators for the others;
- The issue addressed is sensitive and hard to advocate, the programme needs to avoid stigmatizing a single country, and engaging a group of countries in a discussion on how to tackle it defuses this sensitivity and creates emulation – for example ill-treatment in prisons and detention facilities, or the initiation of trials for human rights abuse.

Following this approach, a regional programme will typically consist of activities conducted at country level in each of the countries covered, and activities which bring these countries together at the regional level, such as networking of practitioners, regional conferences, or regional working groups. A few programmes feature regional-level activities only.

Therefore, for the purpose of this evaluation, a programme is considered regional if:

- It covers more than two countries in the same region;
- It features coordinated and planned actions involving these countries, but also cross-country action at regional level;
- It has one common programming tool such as a Logframe (objectives, expected results and indicators) encompassing regional level action, and/or similar actions in each of the countries;
- It possesses an overarching programme management mechanism applicable to the actions in all counties covered, and to regional level action;
- It issues a single end report.

## 2.2 Regional programme management in the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe has administered regional programmes from the onset of its technical co-operation in 2001. Regional programmes are conducted as Joint Programmes financed by the Council of Europe and European Union, as well as programmes financed by voluntary contributions and by ordinary budget.

The management structure of regional programmes has evolved over time.  At first, regional programmes' implementation was based in Strasbourg and all activities were supervised by the relevant operational directorates both in terms of content and financial oversight. Since the beginning of the de-centralization reform in 2010, some regional programmes have been de-centralized to the Council of Europe's field offices. At initial stages, this meant that financial oversight of the programmes was ensured by the Directorate of Political Affairs, replaced by the Office of the Directorate General of Programmes (DG Prog) upon its creation in 2011. Meanwhile, content supervision was, as previously, ensured by the relevant operational directorate.

As de-centralization progresses and the administrative capacity of field offices is enhanced, the financial oversight of new regional programmes is delegated by DG Prog to head or several heads of field office, while the content supervision remains in Strasbourg with operational directorates. In some cases, content management has also been partially decentralized through the placement of programme managers in the field offices under general supervision of the relevant operational directorates Strasbourg headquarters.

In addition, DG Prog provides oversight of programme reporting and is in charge of interactions with donors. The following diagram demonstrates the change in management structure.



Figure 1: Evolution of the division of responsibilities for regional programmes in relation to the decentralization reform

# 3. Scope of the evaluation: source of funding, timeframe and geographic focus

Based on the below criteria, **this evaluation will examine regional JPs started after January 2011 and targeting South Eastern Europe and Turkey, as well as in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and the Russian Federation.**

## 3.1 Source of funding

This evaluation will look into **regional Joint Programmes**, excluding programmes financed by voluntary contributions. This is because, according to preliminary interviews, donor relationship has sizeable influence over the decision to give programmes a regional dimension, and the approaches of the various donors may differ a lot in this regard. In order to enable comparison

between the sampled programmes, it is deemed necessary to exclude regional programmes financed by donors other than the EU.

## 3.2 Timeframe

It was decided to select January 2011 as the **cut-off date** for the start of programmes to be evaluated. Anterior programmes would be difficult to evaluate, because the documentary evidence thins as time passes, and because the resource persons would be difficult to reach out to.

In addition, an evaluation commissioned by the EU Commission, implemented by Particip consultancy firm and released in 2012 has already examined Joint Programmes from 2000 to 2010. A cut-off date in January 2011 avoids an overlap with this evaluation.

## 3.3 Geographic focus

This evaluation would only look into **joint programmes implemented in CoE member States (plus Belarus** as appropriate, since it is part of the EU Eastern Partnership region and is usually included in regional joint programmes targeting this region).

In practice, the review of JPs has revealed that EU Member States are not usually covered by regional programmes corresponding to the selected definition. Programmes targeting EU countries tend to be of a multilateral nature (programmes addressing several countries without a regional component), and are therefore not included in the overall sample of evaluated programmes under this evaluation.

With a view to maintaining comparability within the overall sample of evaluated programmes, Central Asia and the Southern Neighbourhood were also excluded from the scope of the evaluation. Indeed these countries are not necessarily bound by the same commitments and standards, which means the programme objectives and the intervention techniques tend to be different. Cooperation with these countries is also more recent than in other regions. Finally, the CoE does not have fully fledged external offices in these countries, which affects the management scheme of such programmes.

# 4. Evaluation purpose

The purpose of this evaluation is to inform future decision making on the conditions under which it is advisable to initiate regional programmes, and on how to best design and manage them.

This evaluation does not have an ambition of measuring in details the results of each individual programme included in the sample. However, this evaluation will look into how the regional approach and the chosen management structure of the regional programmes affect the fulfilment of objectives.

## 5. Evaluation objectives

The evaluation will serve the following objectives:

1. To understand what distinguishes regional programmes from others in terms of advantages and challenges;
2. To identify success and failure factors of regional programmes;
3. To use the model of regional programmes as one of the most challenging ones as an opportunity to identify lessons learned about the CoE's decentralization, programme management capacity and adaptation to the upcoming update of the CoE and European Union cooperation framework.

## 6. Evaluation criteria and draft evaluation questions

Three main evaluation criteria will apply to this evaluation:

- **Efficiency of regional programmes**: This criterion will examine the internal functioning of regional programmes. It will seek to identify the specific challenges and opportunities offered by these programmes.
- **Relevance of regional programmes**: this criterion will examine when and how the regional approach is relevant to the fulfilment of the CoE's priorities, to the needs of the targeted beneficiaries, and to the intended results of the programmes themselves;
- **Added value of regional programmes**: This criterion will examine under which conditions it is worth adopting a regional approach as opposed to national-level interventions or multilateral programmes, and what are the opportunities of such approaches.

| Question number | Draft question | Draft sub-question | Criterion | Evaluation objective |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | To what extent does the regional approach offer advantages and challenges in terms of results, needs and fulfilment of objectives? | How do stakeholders define regional approach to programming?<br><br>What are the factors that trigger a decision to intervene through a regional programme?<br><br>How do the stakeholders define the expected benefits of regional approach, and what benefits are effectively observed?<br><br>What are the specific challenges of regional programmes in terms of | Relevance | 1 |

| | | substance?<br><br>Are regional programmes more reliant on initial investment in time, advocacy efforts and funds, as compared to bilateral programmes? | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | To what extent do regional programmes present specific management challenges and opportunities? | What are the specific challenges of regional programmes in terms of programme management and costs?<br><br>Do regional programmes create specific management risks?<br><br>Do regional programmes offer synergies and economies of scales or improved management efficiency?<br><br>Do regional programmes offer specific risk limitation?<br><br>Which programme management models tend to work best, and when? | Efficiency | 1 |
| 3 | To what extent do regional programmes affect the CoE's programme management and implementation capacity? | To what extent has the CoE's programme management and implementation capacity evolved as a result of regional programmes?<br><br>How can the CoE improve its capacity to manage and implement regional programmes?<br><br>What has been the role of the donor in the evolution of the CoE regional programmes? | Efficiency | 3 |
| 4 | When is it worth adopting a regional approach? | What are the critical external success factors of regional programmes?<br><br>What are the internal conditions that determine the success of regional programmes?<br><br>What are the specific assumptions of regional programmes, and the strategies to ensure their fulfilment? | Added value | 2 |

# 7. Evaluation methodology

The evaluation is organised around three phases:

- **The scoping phase**, during which the evaluation team has elaborated the terms of reference and conducted the sampling;
- **The Inception phase**, during which the evaluation team will map the scope and stakes of the evaluation, and refine its methodology;
- **The data collection phase**, during which the evaluation team will collect data in a structured manner aiming at answering the evaluation questions;
- **The data analysis and reporting phase**, during which the team will review, analyze and interpret the data, and produce the final evaluation report.

## 7.1 Scoping phase and sampling

During the scoping phase, which led to the drafting of the terms of reference, the evaluation team has conducted interviews with key stakeholders of regional programmes. This has enabled to define the scope, purpose and objectives of the evaluation, and to determine the sampling of projects.

The evaluation will examine in parallel:

- **The overall sample (all JPs covered by the scope of the evaluation);**
- **Four case studies.**

To select the case studies the evaluation team has used the method of purposeful sampling: the team selected case studies which are likely to represent most categories under the overall sample, to illustrate the added value and particular challenges of the regional approach, and to best answer the evaluation questions. Based on a preliminary mapping of the overall sample, the identification of their key characteristics, and discussions with key stakeholders in the Major Administrative Entities the team has elaborated the following criteria to select the case studies:

- Both regions represented in the sample;
- Both operational Directorate Generals represented;
- At least one programme with a large budget (over four million Euros);
- Various management schemes represented (decentralized to Field Office, managed from DG Prog, managed by DG I or DG II).

As a result, and in consultation with the key CoE stakeholders in operational DGs and DG Prog, the evaluation team has selected the following case studies:

- **Regional support for inclusive education** (Albania / Bosnia and Herzegovina / Croatia / Montenegro / Serbia / "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" / Kosovo[28])
- **Regional Cooperation in Criminal Justice: Strengthening capacities in the fight against cybercrime** (Albania / Bosnia and Herzegovina / Croatia / Montenegro / Serbia / "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" / Turkey / Kosovo)
- **Strengthening the lawyers' capacity for domestic application of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and of the Revised European Social Charter (RESC)** (Armenia / Azerbaijan / Georgia / Republic of Moldova / Russian Federation / Ukraine)
- **Eastern Partnership facility, including its four components: election support, cybercrime, fight against corruption, justice reform** (Armenia / Azerbaijan / Georgia / Republic of Moldova / Ukraine / Belarus)

However, owing to budgetary and human resources constraints, it is not deemed possible to visit all the countries covered by the regional programmes selected as case studies. The DIO expects to be in a position to organise missions to a total of two to three countries per programme, provided two programmes can be addressed during the same Mission (e.g. both Regional support for inclusive education and Regional cooperation in criminal justice, during a mission to Serbia)

The sample of case studies partly corresponds to the regional programmes covered by the audit team:

- Regional support for inclusive education;
- Joint Programme for the preparation of the Emerald Network for Nature Protection Sites - Phase II;
- Strengthening the lawyers' capacity for domestic application of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and of the Revised European Social Charter (RESC).

## 7.2 Inception phase

**Reference group**

The evaluation team will request the MAEs to appoint representatives to the Reference Group. This Reference Group will accompany the evaluation process by providing feedback and comments on each major step of the evaluation, and by offering peer review on the evaluation final report. It will meet at least twice, to discuss the inception report and the final report.

**Preliminary desk study**

The evaluation team will conduct a first desk study, in order to:

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[28] Throughout these terms of reference, this designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

- Map the existing landscape regional programmes covered by the evaluation;
- Map stakeholders within and outside the CoE, particularly for the four case studies;
- Identify areas of inquiry for the evaluation and elaborate the evaluation methods;
- Plan and schedule the implementation of the following phases, with particular attention to missions in the field.

The evaluation team will elaborate a regional programme mapping tool in order to gather and organize standardized information on these programmes, prepare comparable statistics and identify general trends.

**Mapping interviews**

In complement, the evaluation team will conduct a limited number of mapping interviews with key stakeholders within the CoE, particularly with the stakeholders of the case studies. The latter will be specifically consulted on selection of countries to be visited for each case study, and planning/scheduling of data collection missions.

**Inception report**

At the end of the inception phase, the evaluation team will submit an **inception report**, which will be commented and discussed by the Reference Group during its first meeting.

The inception report will elaborate on the evaluation method and work plan, and provide details about case studies (choice of countries for missions, timing of missions, list of stakeholders…). It will present data collection tools (data collection matrix for overall sample, semi-structured interview questionnaires for case studies, survey questionnaire). It will outline preliminary findings and working hypothesis.

## 7.3 Data collection phase

**Overall sample**

The data collection phase will start with the full-fledged desk research, including the request for documents from relevant MAEs and external stakeholders, collection of documents through internet research and research into the document records of the CoE.[29]

- EU Project Fiche
- Description of action
- Logframe
- Budgetary documents if different from above
- All CoE-drafted programmet reports (reports on implementation, final reports)

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[29] Some of these documents have already been collected as part of the scoping phase.

- EU Result-Oriented Monitoring (ROM) reports
- External evaluation reports if any.

In parallel to the desk research, the evaluation team will administer an email survey, addressed to the programme managers of the overall sample programmes.

The evaluation team will further conduct semi-structured interviews with the EU, possibly through a mission to Brussels.

**Case studies**

The evaluation team will collect the following documents on case studies, through additional desk research.

- Same documents as for the overall sample
- Documents produced as programme outputs (e.g. handbooks, publications, research reports, agendas and presentations from conferences…)
- Website of the programme if any
- Contracts with donor, grant beneficiaries, implementing partners if any
- Media coverage about the programme or programme events (e.g. press articles) if any
- Websites of the main programme partners (e.g. relevant Ministries, independent agencies, civil society organisations)

The evaluation will research these case studies in more detail through semi-structured interview with project staff and stakeholders in Strasbourg, and through missions to the project locations, involving semi-structured interviews with resource persons including programme staff in situ, decentralized programme management staff, beneficiaries, programme partners and other stakeholders locally (e.g. EU Delegation, representatives of international or civil society organisations).

Where possible, the evaluation team will seek to attend events organized by those case study programmes which are still active (e.g. regional conferences). The evaluation team will rely on the programme managers to communicate the calendar of upcoming events.

## 7.4 Data analysis and reporting phase

The evaluation team will analyze the data of case studies and prepare case study reports, on which the relevant stakeholders will be consulted.

The evaluation team will review, sort and synthesize the data collected using the indicators outlined in the detailed evaluation matrix and the methodology designed in the inception phase. The evaluation team will then analyze the synthesized data to identify trends and processes, draw findings and conclusions, and analyze their root causes, with a view to answering the evaluation questions and fulfilling the evaluation's objectives. As a result of the data analysis phase, the

evaluation team will prepare **case study reports** of a maximum of 15 pages **and a draft final report** of a maximum of 25 pages plus annexes.

**The final report** will present success stories, good practices and lessons learned in a user-friendly fashion, tying them clearly to findings and identified factors. Tables, boxes and graphs will facilitate reading and navigability. The recommendations shall be concrete, specific, addressed to clearly identified recipients, useful and feasible. The final report will have to fulfil the Quality assurance checklist for final report. The Reference Group will then convene to discuss the draft final report, and provide comments and feedback to the evaluation team.

After adjustment of the final report, the evaluation will be concluded with a final event presenting the main findings to relevant stakeholders.

## 8. Evaluation team

The evaluation team will be composed of a DIO Evaluator, and DIO Evaluation Expert. It is not envisaged to hire external consulting services for this evaluation.

# ANNEX 1 – EVALUATION SAMPLE

Legend

| Pillar | Human Rights | Rule of Law | Democracy | All pillars |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| Implementer | DG I | DG II | DG Prog | DPP |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| Budget | Budget over 1Mio | Budget over 500K | Budget below 500K |
|---|---|---|---|

| Management | DG Prog/Regional | DG Prog/MAE | MAE |
|---|---|---|---|

General sample

| Acronym | Pillar | Name | Countries covered | Status | Dates | Implementation | Budget € | Management 1 | Management 2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| INED | Democracy | Regional Support for Inclusive education | Albania / Bosnia and Herzegovina / Croatia / Montenegro / Serbia / "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" / Kosovo | JP Active | 01/01/2013 - 30/11/2015 | DG II | 5,165,650 | DG Prog | Belgrade |
| CoE EaP Facility | All pillars | Council of Europe Eastern Partnership Facility | Armenia / Azerbaijan / Georgia / Republic of Moldova / Ukraine / Belarus | JP Active | 01/03/2011 - 31/12/2014 | DG Prog | 4,800,000 | DG Prog | DPA DGI |
| MinRights | Human rights | Promoting Human Rights and Minority Protection in South East Europe | Albania / Bosnia and Herzegovina / Croatia / Montenegro / Serbia / "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" / Kosovo | JP Active | 30/11/2011 - 29/11/2014 | DG II | 3,600,000 | DG Prog | Podgorica |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Emerald network -II | Democracy | Joint Programme for the preparation of the Emerald Network for Nature Protection Sites - Phase II | Armenia / Azerbaijan / Georgia / Republic of Moldova / Russian Federation / Ukraine / Belarus | JP Active | 09/10/2012 - 08/10/2016 | DG II | 2,205,560 | DGII | No |
| Lawyers ECHR RESC | Human rights | Strengthening the lawyers' capacity for domestic application of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and of the Revised European Social Charter (RESC) | Armenia / Azerbaijan / Georgia / Republic of Moldova / Russian Federation / Ukraine | JP Active | 01/01/2013 - 30/06/2015 | DG I | 1,960,000 | DG Prog | Chisinau; Kiev; Erevan; Tbilisi Moscow; |
| Ill-treatment II | Human rights | Reinforcing the fight against ill-treatment and impunity | Armenia / Azerbaijan / Georgia / Republic of Moldova / Ukraine | JP Active | 01/07/2011 - 31/03/2014 | DG Prog | 1,750,000 | DG Prog | DGI |
| ROMACT | Democracy | "Building up political will and understanding of Roma inclusion at local and regional level" (ROMACT programme) | Bulgaria / Czech Republic / Hungary / Italy / Romania / Slovak Republic | JP Active | 01/10/2013 - 30/09/2014 | DG II | 1,050,000 | DGII | No |
| Ljubljana Process II | Democracy | Ljubljana Process II - Rehabilitating our Common Heritage | Albania / Bosnia and Herzegovina / Bulgaria / Croatia / Montenegro / Romania / Serbia / ''the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia'' / South-East Europe / Kosovo | JP Active | 19/05/2011 - 18/07/2014 | DG II | 500,042 | DGII | No |
| CyberCrime@IPA | Rule of Law | Regional Cooperation in Criminal Justice: Strengthening capacities in the fight against cybercrime | Albania / Bosnia and Herzegovina / Croatia / Montenegro / Serbia / ''the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia'' / Turkey / South-East Europe / Kosovo | JP Completed | 01/11/2010 - 30/06/2013 | DG I | 2,777,778 | DGI | No |
| SocialSecCoord | Democracy | Regional Programme for Social Security Co-ordination and Social Security Reforms in South-East Europe | Albania / Bosnia and Herzegovina / Croatia / Montenegro / Serbia / ''the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia'' / Turkey / Kosovo | JP Completed | 01/03/2008 - 31/08/2011 | DG II | 2,196,122 | DGIII (DGII) | |
| Ill-treatment | Human rights | Combating ill-treatment and impunity in South Caucasus, Moldova and Ukraine | Armenia / Azerbaijan / Georgia / Republic of Moldova / Ukraine | JP Completed | 01/01/2009 - 30/06/2011 | DG I | 1,900,000 | DGI | |

| Acronym | Pillar | Name | Countries covered | Status | Dates | Implementation | Budget | Management 1 | Management 2 |
|---------|--------|------|-------------------|--------|-------|----------------|--------|--------------|--------------|
| Peer-to-Peer II | Human rights | Promoting national non-judicial mechanisms for the protection of human rights and especially the prevention of torture | Albania / Armenia / Azerbaijan / Bosnia and Herzegovina / Croatia / Georgia / Republic of Moldova / Montenegro / Russian Federation / ''the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia'' / Turkey / Ukraine | JP Completed | 01/03/2010 - 30/06/2012 | DG I | 1,600,000 | DGI | |
| Emerald Network-ENP – | Democracy | Support for the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)'s Programme of Work on Protected Areas in the EU Neighbourhood Policy East Area and Russia | Armenia / Azerbaijan / Georgia / Republic of Moldova / Russian Federation / Ukraine / Belarus | JP Completed | 06/12/2008 - 15/04/2012 | DG II | 1,484,000 | DGII | |
| Kyiv RegProg-2nd Cvt | Democracy | Kyiv Initiative Regional Programme: 2nd Covenant - Pilot Project for the rehabilitation of cultural heritage in historic towns | Armenia / Azerbaijan / Georgia / Republic of Moldova / Ukraine | JP Completed | 01/12/2010 - 30/11/2011 | DG II | 200,000 | DGII | |
| CURES | Democracy | Cultural resources for Roma inclusion, feasibility phase Bosnia and Herzegovina / Croatia / Hungary / Slovenia / ''the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia'' | Bosnia and Herzegovina / Croatia / Hungary / Slovenia / ''the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia'' | JP Completed | 01/04/2013 - 31/12/2013 | DG II | 159,000 | DGII | |

Case studies

| Acronym | Pillar | Name | Countries covered | Status | Dates | Implementation | Budget | Management 1 | Management 2 |
|---------|--------|------|-------------------|--------|-------|----------------|--------|--------------|--------------|
| INED | Democracy | Regional Support for Inclusive education | Albania / Bosnia and Herzegovina / Croatia / Montenegro / Serbia / ''the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia'' / Kosovo | JP Active | 01/01/2013 - 30/11/2015 | DG II | 5,165,650 | DG Prog | Belgrade |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CyberCrime@IPA | Rule of Law | Regional Cooperation in Criminal Justice: Strengthening capacities in the fight against cybercrime | Albania / Bosnia and Herzegovina / Croatia / Montenegro / Serbia / ''the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia'' / Turkey / South-East Europe / Kosovo* | JP Completed | 01/11/2010 - 30/06/2013 | DG I | 2,777,778 | DGI | No |
| CoE EaP Facility | All pillars | Council of Europe Eastern Partnership Facility | Armenia / Azerbaijan / Georgia / Republic of Moldova / Ukraine / Belarus | JP Active | 01/03/2011 - 31/12/2014 | DG Prog | 4,800,000 | DG Prog | DPA DGI |
| Lawyers ECHR RESC | Human rights | Strengthening the lawyers' capacity for domestic application of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and of the Revised European Social Charter (RESC) | Armenia / Azerbaijan / Georgia / Republic of Moldova / Russian Federation / Ukraine | JP Active | 01/01/2013 - 30/06/2015 | DG I | 1,960,000 | DG Prog | Chisinau; Kiev; Erevan; Tbilisi Moscow; |

## Annex 3 - Inception report

Council of Europe
Directorate of Internal Oversight
16 July 2014

# Evaluation of Council of Europe Regional Programmes

INCEPTION REPORT

## 1. Introduction

The 2014 Work programme of Directorate of Internal Oversight (DIO) of the Council of Europe (CoE) foresees the evaluation of the CoE regional programmes.[30] The Work Programme highlights that such programmes "are complex in their design and management. The evaluation will look into, particularly, efficiency issues (design, planning, working methods and management) as well as results achieved. It will have both audit and evaluation aspects. The selection criterion concerns c: the potential of the evaluation in identifying and addressing programme specific risks."

## 2. Data collection methodology

The evaluation team has chosen a combined data collection approach. For each evaluation question the evaluation team combines several sources of data for triangulation (cross-checking of findings through at least three different sources):
- Existing primary qualitative data (Description of action, interim and final reports of the programmes
- Existing secondary qualitative data (ROMs)
- Primary qualitative data from different and complementary sources: semi-structured interviews with sources determined by stakeholder map (CoE internal/external; programme staff/beneficiaries; international/local stakeholders); focus group with programme managers.
- Primary quantitative data: survey.

### 2.1 Document collection

In order to collect documentation on regional programmes, the following documents have been requested from ODG-Prog and from programme managers in the operational DGs:

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[30] GR-PBA(2014)2

(1) Any preparatory work such as needs assessments, feasibility studies or other documents (stakeholders meeting reports, preparatory missions reports, e-mails, etc.) prepared before the beginning of activities by CoE staff, EC staff and other partners and stakeholders that contributed to take the decision of conceiving and launching the intervention;
(2) Programming documents (Logical Framework, "Description of the action" or other "design" documents) and other contractual documents;
(3) Information related to any relevant previous interventions, evaluation reports, or recommendations of advisory groups;
(4) Interim reports, ROM reports, monitoring and progress reports, relevant parts of CoE Progress Review Reports, financial reports, mission reports, providing information on inputs used, activities implemented, outputs produced, results achieved and any issue or problem encountered during the implementation;
(5) Other documents, as relevant.

These documents were requested for all regional programmes in the larger sample. ODG-Prog has provided the evaluation team with the Description of Action, the contractual agreement, and the final narrative and financial reports or, in some cases, interim reports. Other documents were provided by operational DGs based on their availability.

A complete list of collected documentation is in Annex II.

## 2.2 Case studies and field missions

The evaluation will examine four programmes as case studies:
- Eastern Partnership Facility Programme;
- Joint Programme on Strengthening the lawyers' capacity for domestic application of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and of the Revised European Social Charter (RESC);
- Regional Support for Inclusive Education programme;
- Regional Cooperation in Criminal Justice: Strengthening capacities in the fight against cybercrime.

These case studies were selected in consultation with programme managers according to the following criteria, as specified in the Terms of Reference of the evaluation:
- Both regions represented in the sample (South-Eastern Europe/Turkey and the Eastern Europe/South Caucasus/Russian Federation);
- Both operational Directorate Generals represented;
- At least one programme with a large budget (over four million Euros);
- Various management schemes represented (decentralized to Field Office, managed from DG Prog, managed by DG I or DG II).

During the inception period, the team conducted the pilot case study mission to Georgia from 28 April to 08 May. This mission to Tbilisi addressed the Eastern Partnership Facility Programme, and the Joint Programme on Strengthening the lawyers' capacity for domestic application of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and of the Revised European Social Charter

(RESC).

The evaluation will also include three additional missions as follows:
- Moldova from 16 to 20 June 2014, looking into the Eastern Partnership Facility Programme, and the Joint Programme on Strengthening the lawyers' capacity for domestic application of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and of the Revised European Social Charter (RESC);
- Bosnia and Herzegovina from 23 to 27 June 2014, looking into the Regional Support for Inclusive Education programme, and the programme Regional Cooperation in Criminal Justice: Strengthening capacities in the fight against cybercrime;
- Serbia from 15 to 19 September 2014, looking into the Regional Support for Inclusive Education programme, and the programme Regional Cooperation in Criminal Justice: Strengthening capacities in the fight against cybercrime.

**Stakeholder map**

The team conducted the stakeholder mapping for the pilot case study mission based on programme documentation and consultations with programme managers in the CoE headquarters and the field offices.

In order to receive the most diverse views on the case study programmes and to include all relevant perspectives, the stakeholders of each programme have been mapped to include the following groups:

- Programme manager(s) in CoE Headquarters (operational DGs)
- Programme coordinator(s) in ODG-Prog, if applicable
- Programme manager(s) in CoE Field Offices
- Head of Field Office and Deputy to Head of Field Office
- Direct counterparts of the programme (e.g. Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education etc.)
- Representatives of Donor (European Union Delegation in each country, EU in Brussels)
- Representatives of other intergovernmental organizations working in the same field (e.g. OSCE, UNDP etc.)
- Representatives of bi-lateral donors (e.g. bilateral Embassies, Norlam, USAID etc.)
- Representatives of international non-governmental organizations working in same field (e.g. Transparency International, Open Society Foundations etc.)
- Representatives of domestic NGOs and civil society activists.

**Semi-structured interviews**

The evaluation team conducted 12 individual interviews and 10 joint interviews with a total of 40stakeholders during the mission to Tbilisi. This broad range of interviewees enabled to test the stakeholders map and determine what is the critical mass of interviewees necessary to obtain a range of complementary points of views and opinions on the regional approach to CoE programmes.

The stakeholder map has proved effective to gather this variety of input, while the team determined that about 10 interviewees per programme would in the future be sufficient to secure triangulation. For the other case studies, the same model will therefore be used, but the number of interviewees reduced. Since the focus of the evaluation is on the regional approach rather than the results of the individual programmes, the team will prioritize stakeholders with a high level of involvement and involvement in regional level activities.

The team used the semi-structured interview questionnaire presented in Annex III.

## 2.3 Large sample

**Phone interviews with in-situ programme staff**

The evaluation team will hold phone interviews with the programme staff posted in the Field Offices under all the programmes included in the large sample but not covered by the case studies. The team will use these interviews to hear their views about the regional approach, how it materializes in their daily work, and what are the advantages and the constraints. The team will use this opportunity to test the preliminary findings drawn from the case studies. This will enable the evaluation to rule out findings on the regional approach which would be specific to one programme.

**Survey of programme staff**

The team will address a web-based, anonymous survey to the CoE staff working on regional programmes: programme managers, and their heads of unit/division if different, programme officers, programme assistants, DG Prog. This survey will be used to gather quantitative data about:
- The criteria which make a regional approach necessary or desirable;
- The preconditions for the success of regional programmes in terms of organisational and management capacity.

**Focus group with programme staff in Strasbourg**

The team will then organize in September a focus group with programme managers in charge of all regional programmes included in the large sample posted in Strasbourg. This focus group will include in priority those programme managers who are not already involved in the evaluation through the case studies and the Reference Group.

The focus group will be used to discuss and challenge the observations of the team through the case studies, phone interviews, document review and survey. The focus group methodology will enable to enrich the information obtained through interviews and survey, with the more creative input that group discussions tend to yield. The focus group will be moderated by one evaluator, while the other one will observe and take notes.

# 3. Data analysis

## 3.1 Data review and analysis methodology

The evaluation matrix presented in Annex I will provide the team with a blueprint for reviewing, sorting, analysing and interpreting the data.

Most of the gathered data is of qualitative nature. The pilot case study in Georgia, as well as preliminary interviews in Strasbourg and desk research suggests that quantitative data on regional programmes is both limited and difficult to compare.

In order to identify patterns and produce demonstrable findings, the evaluation team will systematically review all interview notes and programme documentation, and extract standard information on all programmes in the large sample, as presented in the Large Sample Review Matrix in Annex IV. This information will be used to derive quantitative data from the existing qualitative data, in a way that is tailored to the evaluation questions and indicators.

## 3.2 Areas of inquiry and working hypothesis

The first desk research, interviews in Strasbourg, and case study pilot visit to Georgia has enabled to identify some working hypothesis. A preliminary review of the interview notes reveals the following trends:

**Table 1:** *Table 1 – Characteristics of interviewees' input during pilot case study*

|  | Opinion on regional approach | Detailed/general views | Facts/opinions |
|---|---|---|---|
| **CoE staff** | Mixed | Detailed | Both facts and opinions |
| **Experts** | Mostly favourable | Detailed | Mostly facts |
| **Cooperation partners** | Rather favourable | Detailed | Variable |
| **Civil society** | Rather favourable | Variable | Both facts and opinions |
| **International community** | Not favourable | General | Mostly opinions |

**Relevance**

- The criteria which are used to determine the relevance of the regional approach vary from topic to topic, and from region to region. In some cases, the programmatic staff considered that the regional approach was a necessary condition for cooperation with the programme partners in a given country or on a given issue. The regional approach also

offers more flexibility for countries to opt in or out.
- The case studies reveal that regional programmes tend to serve both regional-level and national-level objectives, which is most effective when they are complementary. However it should be noted that there is no definition of regional objectives as opposed to national objectives.
- The role of the donor and the funding instruments seems crucial in the adoption of a regional approach and/or in the definition of the countries to be involved in a regional programme. However, this trend has exceptions, and the final decision is usually taken jointly with the donor.
- There seems to be four main strategies on the regional approach to an issue.
  o Some programme managers use regional programmes as an entry door, which may then be declined after completion of the regional programme into country programmes where the highest demand and opportunities arise.
  o Other programme managers start with national programmes in the countries where the partners are most engaged into change strategies, then move on to create regional programmes in which these countries have a leadership role – possibly moving on to global programmes where funding instruments allow.
  o Other programme managers use regional programmes as a complement to ongoing national programmes.
  o Some programme managers use regional programmes separately from national and other regional programmes.

**Efficiency**

- There is no uniform pattern for regional programme management schemes. Almost each case is different, and most examined programmes constitute a precedent in their own way. There is a trend for more decentralisation, but this also has exceptions.
- Most CoE interviewees point that the regional framework exacerbates common programme management challenges such as the relations between headquarters and field offices, recruitment, administrative procedures, or activity planning.
- The challenges relating to the relationship between the financial management and the content management of programmes are multiplied in the case of regional programmes, according to some CoE interviewees.
- Most CoE interviewees point to additional programme management constraints linked to regional programmes, particularly as regards financial management. This seems to relate to issues of capacity (as the decentralisation process is still proceeding) or coordination (with different understandings on budget planning and allocation of programme resources).
- However, interviewees identify economies of scale realized through a given regional programme covering several countries, as compared to running several country programmes. These economies of scale concern for instance negotiation costs with the donor, programme design, staffing and programme administration, and overall budgetary spending.
- There was a general agreement that regional programmes require a critical mass of funding, especially if they serve both regional and national objectives.
- Interlocutors in the countries visited point to the benefit of having programme staff on the ground for logistical and project administration purposes, but also for content

management. They often point that capacity building requires a continuous relationship, which is boosted by the presence of programme staff.

- Apart from progress reports and completion reports, there does not seem to exist a unique reporting scheme and template for regional programmes to report on planning, achievements and lessons learned on a more frequent basis. Where the programmes have staff in several locations, reporting schemes do not seem to systematically foster exchange of information and lessons learned among this staff. Horizontal communication among this staff seems to take place in a limited way.

**Added value**

- Regional programmes seem to have higher added value where they serve regional level objectives, for instance if regional cooperation is the main objective of a programme. This added value is highest when these regional programmes complement national programmes.
- Regional programmes seem to have highest added value when the activities take place both at regional and national level.
- The regional-level component of these programmes may serve both regional-level objectives, and national-level objectives complementarily. Regional activities are therefore both a vehicle to create change at the national level, and a means to fulfil regional objectives. Interviewees indicate that regional approach to country-level objectives retains higher importance: these programmes chiefly impact the national level, and do not always fully embrace the regional perspective.
- The older regional programmes tend to confine regional-level techniques to conferences and seminars where participants from several countries exchange views in a one-off fashion. Few interviewees from domestic authorities have maintained links with other participants to such events. Other techniques to create partnership platforms are currently piloted in more recent programmes.
- The delimitation of the regions seems to match closely the EU funding instruments. There has been criticism from some national counterparts as regards the Eastern Partnership and other Eastern European and Caucasus countries as one region. Most interviewees in countries which have proceeded further with their reforms argue that they would prefer to participate in regional programmes with a different group of country (EU candidates or EU member States). In general, there was an agreement that, while the South-East Europe region is relatively homogeneous and lends itself well to regional programmes, the Eastern European and Caucasus region is heterogeneous and characterized by more contradictory dynamics.
- A small number of interviewees considered that regional programmes caused limitations to the ability of the CoE to tailor programmes to their needs.
- Most interviewees point to the benefits of having a regional platform for exchange of experience and views, but more importantly for establishing long-lasting, deep partnerships among practitioners of several countries facing the same challenges. The team has seen limited evidence of the deployment of the second model in practice.
- Some interlocutors reported that regional events did create emulation among the participants. They may also pointed that regional programmes participants use the examples of other countries to advocate and overcome sensitivities at national level. However, some regretted that programme participants from countries that have already

invested a lot in reforms are comforted by the comparison with less reform-prone countries, and do not feel pressed to pursue reforms further.
- Several regretted that such events did not reach out to a critical mass of practitioners, or addressed only some levels in the management structures of the participating institutions. A working hypothesis is that regional programmes may have higher added value when the regional component involves a high proportion of professionals in one field – which would be possible either with larger regional components for a wide intervention topic, or with the selection of a narrow intervention topic.
- The feedback on the CoE's capacity to implement regional programmes was very different depending on the interlocutor, and not only depending on programmes.

## 4. Reference group meeting

The first reference group meeting was held on Thursday 3 July 2014, and gave an opportunity to discuss the results of the inception phase, specific challenges related to the case studies or to data collection, and the conduct of data analysis and reporting.

## ANNEX I - EVALUATION MATRIX

| Evaluation Criteria | Evaluation Question | Sub-Questions | Indicator(s) | Data Collection Instrument(s) | Data Source(s) | Data Analysis |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Relevance | To what extent does the regional approach offer advantages and challenges in terms of results, needs and fulfilment of objectives? | How do stakeholders define regional approach to programming?<br><br>What are the factors that trigger a decision to intervene through a regional programme?<br><br>How do the stakeholders define the expected benefits of regional approach, and what benefits are effectively observed?<br><br>What are the specific challenges of regional programmes in terms of substance?<br><br>Are regional programmes more reliant on initial investment in time, advocacy efforts and funds, as compared to bilateral programmes? | Decision to adopt a regional approach is based on objective criteria (e.g. relevance to subject matter, identified pros and the cons, link between the outcomes of the project and its regional nature<br><br>Decision to adopt a regional approach takes into account specificities of the region and countries<br><br>Level of consensus on expected benefits of regional approach<br><br>Level of consensus on challenges of regional programmes in terms of substance<br><br>Part of budget dedicated to regional activities.<br><br>Degree of penetration of programmes with partner/beneficiary institutions<br><br>Satisfaction levels of involved staff and beneficiaries | Semi structured interviews<br><br>Focus group<br><br>Desk review | CoE staff (HQ and FO)<br><br>CoE experts<br><br>Beneficiaries and cooperation partners<br><br>Donor<br><br>Other IOs<br><br>Bilateral actors in countries<br><br>Civil society actors<br><br>Programme documentation<br><br>Donor evaluations (ROMs) | Descriptive, qualitative:<br><br>Systematic comparison of patterns in input from at least complementary points of view (triangulation).<br><br>Comparison on input of interviews with trends identified in project documentation<br><br>Test of identified trends in focus group. |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Efficiency | To what extent do regional programmes present specific management challenges and opportunities? | What are the specific challenges of regional programmes in terms of programme management and costs?<br><br>Do regional programmes create specific management risks?<br><br>Do regional programmes offer synergies and economies of scales or improved management efficiency?<br><br>Do regional programmes offer specific risk limitation?<br><br>Which programme management models tend to work best, and when? | Programme delays, length of administrative procedures compared to other programmes<br><br>Time between start of programme and start of regional level activities.<br><br>Part of staff time and budget dedicated to project management as opposed to implementation<br><br>Specific management risks not inherent to bi-lateral programmes identified by stakeholders<br><br>Satisfaction level of CoE staff regarding programme management<br><br>Demonstrated link between a management model of a regional programmes and its efficiency. | | | |
| | To what extent do regional programmes affect the CoE's programme management and implementation capacity? | To what extent has the CoE's programme management and implementation capacity evolved as a result of regional programmes?<br><br>How can the CoE improve its capacity to manage and implement regional programmes?<br><br>What has been the role of the donor in the evolution of the CoE regional programmes? | New structures, processes/procedures, tools were established to serve regional programmes<br><br>Deficiencies in the functioning of regional programmes suggest that specific actions are needed.<br><br>Level of influence of donor priorities on setting up of regional programs (i.e. Regional programmes come into existence because of donor priorities for regional action/ funding) | | | |
| Added value | When is it worth adopting a regional approach? | What are the critical external success factors of regional programmes?<br><br>What are the internal conditions that determine the success of regional programmes?<br><br>What are the specific assumptions of regional programmes, and the strategies to ensure their fulfilment? | Level of consensus on external factors influencing success of regional programmes<br><br>Evolution of interaction among programme managers throughout case study programmes<br><br>Level of consensus on internal conditions determining success of regional programmes<br><br>Level of consensus on conditions under which regional programmes should be developed and implemented | | | |

## ANNEX II. LIST OF COLLECTED DOCUMENTS

| Acronym | Name | Collected documentation |
|---|---|---|
| INED | Regional Support for Inclusive education | Description of Action<br>Contractual agreement<br>Inception Report<br>Progress Report July-Sep 2013<br>Financial Report 2013<br>Annual Report 2013<br>Steering Committee meeting minutes<br>Activity reports<br>Tender documents<br>Lists of participants<br>Project's website |
| CoEEaP Facility | Council of Europe Eastern Partnership Facility | Description of Action<br>Contractual agreement with addenda<br>Progress Report 2012-2013<br>Presentations for CoE EaP Facility Information meeting<br>ROM reports by country<br>Assessment Report for Cybercrime component<br>Assessment Report for Corruption component<br>Inception Report for Corruption component<br>Steering Committee Meeting minutes for the Corruption component<br>Relevant e-mail exchanges for the corruption component<br>Project's websites |
| MinRights | Promoting Human Rights and Minority Protection in South East Europe | Description of Action<br>Contractual agreement and addendum |
| Emerald network -II | Joint Programme for the preparation of the Emerald Network for Nature Protection Sites - Phase II | Description of Action<br>Contractual agreement<br>Interim Reports<br>Interim Financial Report<br>Project's website |
| Lawyers ECHR RESC | Strengthening the lawyers' capacity for domestic application of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and of the Revised European Social Charter (RESC) | Description of Action<br>Contractual agreement<br>Needs assessment<br>Progress Reports<br>ROM reports<br>Steering Committee meeting minutes<br>Interim Narrative Report<br>Interim Financial Report |

| Ill-treatment II | Reinforcing the fight against ill-treatment and impunity | Description of Action<br>Contractual agreement and addenda<br>Inception Report<br>Interim Financial Report<br>Interim Narrative Report<br>Steering Committee meeting minutes<br>Extension request |
|---|---|---|
| ROMACT | "Building up political will and understanding of Roma inclusion at local and regional level" (ROMACT programme) | Project Description<br>Contractual agreement<br>EU CoE Scoreboard Report<br>Final Narrative Report Finland VC 2013 |
| Ljubljana Process II | Ljubljana Process II - Rehabilitating our Common Heritage | Description of Action<br>Contractual agreement<br>Interim Financial Report<br>Interim Narrative Report |
| CyberCrime@IPA | Regional Cooperation in Criminal Justice: Strengthening capacities in the fight against cybercrime | Description of Action<br>Contractual agreement and addenda<br>Final Narrative Report<br>Financial Report |
| SocialSecCoord | Regional Programme for Social Security Co-ordination and Social Security Reforms in South-East Europe | Description of Action<br>Contractual agreement and addendum<br>ROM reports<br>Interim Narrative Report<br>Final Narrative Report<br>Financial Report |
| Ill-treatment | Combating ill-treatment and impunity in South Caucasus, Moldova and Ukraine | Description of Action<br>Contractual agreement<br>Inception Report<br>Interim Financial Report<br>Interim Narrative Report<br>Final Narrative Report<br>Financial Report |
| Peer-to-Peer II | Promoting national non-judicial mechanisms for the protection of human rights and especially the prevention of torture | Description of Action<br>Contractual agreement and addendum<br>ROM reports<br>Evaluation report<br>Final Narrative Report<br>Financial Report |
| Emerald Network-ENP – | Support for the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)'s Programme of Work on Protected Areas in the EU Neighbourhood Policy East | Description of Action<br>Country assessment reports<br>Contractual agreement and addendum |

| | Area and Russia | Final Narrative Report<br>Financial Report<br>ROM reports |
|---|---|---|
| Kyiv RegProg-2nd Cvt | Kyiv Initiative Regional Programme: 2nd Covenant - Pilot Project for the rehabilitation of cultural heritage in historic towns | Description of Action<br>Contractual agreement<br>Final Narrative Report<br>Financial Report |
| CURES | Cultural resources for Roma inclusion, feasibility phase Bosnia and Herzegovina / Croatia / Hungary / Slovenia / "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" | Description of Action<br>Contractual agreement<br>Final Narrative Report<br>Financial Report |

ANNEX III – SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

| | |
|---|---|
| Date: | |
| Name(s) and function(s) of interviewee(s): | |
| Location: | |
| Evaluation phase: | pilot/data collection |
| In-person/phone interview: | In-person |
| Interview by: | |
| In confidence/quotable: | |

**Introduction by interviewer(s):**

- *Thank for taking the time to meet, present the team*
- *Purpose. As a part of an evaluation team, I am conducting the evaluation of Council of Europe Regional Programmes, specifically focusing on the programme Eastern Partnership Facility.*
- *Confidentiality*

**Questions:**

Role of interviewee(s) in the evaluated programmes:

- *What was your role with regard to this/these programme/s*

Description of Regional programmes from the interviewee's point of view

- *What are the features of a regional approach?*
- *How does a regional programme come into existence? How is it designed?*
- *How is such programme managed?*

Results and lessons learnt

- *Do you consider the programme successful? EXAMPLES.*
- *Are the specific successes which are due to regional approach?*
- *If yes – why (external success factors, internal success factors)?*
- *What were the specific challenges? How can they be addressed?*
- *If you could have changed this programme, what would you have done?*

What are the advantages of regional programmes? What are the challenges?

- *When is it worth to adopt a regional approach (which factors play a role)?*
- *Which themes lend themselves better to being addressed on a regional level(i.e. trans-*

*border issues, issues common in a group of countries, sensitive issues etc.)?*
- *At initial stage, does a regional programme need more time and effort invested?*
- *Does a regional programmes require larger funding?*
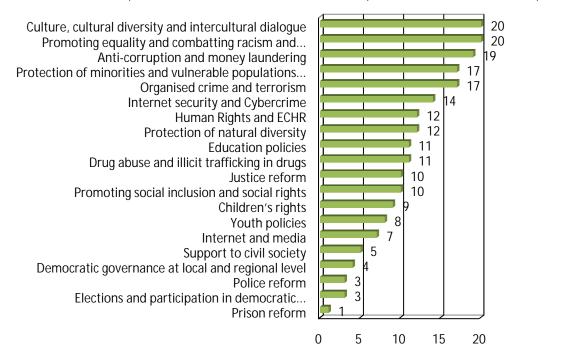- *What are the strategies to ensure that a regional programme can succeed?*


Closing of the interview:

- *Thank you; Contact details for questions / further information*

# Most suitable topics for a regional approach

*Respondents ranked from 1 to 5 the most suitable topics from a list, most suitable on top*

| Topic | Value |
|---|---|
| Culture, cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue | 20 |
| Promoting equality and combatting racism and... | 20 |
| Anti-corruption and money laundering | 19 |
| Protection of minorities and vulnerable populations... | 17 |
| Organised crime and terrorism | 17 |
| Internet security and Cybercrime | 14 |
| Human Rights and ECHR | 12 |
| Protection of natural diversity | 12 |
| Education policies | 11 |
| Drug abuse and illicit trafficking in drugs | 11 |
| Justice reform | 10 |
| Promoting social inclusion and social rights | 10 |
| Children's rights | 9 |
| Youth policies | 8 |
| Internet and media | 7 |
| Support to civil society | 5 |
| Democratic governance at local and regional level | 4 |
| Police reform | 3 |
| Elections and participation in democratic... | 3 |
| Prison reform | 1 |

# Least suitable topics for a regional approach

*Respondents ranked from 1 to 5 the least suitable topics from a list, least suitable on top*

| Topic | Value |
|---|---|
| Prison reform | 31 |
| Police reform | 28 |
| Justice reform | 26 |
| Elections and participation in democratic institutions... | 23 |
| Democratic governance at local and regional level | 16 |
| Support to civil society | 14 |
| Protection of natural diversity | 13 |
| Promoting social inclusion and social rights | 12 |
| Education policies | 12 |
| Anti-corruption and money laundering | 10 |
| Youth policies | 7 |
| Human Rights and ECHR | 6 |
| Protection of minorities and vulnerable populations... | 6 |
| Children's rights | 5 |
| Organised crime and terrorism | 5 |
| Internet and media | 5 |
| Culture, cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue | 5 |
| Promoting equality and combatting racism and... | 4 |
| Drug abuse and illicit trafficking in drugs | 3 |
| Internet security and Cybercrime | 2 |
| Threats to human dignity (human trafficking, sexual... | 2 |

# Advantages of regional programmes

*Respondents ranked from 1 to 5 the five main advantages from a list,*

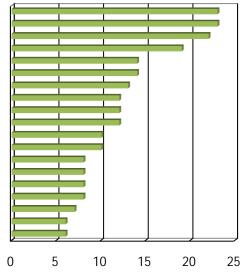| Category | |
|---|---|
| Identification of regional good practices | |
| Common solutions to common problems | |
| Access to/sharing of wider range of… | |
| Reconciliation through cooperation | |
| Networking and personal contacts among… | |
| Ability to address sensitive issues and to create… | |
| Peer scrutiny, higher accountability of countries | |
| Comparative analysis of respective countries' needs | |
| Creating coalitions of countries with political will… | |
| Strengthening cohesion within a region/creating… | |
| High visibility of CoE | |
| Positive emulation, positive competition between… | |
| Recommendations issued by peers more easily… | |
| Engaging high-level persons through regional events | |
| Direct access to/networking of local-level… | |
| Costs savings through economies of scale | |
| Donor satisfaction | |

0   5   10   15   20   25   30

# Challenges of regional programmes

*Respondents ranked from 1 to 5 the five main challenges from a list*
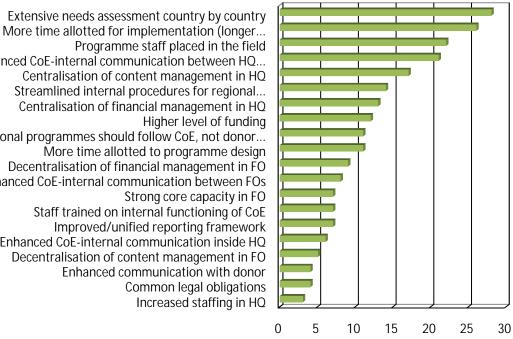
| Category | |
|---|---|
| High coordination efforts | |
| Difficult to measure impact | |
| Complex financial management | |
| Difficulty to accommodate different constraints… | |
| Remoteness/no continuous relationships if no… | |
| Labour intensive for CoE staff | |
| Cost of regional activities (e.g. travel, translation…)… | |
| Sensitivities of different countries in terms of… | |
| Resources not commensurate to regional + national… | |
| Lack of CoE capacity for complex management set up | |
| Regional programmes not suited for decentralisation | |
| Language barriers | |
| Reluctance of participants to expose their country's… | |
| Predefined regions are not homogeneous | |
| Long take off endangers programme's relevance | |
| Countries may perceive placement in a region as… | |
| High level of dissociation between financial/content… | |
| Participants from most compliant/"advanced"… | |
| Counter-incentive for most advanced countries due… | |

0   5   10   15   20   25

## Pre-conditions for regional approach

*Respondents ranked from 1 to 5 the top preconditions, from a list*



| | 0 | 5 | 10 | 15 | 20 | 25 | 30 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Extensive needs assessment country by country | | | | | | | |
| More time allotted for implementation (longer... | | | | | | | |
| Programme staff placed in the field | | | | | | | |
| Enhanced CoE-internal communication between HQ... | | | | | | | |
| Centralisation of content management in HQ | | | | | | | |
| Streamlined internal procedures for regional... | | | | | | | |
| Centralisation of financial management in HQ | | | | | | | |
| Higher level of funding | | | | | | | |
| Regional programmes should follow CoE, not donor... | | | | | | | |
| More time allotted to programme design | | | | | | | |
| Decentralisation of financial management in FO | | | | | | | |
| Enhanced CoE-internal communication between FOs | | | | | | | |
| Strong core capacity in FO | | | | | | | |
| Staff trained on internal functioning of CoE | | | | | | | |
| Improved/unified reporting framework | | | | | | | |
| Enhanced CoE-internal communication inside HQ | | | | | | | |
| Decentralisation of content management in FO | | | | | | | |
| Enhanced communication with donor | | | | | | | |
| Common legal obligations | | | | | | | |
| Increased staffing in HQ | | | | | | | |