

# MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Name of Evaluation Report:	<a href="#">Evaluation of Intergovernmental Committees</a>
Date of Evaluation Report:	12 June 2019
Date of the Management response:	30 July 2019

## Overall Management Response to the Evaluation:

In its decision “A shared responsibility for democratic security in Europe” adopted on the occasion of the 129<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Session on 17 May 2019 in Helsinki (CM/Del/Dec(2019)129/2a), the Committee of Ministers reaffirmed the importance of intergovernmental co-operation and invited its Deputies to evaluate the possibility to reinforce the co-ordination and role of intergovernmental committees taking into account the proposals made in the Secretary General’s report of 2 April 2019 “*Ready for future challenges : Reinforcing the Council of Europe*”.

In his report, the Secretary General emphasises the crucial role of intergovernmental committees in developing a common response to new challenges Europe is facing and in defining the Council of Europe’s future priorities. The elaboration of new standards and exchange of good practices amongst member states is essential to maintain the pan-European dimension of the Organisation’s work. In view of these considerations the Secretary General proposes that intergovernmental co-operation and co-ordination of the intergovernmental committees’ work should be further enhanced and that the committees should be provided with the necessary flexibility to adapt to urgent needs.

Against this background, the present “Evaluation of the Intergovernmental Committees” was both timely and welcomed by the Secretariat. It includes recommendations aiming at supporting the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the committee system in place. In fact, several of the recommendations mirror the Secretary General’s proposals in the aforementioned report and have already been the subject of reflections within the Secretariat and on the occasion of the meeting of chairs of intergovernmental committees organised by the Secretary General on 20 September 2018. This is true as regards, *inter alia*, the Secretary General’s proposals to use multi-annual thematic strategic frameworks, pursue regular meetings for chairs of intergovernmental committees and to set up an IT platform providing a common database for intergovernmental committees.

The Secretariat is satisfied that these proposals have been taken up in the recommendations of the evaluation report. Some of the proposals and recommendations are already implemented or in the process of being implemented. The Secretariat will pursue its related efforts as appropriate and within the limits of the available resources.

Actions to address recommendations	Target date	Entity responsible
<p><b>Recommendation 1:</b> Focus on defining the strategic frameworks for the committees and request reporting at a strategic level  <b>Management Decision:</b> Accepted</p>		
<p>In his report “Ready for future challenges - Reinforcing the Council of Europe” to the May 2019 Ministerial Session of the Committee of Ministers, the Secretary General proposed that the Organisation’s priorities should be set on the basis of a four-year strategic framework. It would be for the new SG to define such a framework.</p> <p>This framework would set out the thematic priorities for the areas of its work, and help to ensure that political priorities drive the programme and budget, including for the work undertaken in the intergovernmental structures.</p> <p>The strategic framework would also serve as the basis, together with the Programme and Budget, for reporting on results achieved and as a basis for budgeting and fundraising.</p>	<p>Autumn 2021</p>	<p>PO/  DPB/  ODGP/  DGI/  DGII</p>

Actions to address recommendations	Target date	Entity responsible
<p><b>Recommendation 2:</b> Clarify how committees are established and dissolved  <b>Management Decision:</b> Accepted</p>		
<p>Partially accepted.</p> <p>The role of intergovernmental committees is clearly set out in Article 17 of CM/Res(2011)24. The specifying of criteria could be considered. However, experience has shown that the present wording of the Resolution allows for flexibility when it comes to creating, prolonging and disbanding committees.</p> <p>The criteria used each biennium when presenting the intergovernmental structure are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- priority driven, aimed at ensuring political relevance in terms of the key priorities for the Organisation, high-level attendance by member States and promoting intergovernmental dialogue at the pan-European level. The involvement of specialised ministries is a key asset of the Organisation and the structure that is proposed for the next biennium aims at ensuring their continued participation in the intergovernmental work;</li> <li>- limited to the biennial cycle, with no automatic renewal or prolongation, and clearly linked to the Programme for the upcoming biennium.</li> </ul> <p>The decision to create, continue or disband a committee lies with the Committee of Ministers. In the absence of consensus the decision can be taken by a two thirds' majority (with a minimum of 24 in favour) (Article 20d of the Statute).</p> <p>The distinction between steering committees and ad hoc committees is also set out in the governing resolution: steering committees have planning and steering functions and ad hoc committees have a more focused task. The secretariat will review the terms of reference of the committees to ensure that this distinction is respected for the forthcoming biennium.</p>	<p>2020</p>	<p>DPB/  CM Sec/  DGI/  DGII</p>



Actions to address recommendations	Target date	Entity responsible
<p><b>Recommendation 4:</b> Reinforce the coordination and cooperation between the intergovernmental committees</p> <p><b>Management Decision:</b> Accepted</p>		
<p>A meeting of chairs of intergovernmental committees was organised by the Secretary General on 20 September 2018. It is foreseen to make these meetings a regular event.</p> <p>A meeting of Committee Secretariats has been held in parallel with the preparation of the draft Programme and Budget 2020-2021 in order reinforce cooperation and coordination within the Secretariat and ultimately between committees.</p> <p>The development of a one entry-point database for the intergovernmental committees was one of the proposals figuring in the conclusions of the 2018 meeting of the chairpersons of intergovernmental committees. A task force made up of Committee secretaries will be set up to examine the feasibility of its implementation subject to the availability of resources.</p>		<p>PO/ DGI/ DGII/ DPB</p>

Actions to address recommendations	Target date	Entity responsible
<p><b>Recommendation 5:</b> Mobilise extra budgetary resources to support the work of intergovernmental committees  <b>Management Decision:</b> Under consideration</p>		
<p>The strategic framework (see Rec. 1) would serve as the basis, together with the Programme and Budget, for budgeting and fundraising.</p>	<p>Autumn 2021</p>	<p>ODGP</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 6:</b> Ensure more flexibility in the way the committees' staff and operational budget are planned and deployed  <b>Management Decision:</b> Accepted</p>		
<p>The proposal made in the context of the draft Programme and Budget to regroup activities into fewer programme lines should increase flexibility in budgetary terms. Also, DGI and DGII are already reviewing the Secretariat structures with a view to allowing for more flexibility, while maintaining the expertise of senior Secretariat staff. In particular the expertise of the Secretaries of the Committees is one of the comparative advantages with other international organisations, and is reflected in the quality of the Committees' output.</p>	<p>2022</p>	<p>DGI/ DGII</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 7:</b> Consider outsourcing and/or pooling the travel-related tasks associated with committee meetings and other visits which are currently handled by each of the secretariats on behalf of their committee's members  <b>Management Decision:</b> Accepted</p>		
<p>This reflection is already covered by the studies currently being carried-out in the framework of the reform on travel management.</p>	<p>2022</p>	<p>DGA/ DGI/ DGII</p>

Actions to address recommendations	Target date	Entity responsible
<p><b>Recommendation 8:</b> Consider holding more committee meetings outside Strasbourg  <b>Management Decision:</b> Accepted</p>		
<p>According to Article 16 of the Rules of procedure for intergovernmental committees (Appendix I to CM/Res(2011)24), committees shall normally be convened at the premises of the CoE in Strasbourg.</p> <p>Committee meetings may be held elsewhere than in the Strasbourg premises at the invitation of member States and in accordance with the principles of sound management. Cost should not necessarily be the only criteria used in deciding to hold a meeting outside Strasbourg, there could be other more political reasons for doing so. Nevertheless, the Secretariat follows the guiding principle that a meeting organised outside Strasbourg should not cost more than a meeting in Strasbourg.</p>	2022	DG I/ DG II
<p><b>Recommendation 9:</b> Explore and pilot the scope for 'remote participation' in certain committee sessions, such as bureau meetings  <b>Management Decision:</b> Accepted</p>		
<p>This reflection is already covered by the projects currently being carried out in the framework of the Reform on videoconferencing and remote interpreting.</p> <p>It is proposed to include in the committees' draft terms of reference (in the working methods section), the following wording:</p> <p>"Whenever appropriate, it will prioritise environmentally sound working methods such as virtual meetings facilitated by information technology and written consultations."</p>	2022	DGA/ Committee Secretariats

Actions to address recommendations	Target date	Entity responsible
<p><b>Recommendation 10:</b> Improve the way in which the committees communicate their activities and interact with key stakeholders  <b>Management Decision:</b> Accepted</p>		
<p>The development of a single gateway webpage that provides access to comprehensive information for each committee on its objectives and work programme, work in progress in real time, and details/presentations on the work undertaken on standard-setting is under consideration but subject to the availability of the necessary resources. Translations of standards and other outputs by the committees into as many different languages as possible in order to enhance their accessibility for users in member states is likewise subject to the availability of resources. They are currently provided where they are financed within the scope of cooperation projects.</p>	2021	DGI/ DGII
<p>Committee names will be reviewed, with a view to greater harmonisation and shorter names where possible. The advantage of the current acronym is that it is already harmonised in both official languages. More effort will be made to use the full name of a committee for communication purposes.</p>	2020	DGI/ DGII/ CM Sec/ DPB
<p>In January 2019 the CM Sec reminded MAEs of directives for the submission of short and structured documents to the CM, including a template for abridged reporting. The CM Sec oversees that documents are issued in line with this format.</p>	Already done and ongoing	DGI/ DGII/ CM Sec/ DPB
<p>Initiatives such as the publication and distribution of a monthly list of committee meetings, and the use of open days to inform Permanent Representations about the work of committees are pursued.</p>	Already done and ongoing	
<p>Informal presentations of standards are organised before their adoption by the Ministers' Deputies. Member states take part in the drafting of standards in Steering Committees. This may involve Permanent Representations in Strasbourg or line ministries. The draft legal instruments are issued to delegations one month before the meeting of the relevant Rapporteur Group, giving them time to consult the ministries involved in the drafting. The texts are always presented by the Secretariat to the relevant CM Rapporteur Group(s) and the necessary time is taken for discussion and comments from delegations, which can be over numerous meetings. The Parliamentary Assembly is consulted on any legally binding instruments. Only when there is agreement are the standards submitted for adoption by the Deputies. This may be 'in the box' or after discussion as the case may be.</p>	Already done and ongoing	

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<p><b>Recommendation 11:</b> Place more emphasis on evaluating the performance of the committees  <b>Management Decision:</b> Accepted</p>		
<p>Committees are continuously asked to evaluate their activities in the abridged reports submitted to the CM, in line with Article 21 of CM/Res(2011)24.</p> <p>It is proposed that committees hold an exchange of views annually with a view to evaluate their activities and advise the CM/Secretary General on future priorities in their sector and on proposals for future activities and identification of activities that might be discontinued.</p>	<p>Already done and ongoing</p>	<p>DGI/DGII/DPB</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 12:</b> Amend Resolution CM/Res(2011)24 to put changes made in order to address recommendations into effect  <b>Management Decision:</b> Accepted</p>		
<p>CM/Res(2011)24 will be examined in the context of this Action Plan as a whole and any possible modifications will be presented to the CM Rapporteur Group concerned (GR-PBA).</p> <p>It is proposed to do this in time for the preparation of the Programme and Budget 2022-2023 which includes the adoption of the Terms of Reference for all intergovernmental committees.</p>	<p>2020</p>	<p>DBP/ CM Sec</p>

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Entity</b>
CM Sec	CM Secretariat
DGI	Directorate General for Human Rights and Rule of Law
DGII	Directorate General for Democracy
DPB	Directorate of Programme and Budget
PO	Private Office