

Council of Europe Secretariat

Directorate of Internal Oversight



Evaluation (2014)11

10 February 2014

**EVALUATION OF COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES**

- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY -

1. This document is prepared by the Directorate of Internal Oversight (DIO) on the basis of the evaluation carried out from August to December 2013 by Roland Blomeyer (from Blomeyer and Sanz), an external consultant who was commissioned to conduct the “Evaluation of Capacity Development”. It is also based on extensive discussions held by the evaluation reference group, focus groups on Georgia, Albania and Turkey, field visits to these countries and the special follow-up meeting held on 17 March 2014.
2. The purpose of this document is to clarify and adapt the consultant’s recommendations to the specific realities, contexts, resources and constraints of the CoE, with a view to facilitate their operationalisation and implementation. The full report of the consultant is appended to this document.

The significance of the term ‘Capacity Development’ (CD)

3. In the world of aid delivery the term ‘capacity development’ has a special meaning. The EU, UN agencies, the OECD and national development agencies have developed definitions and approaches to CD. The contemporary definitions emphasise the importance of moving away from a top down, donor-driven, short-term approach to a rather holistic and long-term approach to capacity development driven by the cooperation partner and focusing on local ownership, commitment and sustainability. Further, developing capacities of individuals (skills, knowledge, mindsets, awareness) should go in hand with developing capacities of institutions (structures, tools and institutional performance).
4. Almost all CoE interventions in technical cooperation are related to Capacity Development (CD) in the sense of enabling member states to comply with their obligations and commitments under the various conventions and policy documents. The reason why the term CD is used in this evaluation instead of ‘technical co-operation’ is to link the CoE technical co-operation to the European and international debates on aid effectiveness and to facilitate communication with the donors whilst at the same time clarifying the CoE approach and the related procedures and processes.
5. Contrary to the EU and other organisations, there has been very little debate on the concept and the CD/technical co-operation approach within the CoE. The Project managers therefore do not have a common understanding of the concept and the best approach to achieve results and sustainable impact, although these are what most of the projects are about. As a result, there is an inconsistent design of projects with imprecise definitions of expected results and ill-adapted indicators. Moreover, explanations of how the CoE operationalises its comparative advantage to the benefit of projects are inconsistent and incomplete. As a result, communication with donors, particularly with the EU on how the CoE actually delivers, and what they should expect from the CD intervention is not clear. The EU-commissioned evaluation report of 2011 mentions the difficulty of understanding what ‘results’ and ‘impact’ mean by the CoE and the incompatibility of the same notions with the ones used by the EU.
6. In the CoE, the funds received from donors and particularly from the EU are increasing rapidly. This means that the CoE will engage in an increasing number of projects to develop national capacities with the support of external funds. If so, it has to satisfy donor expectations and must be able to clearly explain the CoE approach to CD, its processes and types of results the donors can or cannot expect from the CoE. The present evaluation report reveals that this has been a source of frustration

not only for the donors but for the project managers and in particularly those working in the field offices who, without clear guidelines and instructions, sometimes 'feel like lost soldiers in a battlefield'.

CoE is unable to mobilise fully its Comparative Advantage

7. The CoE comparative advantages are clearly defined in the three categories as mentioned in the report: authority, expertise and tools. The evaluation report reveals that mobilising them systematically in order to support programmes in achieving results is problematic. This is due to the fact that using the institutional leverage and the political push needed to overcome the lack of 'political will' and other obstacles for achieving results with cooperation partners require involvement of senior management and various entities of CoE over and above the function of project managers and beyond the entities to which they belong.
8. There is therefore an inescapable need that the Directors and Directors General closely follow the running of projects, but that it is equally important and urgent that entities whose involvement to project support and interaction with them be clearly and officially defined and documented (such as HRC, PACE, SG, ECtHR, monitoring bodies, intergovernmental steering committees). The development by the ODGPROG of a new Project Management Methodology is an excellent opportunity to integrate the mapping out of processes and procedures that clarify co-operation between operational entities responsible for projects and those responsible for providing support to them.

CONCLUSIONS

On technical co-operation and virtuous circle

9. The link between Technical Co-operation activities and Monitoring and Standard Setting activities needs to be strengthened. Technical co-operation needs to be positioned more strongly inside the organisation, and must indeed become an integral part of the "virtuous circle", i.e. to feed back into standard-setting and monitoring. The strengthening of linkages must occur not only at the level of the programme managers but must rather happen at the policy level (with leadership support), but most importantly at the level of heads of MAEs, who have to be instructed on the priority of cooperation and coordination and held accountable. One of CoE's comparative advantages is its multi-institutional approach; the involvement of the relevant institutions must be integrated into technical co-operation, also as a means to create and sustain political will on the side of co-operation partners.
10. Therefore, a policy statement should be issued on technical co-operation by the Council of Europe, which should outline the concept and approach with regard to technical cooperation conducted by CoE (such as CoE approach to technical assistance, the need for systematic mobilization of CoE's comparative advantage, the need for systematic involvement and engagement of the various CoE entities). This outline should also define the priority areas for technical co-operation and a mid-term strategy which will ensure that all entities of CoE contribute to the attainment of common goals and develop a shared vision.
11. The policy statement will ensure support of senior management for technical co-operation. It will promote a results-based working environment in the CoE and guide CoE staff on how the different entities can work together to achieve impact.

On enhancement of processes

12. CoE must enhance and chart out the internal processes by clearly outlining roles and responsibilities of the various CoE entities throughout the programme cycle, from planning to

implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The processes should be supported by guiding documentation as well as relevant IT instruments. Information flows between the different institutions need to be improved through a more efficient use of IT tools.
The role of Field Offices needs to be recognized and strengthened.

RECOMMENDATIONS

13. At the political level: A policy statement and instruction from the SG to all MAEs clearly outlining his expectations of working relationships between different parts of the house (entities developing and implementing projects and those supporting them practically and politically) to increase impact – including clarifying the Directors and Directors-Generals' roles to ensure leadership support and accountability at senior level. The policy statement should also incorporate recommendation 1 (vision&mission of technical co-operation in CoE) as well as strategic elements of recommendations 4 (thematic focus at country level) and 8 (communication strategy) of the consultant's report.
14. At the operational level:
 - Based on the policy statement of the Secretary General, the ODGPROG when developing the new Project Management Methodology should integrate how linkages of the virtuous circle should function in practice and incorporate in the new methodology recommendations 2 (establishment of consistent and comprehensive processes), 3 (evaluation framework), 4 (thematic focus at country level), 5 (analysis of the shortcomings of the existing regulatory framework for CoE-EU JPs), 6 (funding negotiations with co-operation partners), 7 (strengthening of field offices) of the consultant' report.
 - Based on the policy statement of the Secretary General, the Directorate of Communications in consultation with relevant directorates should prepare a communication strategy focusing on CoE corporate image and develop guidelines on the visibility of CoE, donors and cooperation partners and on regular publications, in accordance with recommendation 8 (communication strategy). The guidelines should be made available to ODG PROG to be included in the updated PMM.