

Council of Europe, Directorate of Internal Oversight

EVALUATION OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE SUPPORT TO ELECTIONS

Final report

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The DIO would like to thank the members of the Reference Group of this evaluation, and all those who have contributed to the evaluation process.

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1. Executive summary

In accordance with its work programme for 2014, approved by the Secretary General and noted by the Committee of Ministers, the Directorate of Internal Oversight has conducted an evaluation of the Council of Europe's support to elections, including both election observation and electoral assistance. The PACE, Congress Secretariats, DG II, DGI and the Venice Commission were involved through regular reference group meetings in the process of evaluation from the finalisation of the ToR to the finalisation of the report and the recommendations. The aim of the evaluation is to take stock of achievements and lessons learned in election support, for the purpose of informing future planning, programming and decision making on election support in the CoE. This report aims to provide this information.

National-level elections in member states are observed by the PACE, while the Congress observes local and regional elections. Alongside with other international parliamentary bodies, both have progressively built up their methodology and asserted their role of political election observation, different from technical election observation provided for by the OSCE ODIHR.

The PACE and Congress possess distinct comparative advantages. As the CoE is a leading standard setting organisation on electoral matters, particularly with the work of the Venice Commission, and has an unequalled monitoring mandate, its election observation has an important political acumen. c. The Congress is appreciated by domestic and international stakeholders for its unique ability to systematically observe local and regional elections in all member states. Its recent policy on following up on its election observation recommendations is promising.

For these reasons, the PACE and Congress have contributed to international election observation results in terms of credibility of the electoral process in new democracies, deterrence of electoral fraud, and identification of shortcomings requiring electoral reforms. The impact is both direct and indirect, because election observation reports are powerful tools in the hands of champions of change such as civil society. Although it is difficult to measure the specific impact of the PACE election observation, and despite some limitations in terms of finance and human resources allocated to the PACE Secretariat, PACE election observation missions are usually considered by stakeholders as a useful complement to their technical-level counterparts.. The Congress' impact is easier to assess and appreciated by stakeholders who are familiar with it, but remains limited due to capacity constraints and a lack of visibility. The findings of the evaluation show that, in a context of multiple carriers of election observation, it is paramount that international election observation missions complement and reinforce each other. It further requires harmonised methodology and a unified message among international observers, which conveys the perception that standards and methods of observation are coherent and trustworthy. It takes time and consistency to ensure all stakeholders trust the mutually reinforcing roles of the various international election observation actors.

The CoE electoral assistance takes place in an environment where multiple international actors intervene, including major donors such as the EU, UNDP or large bilateral agencies. The CoE

enjoys several comparative advantages. Through the Venice Commission, it is identified as a leading organisation in the area of election-related legislation, both in terms of issuing reference documents and advising countries on necessary legislative reforms. The CoE has also developed specialized competencies in the areas of electoral disputes, transfer of knowledge on standards and legislation for election administration bodies, or gender aspects of elections. The entire spectrum of CoE electoral assistance benefits from the reputation of the organisation as home to the relevant standards, as a respected monitoring body, and as a benevolent partner. Finally, the CoE offers cutting edge expertise. Where there is political commitment and agents of changes in the civil society and state institutions, the CoE's assistance has therefore contributed to harmonisation with standards.

However, the CoE electoral assistance also suffers from structural capacity constraints. Its core human and financial resources are scarce, creating dependency towards donors who are not inclined to provide long-term funding independently of imminent electoral deadlines. This situation has a detrimental influence on the size of CoE's programmes and their continuity, and prevents the CoE from making the most of its complementary role along with other actors in the field of international technical assistance to elections.

While main CoE entities have established some synergies and dialogue to avoid overlap, and eventually reinforce each other, the CoE still lacks a sustainable internal coordination and planning approach, such as long-term country strategies for election support which would serve to make the most of existing resources, and to elicit more long-term support by donors. This lack of strategic planning also prevents the CoE from efficiently channelling information from the assistance side, from election observation and from monitoring into strategic plans. It also represents a shortcoming in the CoE's ability to advocate the implementation of its recommendations.

These shortfalls prevent the CoE from optimizing its comparative advantages, and making the most of its complementary role to other actors. This is even more the case as the CoE has not systematically established strategic partnerships with other international providers of election assistance: to realise its potential, the CoE needs to further assert its place among other international actors, building on its image of a competent and trusted partner. Where such partnership exists between the Venice Commission and ODIHR, recognition for the CoE's role is much higher. Likewise, the CoE could expand its cooperation with civil society actors, who as change advocates using the CoE's recommendations, are natural multipliers of the CoE's impact.

While it would be unrealistic to expect the CoE to take a leading role in electoral support overall, it has the potential to become a leading organisation in its main fields of expertise. Using clear strategies and priorities as a basis to create partnerships with other international actors and to further engage domestic actors, the CoE should be able to overcome its capacity constraints, mobilize increased support, foster recognition and enhance its impact.

2. Introduction

1.1 Evaluation approach

The 2014 Work programme of the Directorate of Internal Oversight (DIO) of the Council of Europe (CoE) foresees the evaluation of the CoE support to elections.¹ This evaluation covers all election support actions, including electoral assistance and election observation, as performed by the relevant bodies of the CoE: Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law (DG I), Directorate General of Democracy (DG II), the Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), the Secretariat of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (the Congress), the Enlarged Agreement on Democracy through Law (the Venice Commission) and all other relevant entities. Concerning election observation, it should be noted that this report is not an evaluation of the activities of the members of PACE and Congress, but rather an analysis of how CoE election observation is perceived among its key stakeholders, and how the CoE as a whole may optimize the impact of these activities

The DIO convened a Reference Group composed of representatives of these entities, to ensure they accompany the evaluation process with feedback, advice and suggestions. In addition, the DIO held consultations with the senior management of the concerned entities. The PACE, Congress Secretariats, DG II, DGI and the Venice Commission were involved through regular reference group meetings in the process of evaluation from the finalisation of the ToR to the finalisation of the report and the recommendations. The DIO would like to thank the Reference Group members and senior management for their valuable contributions throughout the evaluation process.

This evaluation takes stock of achievements and lessons learned in election support, for the purpose of informing future planning, programming and decision making on election support in the CoE. To this end, this evaluation serves the following objectives:

- **Objective 1:** Identifying the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the CoE in election support, and informing future decision making on optimizing comparative advantage;
- **Objective 2:** Identifying success stories and good practices that can be replicated, particularly in election assistance;
- **Objective 3:** Identifying ways to improve the working methods, tools and structures used for election assistance and observation respectively;
- **Objective 4:** Identifying risks and areas for improvement of complementarity and cooperation among the various CoE bodies engaged in election support.

Based on this background, the evaluation Terms of Reference defined the following questions to be answered:

¹ GR-PBA(2014)2

Evaluation question 1	Evaluation question 2	Evaluation question 3	Evaluation question 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To what extent do the tools and methods used in election support help the implementation of relevant norms and standards on elections?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To what extent does the CoE possess adequate capacity (in terms of organisational capacity, expertise, funding, human resources, political capital, access...) to conduct election support?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What are the existing and possible synergies, overlaps or opportunities for enhancing coherence between the CoE and other international organisations, and among CoE bodies, to conduct election support?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What are the niches of excellence and comparative advantages of the CoE compared to other international organisations in the field of elections?</i>

This report is organised around five main chapters. Further to the executive summary (Chapter 1) and this introduction (Chapter 2), Chapter 3 presents the background of election observation and election assistance; Chapter 4 comprises the main findings from desk research and case study work in Albania, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova; and Chapter 5 outlines a series of conclusions and recommendations with a view to enhancing future election support. The main report is supported by six annexes, including the terms of reference and inception report for this evaluation and a separate annex for each of the four case studies.

1.2 Methodology

The evaluation team, comprised of one DIO evaluator and one external consultant, chose a combined data collection approach for the case studies. For each evaluation question the evaluation team combined several sources of data:

- Existing primary qualitative data (applicable normative framework and good practices on electoral standards and on election observation, election observation reports by the PACE and Congress, Venice Commission opinions and reports, programmatic documents and reports);
- Primary qualitative data collected from different and complementary sources (semi-structured interviews with CoE staff; election support partners; NGOs);
- Existing secondary qualitative data (election observation and election observation reports guidelines by other international observers, EU result-oriented monitoring reports, academic and press articles, civil society reports).

For this evaluation, the DIO has selected four case study countries: Albania (AL), Azerbaijan (AZ), Georgia (GE) and Moldova (GE). The team interviewed 18 persons in the CoE headquarters and representations in Vienna and Warsaw, 7 persons in OSCE/ODIHR headquarters in Warsaw, 13 persons in Albania, 12 persons in Azerbaijan, 39 persons in Georgia and 15 persons in Moldova.² The team analysed these interviews in a standardized fashion, using

² The difference between Georgia and other countries is because Georgia was selected as a pilot case study destination: this means the evaluation team interviewed a wider range of interlocutors to test the interview questionnaire and the stakeholder mapping process, in order to narrow down the stakeholder map for other countries.

an interview analysis matrix structured around the evaluation questions and synthesizing the main opinions displayed on each question by the interviewees while noting the type and number of interviewees representing this opinion. The team validated the findings by cross-checking interviewee input (meaning that input was only considered if shared by representatives of at least two categories of stakeholders such as CoE staff, election administration bodies, civil society organisations, international donors/agencies), and confronting with documentary evidence.

The team experienced certain challenges in the data collection phase:

- a) With one exception, the team was not able to meet with PACE Members, including the Chairman of the Council of Democratic Elections;
- b) There was limited documentary evidence on the effectiveness of election assistance programmes, because programme reports rarely focused on the results and impact of programmes, and did not sufficiently substantiate indicator-based reporting. Reports were more often centred on activities, which is difficult to exploit from an evaluation point of view.

Methodologically, the attribution of changes to the CoE's action has proven often difficult. Several international stakeholders provide electoral assistance, in the context of reforms initiated by the countries themselves. This multiplicity of actors renders it difficult to ascertain all causal links between the CoE's assistance action and the changes observed by stakeholders.

It is even more difficult to assess the effectiveness of election observation. Legally binding instruments on elections are scarce: they include chiefly Article 25 (b) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 3 of the Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights. However, the provisions of these articles are extremely concise. On this basis, the CoE has developed a series of instruments elaborating on these standards. The most commonly used is the 2002 Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters,³ developed by the Venice Commission upon request from the PACE,⁴ and endorsed by the PACE through a Resolution calling the CoE to "*transform the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters into a European convention*".⁵ This document is further supported by the Venice Commission document on Europe's Electoral Heritage.⁶ While these documents are used by the PACE for election observation, they do not amount to a convention supported by a specific monitoring mechanism. Beside election observation reports PACE election observation results are tracked within the reporting under the monitoring procedure.

The assessment of effectiveness of election observation is further constrained by difficulties over attribution, i.e. the extent to which a causal link can be established between election observation and subsequent election reform. This is exacerbated by the fact that CoE election observation is usually organised in the framework of a wider European or international election observation effort, involving ODIHR and a number of parliamentary bodies. The difficulty with attribution applies less to the Congress, considering the few international election observations at the level of local elections.

³ CDL-AD (2002) 23 rev

⁴ Resolution 1264 (2001) and 1320 (2003)

⁵ Recommendation 1595 (2003)1

⁶ CDL (2002) 7 rev.

3. Background

The Council of Europe supports the conduct of regular, free, fair and transparent elections in its Member States and in other countries upon request. The CoE's election support work is based on the principle of a "virtuous cycle" between three distinct aspects:

- a) **Elaboration of norms and standards** consists in defining the norms and standards applicable to elections, and to which Member States should strive to adhere;
- b) **Election observation** aims to verify the adherence to these norms and standards, and identify gaps between the standards and the practice;
- c) **Election assistance** consists in providing advice and technical assistance to the MSs (and other countries upon request) on various aspects of elections such as the elaboration of legislative frameworks, the administration of elections, the raising of voter awareness, or capacity building for domestic election observers.

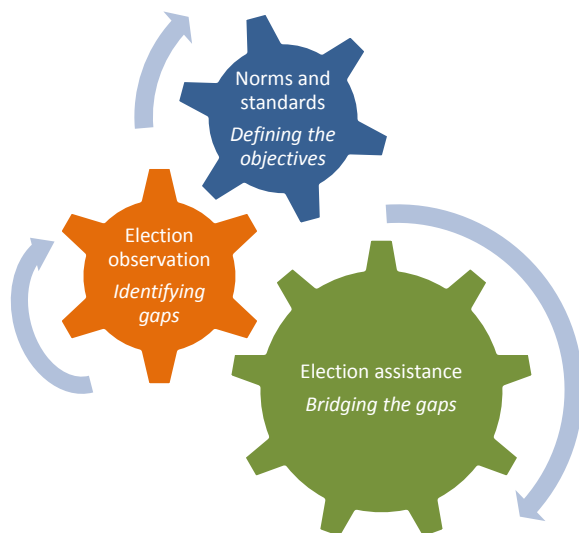


Figure 1: The dynamics of the CoE work on elections

These three aspects of the CoE's election support need to reinforce one another, and are ultimately meant to enhance human rights, the rule of law and democracy through regular, free and fair elections. Various CoE actors take a part in each of these three pillars.

Election support aims to support better fulfilment of CoE standards and guidelines on elections. The document review has enabled to summarize these standards and guidelines. The inception phase has revealed, however, that there is no commonly agreed definition of standards. Two main approaches coexist:

- a) Standards should be understood *stricto sensu*. They are constituted by legally binding documents, primarily Conventions and their corresponding protocol(s), as well as case law;
- b) Standards should be understood in a wider context. Beside legally binding documents, they also include recommendations, guidelines, codes of practice and other non-binding

documents. Such documents become “international standards” if the follow up that is given to them is substantive, if they are commonly referred to by governments, parliaments, other international organizations, and civil society organisations.

The Venice Commission has endeavoured to prioritize its recommendations in light of the legal hierarchy of standards, and with a focus on the core standards and recommendations on electoral matters. This discussion is particularly relevant to evaluation questions related to effectiveness. Therefore, the evaluation team has integrated this aspect in the interview questions. Annex 2 presents a non-exhaustive list of standards and reference documents most commonly used.

Election observation

According to existing research, election observation can have positive effects on electoral reforms, all of which were observed to different degrees in the context of the case studies, in particular regarding election quality, i.e. monitored elections are better than non-monitored elections, and countries with repeated engagement from monitors improve their election quality over time.⁷ Elections are heavily conditioned by trust: election results will be recognized as legitimate if there is citizens’ trust that they reflect the choice of the majority. Election observation also needs to be trusted to be considered a truthful assessment of how trustworthy election results are.

When concluding positively and with one voice on an election, international election observation is considered to validate elections, and thus contributes to trust in democratic processes (MD). In transitioning democracies, this factor is essential to the continuation of democratic reforms and to the political stability and continuity. However it is a lengthy process requiring repeated positive experiences, as well as constancy and coherence of international election observation. Case study analysis and input from CoE and other stakeholders confirm that the impact of election observation on reforms of the electoral framework is heavily dependent on political willingness in the member states.

In three of the case study countries (MD, GE, AL), CEC representatives, domestic observers, NGOs advocating for electoral reforms, EU Delegations, in all case study countries considered a joint international election observation effort, to have contributed to domestic advocacy on election reform. For instance civil society pressure using international election observation conclusions had contributed to recounting (MD). In one case study, all interviewees but Government representatives considered that diverging conclusions from international election observers had reduced trust in the election observation process.

In ‘transition democracies’ showing limited incidents of election fraud, the continuation of PACE election observation within the monitoring process is considered by CEC representatives, civil society and international organisations as necessary to consolidate free and fair elections (GE, MD, AL). A significant proportion of interlocutors in Georgia and Moldova warned against

⁷ Judith G. Kelley, *Monitoring Democracy*, 2012. Kelley’s work is considered the most comprehensive and up-to-date account of the effectiveness of election observation with an empirical basis comprising data for 1,324 national elections between 1975 and 2004, one third of which were monitored, and using state-of-the-art statistical techniques to reduce selection bias.

the sustainability of election reforms as political changes occur: free, fair and transparent elections can result in political alternance, which although positive might involve backsliding of reforms. According to civil society representatives, it will be paramount to maintain a high level of scrutiny through election observation in the next few years.

The observation of national-level elections (parliamentary and presidential elections, as well as referenda) is implemented by the PACE, upon invitation by the relevant country. Since 1974, when the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) first observed elections in Greece, the CoE has conducted over 240 elections observation missions. The PACE observes elections as a part of its monitoring or post-monitoring procedures. Therefore, the PACE only observes elections in countries under these procedures, or as a part of a partnership for democracy with non-member States. Observation is conducted by PACE members (systematically including country-specific monitoring Rapporteurs), supported by the PACE Secretariat. Rules and guidelines set the frame for election observation, primarily the Guidelines for the observation of elections by the Parliamentary Assembly, which are part of the PACE Rules of Procedures.⁸ The PACE often performs election observation as a part of an international Election Observation mission, which usually includes the election observation mission of ODIHR, and delegations from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the European Parliament, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the NATO.

As mandated in the Council of Minister's Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2011)2, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (the Congress) observes local and regional-level elections upon invitation by the relevant authority of the member country. Rules on the Congress' election observation are enshrined, in particular, in its Resolution 306(2010)REV adopted in October 2013. The Congress regularly invites the EU Committee of Regions to participate in its election observation missions.

Electoral assistance

Electoral assistance aims to address the shortcomings identified, in particular, through election observation. Historically, the Venice Commission has been the first to perform election assistance through:

- a) Issuing opinions upon request;
- b) Performing research and advice on necessary legislative amendments or on the practical organisation and management of elections, addressed to the central electoral bodies, the legislators and the executive of beneficiary countries;
- c) Organising training for domestic authorities in charge of election organisation (e.g. training of Central Electoral Commissions and electoral commissions);
- d) Providing long-term assistance to central electoral bodies through the co-location of experts;
- e) Organising workshops and conferences for central electoral bodies, other domestic authorities in charge of election organisation, legislators, executive, media and civil society. Such events may be held at national, regional or multilateral levels.

⁸ AS/Bur(2012)85

In addition to electoral assistance, the Venice Commission provides the PACE's election observation missions with legal and legislative advice on the occasion of election observation. While the Venice Commission performs the core of legal and legislative advice, the Congress also takes on part of this advisory work when it comes to the local and regional levels. The Directorate of Democracy (DG II) implements electoral assistance programmes, in cooperation or jointly with the Venice Commission. Typically, such programmes comprise of the following activities:

- a) Development of references such as handbooks or curricula for election stakeholders and voters;
- b) Training, coaching and networking and exposure to international good practices (e.g. through study visits and translation of reference documents) for central electoral bodies and other election stakeholders (in particular women candidates);
- c) Awareness raising activities targeting the voters (e.g. through TV debates, publications);
- d) Training, networking and coaching of non-governmental organisations involved in domestic elections observation, voter mobilisation or access of vulnerable categories to their voting rights;
- e) Training and awareness rising for first-time voters and political elite, through education of students and school pupils, and cooperation with the CoE network of Schools of Political Studies.

The Directorate of Human Rights and Rule of Law (DG I) implements this work by providing training, networking and technical support to the media on the coverage of elections.

Gender mainstreaming

Whereas the participation of women in election is a matter of attention of the PACE, election observation itself does not specifically analyse observation results through a gender perspective. Election assistance on the other hand increasingly focuses on gender issues. For instance a programme on “Strengthening accountability of young and political leaders” works on the increasing women’s engagement in political processes, while the regional joint programme Eastern Partnership Facility implemented an array of activities on women candidates and participation of women in elections. Beneficiaries usually welcomed this recent emphasis and considered it relevant. The vast majority of interviewees in this evaluation were men, both among country partners and international actors, which suggests the relevance of the issue in the area of elections.

4. Findings

4.1 Election observation

Evaluation Question 1 – To what extent do the tools and methods used in election support help the implementation of relevant norms and standards on elections?

Finding 1: Election observation methodology can be strengthened.

Over the years, the Secretariat of the PACE has contributed to the progressive elaboration of the PACE election observation methodology. PACE election observation follows guidance set out in two documents, namely the six-page ‘*Guidelines for the observation of elections by the Parliamentary Assembly*’,⁹ and the 27-page ‘*Practical Guide*’.¹⁰ Both documents focus on the practicalities of election observation, e.g. the composition of missions, practical organisation such as travel or coordination issues. The Guidelines, in particular, focus on modalities and forms of observation missions, assessment of an election as a continuous process with several stages rather than a one-day exercise, cooperation with other international partners, political and geographical balance of composition of observation missions, declaration of potential conflict of interest of members of the missions, and modalities of preparation and adoption of election observation reports.

The guidance comprises very limited elaboration on specific election issues: ‘*Electoral legislation*’ is the only area elaborated to some extent by the Guidelines. There are no reporting forms as part of PACE guidance documents, however the Secretariat of the PACE reports that members of election observation missions normally use ODIHR observation forms, or, when ODIHR is not present, forms prepared by the Venice Commission. The rules for selection of the election observation mission, although they ensure fair representation of political groups, do not guarantee the expertise of the observers. In the absence of substantial or systematic training for observers, interviewees see the lack of professionalism and expertise as a major risk for PACE observers (MD, GE, CoE Headquarters, one PACE Member). According to the PACE Secretariat, the members of election observation missions receive detailed oral and written briefings from the PACE Secretariat before.

Congress guidance on election observation is of a similar nature.¹¹ There is very limited feedback on Congress observation. Those stakeholders having a view on the matter considered that the Congress’ tools and guidelines were showing progress, and that the Congress made fuller use of these tools. With its Strategy and Rules for Observation of Local and Regional Elections,¹² the Congress has pioneered an approach of integrated election observation and follow-up through cooperation. Stakeholders with knowledge of the Congress’ observation considered this a good practice; however its implementation is in its early stage, and could not be assessed by the evaluation team. Congress election observation is considered to have contributed to local government / local election reform via systematic observation, reporting of deficiencies, and follow-up dialogue (GE, AL). However for one case study, Congress reporting suggests that its reporting of deficiencies did not trigger any reform (AZ).¹³

⁹ CoE, PACE, Guidelines for the observation of elections by the Parliamentary Assembly: proposed amendments, AS/Bur (2014) 17, 17 February 2014.

¹⁰ CoE, PACE, Election Observation – A practical guide for parliamentarians, 2014

¹¹ CoE, Congress, Observation of local and regional elections – strategy and rules of the Congress, Resolution 306 (2010), 18 June 2010; CoE, Congress, Congress policy in observing local and regional elections, Resolution 274 (2008), 3 December 2008; CoE, Congress, Recommendation 124 (2003) on the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters, 21 March 2003

¹² Resolution 306 (2010) REV; See also Resolution 353 (2013) REV Congress post-monitoring and post-observation of elections: developing political dialogue;

¹³ Chamber of Local Authorities, Draft Resolution, CPL(18)2, 8 February 2010

Evaluation Question 2: To what extent does the CoE possess adequate capacity (in terms of organisational capacity, expertise, funding, human resources, political capital, access...) to conduct election support?

Finding 2: Election observation draws on limited human resources of the Secretariats.

The PACE and Congress draw on limited human resources in their respective Secretariats to support election observation. The PACE Secretariat's section for Inter-parliamentary cooperation and Election Observation counts six staff (one head, three officers and two assistants). The CoE's Secretariat and the Venice Commission support PACE, however, this is limited to support during most (although not all) election observation missions, since the relevant units cover both, the support of election observation and the delivery of election assistance. The Congress' Division for Regional and Local Election Observation has three staff members, partly involved in election activities. Other relevant units in the CoE, who interact with the Congress and the PACE, include the DG II Election Unit (five staff); DG I Media Cooperation Unit (four staff); the Venice Commission Elections and Political Parties Division (five staff).

Finding 3: PACE and Congress election observation have enjoyed limited visibility.

Most stakeholders perceived the European / international election observation of national elections as a joint effort under ODIHR leadership (GE, AL). The joint international election observation missions as such enjoy substantial visibility, although most actors do not easily differentiate between the various international actors involved.

The observation of local and regional elections is generally less visible than national-level international election observation. However, those stakeholders who had more intimate knowledge of the issue almost always distinguished the Congress from other actors, because of its follow-up strategy and ability to systematically observe these elections provided the authorities of the country concerned issue an official invitation.

Evaluation Question 3 – What are the existing and possible synergies, overlaps or opportunities for enhancing coherence between the CoE and other international organisations, and among CoE bodies, to conduct election support?

Finding 4: Synergies and coherence among international election observers are essential to the overall credibility and usefulness of election observation.

The PACE Secretariat has deployed significant efforts to facilitate the coordination with other organisations observing elections. They maintain technical level dialogue during election observation missions, which contributes to the usual coordination of statements between the PACE, European Parliament and ODIHR. However, and bearing in mind the independence of parliamentarians in the exercise of their mandate, in a few instances it has not been possible for

international election observers to come to common conclusions. Such instances, in particular in one Member State, have elicited criticism on the credibility of internal election observation as a whole, according to civil society, state institutions including CECs in several member States, and interlocutors from international and regional organisations, as well as bilateral donors.

Stakeholders appreciated Congress election observation efforts at the local level, considering that the focus of European / international election observation effort is mostly on parliamentary or presidential elections (GE). The Congress is the only international organisation systematically observing local and regional elections. In this context, it maintains cooperation with ODIHR when the latter engages in support to local democracy. The Congress, if OSCE/ODIHR is observing local or regional elections, systematically attends briefings with the ODIHR core team and arranges meetings with the ODIHR long-term observers in the regions. Cooperation materialises in a joint final press conference after Election Day, with joint press release and preliminary conclusions. However, the respective bodies prepare and issue their final reports separately. Beside ODIHR, the Congress cooperates with the EU Committee of the Regions to organise regular training sessions for its members on election observation. Finally, in line with Congress' Resolution 306(2010)REV, briefings with representatives of local NGOs and media representatives are systematically organised during missions to observe local and regional elections.

Finding 5: Election observation benefits from increased CoE-internal synergies, but there is room for improvement.

The PACE Secretariat has supported the synergy between election observation and other aspects of the monitoring procedure particularly through the elaboration of preparatory documents drawing on the results of both. Both country-specific monitoring reports and election observation reports constantly make reference to one another, which further highlights that election observation is an intimate part of the monitoring process.

Systematic Venice Commission inputs to PACE missions was also considered to contribute to PACE election observation, which is in accordance with the Co-operation agreement between the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) of 4 October 2004.¹⁴ For all PACE election observation missions, upon systematic invitation by the PACE Secretary General, the Venice Commission Secretariat's election experts systematically advise, and in most cases accompany the PACE election observation missions. This gives the election observation mission the necessary background to elaborate more informed findings.

Within the CoE, the Congress mostly cooperates with the Venice Commission, and regularly requests its opinions on matters related to local democracy revealed by election observation (MD). Due to resource constraints despite the Congress' invitations, the Venice Commission was not in a position to delegate a member of its Secretariat to the Congress' election observation missions. In 2013 the Congress appointed a special spokesperson for elections who is also the Congress representative at the Council for Democratic Elections, and the Venice Commission

¹⁴ PACE Resolution 1202 (1999) adopted on 4 November 1999) with subsequent modifications of the Rules of Procedure

interlocutor. It is too early to evaluate the effects of this measure, but it should be recorded as a good practice. Increasingly, problems detected during the pre-electoral phase and issues stemming from Congress' Monitoring Reports of the Charter of Local Self-Government or from previous observations are taken into account for the actual observation. Further systematisation of this approach is amongst the Congress' priorities for 2015/16.

The evaluation team found no evidence of the Secretariat of the PACE systematically using information gathered through electoral assistance by other entities of the CoE. While election observation reports often mention the importance of electoral assistance programmes, and meetings between the PACE Secretariat and entities involved in electoral assistance do take place, election observation reports do not specifically contrast the assessments made during assistance programmes (e.g. on the capacity of election observation bodies) with the reality of elections themselves. This constitutes an opportunity for further improvement, as election observation could use such background information to further document the pre-election period. Likewise, there was no evidence of direct cooperation between PACE and Congress Secretariats on developing common tools, although such cooperation could enable the two institutions to draw on each other's experience.

The PACE and Congress Secretariats exchange information and meet regularly, however this cooperation is not formalized or translated into joint documents or common guidelines. Cross fertilization requires to be translated into genuine synergy.

Evaluation Question 4: What are the niches of excellence and comparative advantages of the CoE compared to other international organisations in the field of elections?

Finding 6: The Congress' systematic observation of elections constitutes a comparative advantage.

Congress election observation is considered a CoE comparative advantage, since in some countries, the Congress is the only observer at the local level (GE, MD). The Congress' policy to also observe elections in countries which are not under monitoring represents a strong comparative advantage, as it increases the perception of political neutrality, and the acceptance of recommendations.

4.2. Electoral assistance

Evaluation Question 1 - To what extent do the tools and methods used in election support help the implementation of relevant norms and standards on elections?

Finding 7: CoE legislative assistance in electoral matters has an attributable impact.

The overwhelming majority of respondents, regardless of country or type of organisation, concur to say that **legislative reform is the area in which the CoE's electoral assistance has the highest, most tangible, and most measurable impact.** Throughout the CoE's reporting on

programmes, legislative changes are also presented as one of the main results of the CoE's actions.

In the countries visited, respondents explained that the Venice Commission's opinions and advice, coupled with advocacy by the FOs and DG II programmes, had a **direct impact** on draft legislation and legislative amendments which the governments present to the legislators. Ultimately, this has an impact on both the type of legislative acts which are adopted (for instance, interviewees from Moldova and Georgia reported that increased attention to drafting legislation on political party financing and electoral campaign financing owed a lot to the CoE's advocacy and assistance), and on the content of legislation.

The CoE's advice and advocacy possibly has an even **higher indirect impact on legislation, through domestic advocates** of electoral reforms, such as the civil society, parliamentarians, or champions of change within government administrations. This is particularly the case in Georgia and Moldova, where the civil society is active on the matter. They use the CoE advice, particularly the Venice Commission's opinions, as strong arguments in their lobbying efforts with the government and parliament. Interviewees quoted several examples where draft legislation that was not considered as compliant with the CoE's standards was thoroughly amended as a result of common advocacy by the CoE and the domestic civil society (Albania, Moldova, Georgia). They also highlighted that breakthrough legislative changes were usually the result of intense domestic lobbying by the domestic civil society combined with international pressure, but that such efforts would not be so effective if they did not rely on the CoE's expert advice and opinion: according to them the CoE is perceived as authoritative in legislative matters in the area of elections, and advocates who relay the CoE's recommendations combine the legitimacy of the CoE with the capacity of domestic actors.

Finding 8: Complementarily to leading organisations in electoral assistance, the CoE is a useful and appreciated provider of capacity building for various election actors, chiefly election administration bodies.

Beside legislative advice and advocacy, the CoE performs **capacity building** in the area of elections. This chiefly involves support to election administrative bodies (Central Electoral Commissions, specialised commissions such as commission on voters' lists) and electoral dispute arbitration bodies (usually judges). The most commonly used techniques are training, advice, exposure to international practices, co-location of experts, organisation of dialogue forums such as conferences. This assistance is generally highly appreciated by its recipients because of its high quality. Thanks to cutting edge expertise (both from the CoE staff and from hired experts) the CoE is recognized in all visited countries as having **contributed to the professionalization, independence and increased technical performance** of these bodies. This contribution is considered **complementary in terms of quantity**, to that of leading international electoral assistance actors which have massively supported election administration bodies.

Civil society support (NGOs but also university-level educational institutions such as the CoE Schools of Political Studies) is limited in quantity, but appreciated for quality, particularly as

regards the transfer of technical expertise to domestic election observers. In this area too, the CoE specializes on expert advice and linkages among domestic observer organisations rather than institutional capacity building. However, this approach is effective only in countries where the civil society is already strong, with high institutional capacity and visibility. Where the civil society is vulnerable, CoE assistance to the civil society lends its aura to the cause of the supported partners, but it is not in a position to curb government pressure on civil society activists, or effectively increase civil society's ability to push for electoral reforms (AZ).

Support to adequate media coverage of elections (including support to self-regulatory bodies which oversee media coverage, and direct support to media outlets) is relatively discrete, and the breadth of activities depends a lot on donor support. Where it is provided with certain continuity (Moldova) it is highly appreciated for its high quality.

Voter awareness activities remain mostly centred on the capitals, and their limited size makes it impossible to measure the impact on actual participation. The effectiveness of the CoE in this area of assistance is probably limited, but these activities create opportunities for the CoE to reach out and establish links with the wider civil society (youth, regions, ordinary citizens).

Relatively recent **gender focus** in some areas of electoral assistance seems to have potential if it is beneficiary-driven: in Georgia or Moldova where partners have a demand for this approach, it has pushed women's participation in elections (as voters or candidates) higher on the priority list of election administration bodies.

Finding 9: Contrary to what is the case on certain transversal election assistance issues, the CoE does not have explicit and detailed country strategies on electoral assistance, which could enhance its effectiveness and to its monitoring capacity.

Except for the Venice Commission's opinions, **the bulk of electoral assistance is delivered in advance of electoral deadlines.** These intense preparatory periods are not the most conducive to the elaboration and implementation of institutional reforms and long-term strategies in partnership with the beneficiary institutions: the latter experience high workload with time pressure, and tend to express their demands in a state of urgency rather than prioritize more fundamental needs. In addition there are gaps between assistance programmes, which can last several years. Lack of continuity means that the CoE provide good ad hoc expert advice, rather than a significant contribution to the core institutional capacities of its beneficiaries, and the CoE's assistance is somewhat diluted in general international electoral assistance.

The CoE is progressively palliating these shortcomings, by maintaining relationships and advice between the programmes, and by developing multi-election programmes spreading over an average of three years. Finally, through regional programmes, the CoE has maintained limited electoral assistance activities on thematic issues in some countries. With the new Programmatic Cooperation Framework documents between the EU and the CoE, which include some multi-country thematic activities on elections, it is expected that higher, more continuous, more predictable funding will benefit a more strategic approach to electoral assistance. This takes

place while DG II has developed strategic documents on the way ahead for transversal electoral assistance thematic areas (such as party financing, domestic election observation or trust in the electoral systems). However, at country level, the CoE does not have explicit strategies which would outline:

- a) The identified areas of focus, and an assessment that would draw on key CoE-external success factors (political commitment, existence of a common message among international actors, abilities of the civil society) and take into account the current CoE capacity.
- b) Reference to election observation results;
- c) Relevance to CoE country action plans, where applicable;
- d) Mission, vision, values/standards, purpose and objectives;
- e) Timeline, benchmarks and expected budget requirements.

Moreover a continuous approach to electoral assistance remains severely constrained by limited human resources, and intervenes at the end of the reform cycle in several countries (AL, GE, MOL).

Finding 10: Electoral assistance reaches its limits where domestic political will is lacking.

Regardless of the amount of technical assistance and advice provided, reforms depend on political commitment in the country. This concerns particularly the independence of election administration bodies (the legislation that enables such bodies to perform professionally and independently, and the willingness to refrain from hindrances/interference), because it conditions not only legislative advice but also capacity building, which represents the bulk of non-legislative electoral assistance

In some cases there is insufficient political **willingness to pursue reform**: the essential points of the relevant legislation are not amended (AZ), or overall compliant legislation still leaves room for politicized interpretation and there is no willingness to adjust such interpretation through adequate bylaws (AL). In these cases, while a significant proportion of the CoE' recommendations (particularly those of the Venice Commission) are implemented in the legislation, the few most important recommendations are not adhered to. In order to ensure that such situations are clearly identified, the Venice Commission now systematically identifies its key recommendations (usually up to four) in its opinions regarding electoral matters, while other recommendations are presented as secondary. In countries where political support for electoral reforms is insufficient, these key recommendations are usually the ones which are not fully implemented.¹⁵

Such situations often continue while election administration bodies express persistent demand for technical support. The CoE may also be concerned about maintaining a level of dialogue. In the most difficult cases, the position of the Venice Commission and DG II is to refrain from sizeable programmes for electoral assistance unless some political will is demonstrated and there are realistic prospects for reform. This option appears to be the most reasonable because

¹⁵ Such situations could concern for instance the independence of election administration bodies, the conditions for registration of candidates, or the elaboration of voters' lists.

continuous support, by strengthening and legitimizing government-dependent election administration bodies, could in fact be detrimental to free, fair and transparent elections.

Evaluation Question 2: To what extent does the CoE possess adequate capacity (in terms of organisational capacity, expertise, funding, human resources, political capital, access...) to conduct election support?

Finding 11: Limited human resources constrain the CoE's ability to meet expressed needs in electoral assistance.

As presented before, the CoE possesses **limited human resources dedicated to election support including assistance**. In Field Offices, the CoE does not have expert staff on elections, beyond the few programme officers hired under extra-budgetary programmes for a limited duration. Most stakeholders having benefited from electoral assistance, while understanding limitations, have expressed regret that the CoE was not in a position to take on some of the assistance work currently implemented by other, less standard- and expertise-based actors. The CoE has also developed positive working relations with its external consultants, so that the latter may further establish trust and a long-term rapport with the partners in the countries. While it does not replace core human resources, this continuous relationship somewhat palliates existing constraints to the continuity of assistance. Stronger human resources would enhance the CoE's ability to ensure a reliable set of activities in countries expressing need and readiness.

Almost all interviewees concur to assess the level of expertise in the CoE and among its external consultants as excellent, which indicates that, **while limited in quantity, the CoE's human resources are adequate in quality**. This greatly contributes to making the CoE's advice and recommendations authoritative and well recognized.

The limited amount of human resources in FOs, the absence of core experts in the field, and the fact that Heads of Field Offices do not have the same diplomatic rank, supporting staff and political acumen than their counterparts from other international organisations, **hinder the FOs' capacity to contribute to monitoring and advocacy on electoral matters**. Interviewees from including other international organisations, civil society and state agencies, wished the CoE FOs were equipped with stronger capacity, and used as relays of HQ's recommendations. According to them, this would greatly increase the likelihood of implementation of recommendations, because day-to-day contacts at policy level are considered most effective in resolving obstacles linked to political commitment.

Finding 12: Proportionally high dependency on donor and the lack of long-term strategies have curtailed the CoE's ability to fulfil its potential as a provider of electoral assistance.

The ordinary budget constrains the financial capacity to perform continuous assistance. Therefore, the CoE's capacity to provide electoral assistance is highly dependent on donors, because **a significant proportion of activity is funded by extra-budgetary sources**. This challenge is compounded by the limitations in terms of core human resources: it takes a

minimum amount of core CoE staff with expertise in elections to plan, implement and oversee extra-budgetary programmes. **Donors are more inclined to contribute ahead of electoral deadlines**, when there is a sense of urgency. It means it is hard for the CoE to go beyond mere pre-election support, towards more continuous support on core capacities. At the same time, the **absence of clearly presented long-term strategies for electoral support does not encourage donors** to volunteer contributions for long-term electoral assistance.

The lack of continuity in the level of assistance has been detrimental to the CoE's ability to fulfil beneficiaries' expectations as a strategic partner. **With the exception of legislative advice, this confines the CoE in a secondary role.** Lack of continuity and strategic planning also meant there is limited reporting and monitoring on impact and even results.

With the inclusion of electoral assistance in the Action Plans of countries, the design of multi-election programmes or longer support programmes on specific issues for some countries, and the emergence of large multi-country programmes financed by the EU and including electoral assistance over longer periods of time, **the CoE palliates this shortcoming**, but such initiatives come late in the reform process for most countries concerned with electoral assistance. For countries where important reform efforts are still to be done, the CoE could capitalize on its experience in other countries to design well-informed and expertise-based long-term strategies which would serve fundraising.

Evaluation Question 3 – What are the existing and possible synergies, overlaps or opportunities for enhancing coherence between the CoE and other international organisations, and among CoE bodies, to conduct election support?

Finding 13: Internal synergies exist, but they are unevenly used.

Internally, **DG II and the Venice Commission** have established an informal but written concept for division of labour. Both entities cooperate and even plan programmes together. This has not only clarified their roles and avoided overlaps: it also facilitates programme design, and enables to identify areas of synergy and mutual support. There is clear pooling of information and resources. DG I's work on media is not yet fully integrated in this planning, partly because the relevant unit has severe constraints in terms of human and financial resources, which means their activities in the electoral field are fewer and more punctual than that of DG II and the Venice Commission. As a result their role in programming and planning is not yet systematized. There is still a need to better define the division of labour between DG I (media coverage) and DG II (assistance to media oversight bodies), but also to pool resources, systematically exchange information, and cooperate.

An example of synergy between DG II and the Directorate of Policy Planning is the implementation of young voter activities through the Schools of Political Studies, although there have been criticisms regarding the political association of key staff of these schools.

In principle, electoral assistance programmes are intended to bridge the gap between the standards and the situation identified through election observation. However, in practice,

election assistance programme make little reference to election observation findings of the PACE or Congress. Electoral assistance does not systematically focus on the recurrent issues identified in PACE election observation reports. The design of programmes draws more often on ODIHR election observation reports, because they are more detailed and technical. Besides, the timing and cycle of needs assessment for assistance does not match that of election observation, which means that programme planning chiefly relies on the programmer's perception of the needs based on previous experience, input and requests from the intended beneficiaries, exchange of views with various stakeholders in the country such as civil society representatives or other international actors. Through the support it provides to the PACE election observation missions, and the resulting relationship with the PACE Secretariat, the Venice Commission is in a better position than DG II to integrate the findings and experience from these missions into programming. In line with its policy of follow up to observation, the Congress is progressively developing more regular consultations, in particular with DG II.

DG II and the Venice Commission further maintain relationships with the relevant monitoring bodies, chiefly the GRECO, which is concerned with political party and campaign financing.

There is no needs assessment tool that could integrate information from all relevant CoE entities. Such tool, used in the context of consultations between DG I (Media support Unit and the Venice Commission Secretariat), DG II, the PACE and the Congress might contribute to better pooling of information and resources, which would in turn benefit the elaboration of election support strategies, with stronger fundraising arguments.

Where it implements assistance programmes, the CoE increasingly organises **post-election lessons learned conferences**, which bring together several CoE entities (for instance the Congress, DG II and the Venice Commission). These conferences constitute a good practice which conveys a unified message from CoE electoral assistance actors. However, the PACE Secretariat does not participate in these conferences, which constitutes an opportunity for expanding the synergy.

In the field, the synergy between election observation results, legislative advice and recommendations is clearly operating, as domestic champions of change of electoral reforms (NGO activists or members of independent election administration bodies) combine them in their advocacy to push for legislative reforms and professional election administration.

Finding 14: The CoE is increasing its external synergies at headquarter level, but field-level synergies are uneven.

The **Council for Democratic Elections** was created under the aegis of the Venice Commission to ensure enhanced coordination within the CoE, but it also welcomes other organisations and institutions. The evaluation team did not have access to sufficient information to assess the effectiveness of this body in fostering internal synergies and cooperation. In practice, it seems that the Council is most effective in facilitating cooperation between the Venice Commission and ODIHR because it presents an opportunity for high level cooperation on joint opinions.

The **Venice Commission and ODIHR** have strategic level cooperation, and issue more and more joint opinions. All stakeholders who expressed themselves on this topic stated that this greatly contributes to the weight and authority of these opinions. Cooperation between the **Venice Commission, DG II and ODIHR on technical assistance**, particularly in capacity building, has also developed. Cooperation with the EU takes place through joint programmes. These are positive points. In order to attain a sufficient level of capacity building in terms of budget, depth and breadth of intervention The organisation requires to systematically co-operate and co-ordinate with other international actors.

Relevant international actors (such as IFES, ODIHR, the EU, and major donors) systematically participate, and in some cases co-organise CoE post-election conferences. These events deliver a strong unified message on the way ahead for the fulfilment of standards. They federate international actors and the main domestic stakeholders. Depending on the topic and country, the CoE has also developed strong partnership with international NGOs specializing in elections such as IFES.

However, in the countries, cooperation with leading international actors supporting elections remains uneven, and **strongly based on personal contacts** because these organisations usually decentralize electoral assistance to their field operations, whereas the CoE's electoral assistance remains headquarters-based: this impairs the establishment of systematic day-to-day cooperation.¹⁶ International coordination in the field of election support **usually works best when the beneficiary government takes responsibility** for a coordination platform (Georgia, Moldova).

Evaluation Question 4: What are the niches of excellence and comparative advantages of the CoE compared to other international organisations in the field of elections?

Finding 15: Legislative support is the main CoE niche of excellence.

Venice Commission opinions are usually considered as more than just advice: they are **seen by most as standards by many**. All interviewees consider them as credible, neutral, trustworthy and authoritative. In many cases, these characteristics have effectively palliated the lack of detailed, legally binding standards on elections.

Since few international actors directly assist countries on legislative reforms, and given that international advice on legislation is provided chiefly by the Venice Commission in coordination with the ODIHR as the other key actor in this field, there is a clear causal link between this advice and observed progress in the legislative field. In this context, the Venice Commission appears as the lead provider of legislative expertise on elections.

¹⁶ Depending on the country, these include EU Delegations, UNDP, OSCE field operations, as well as bilateral donors,

Finding 16: The CoE has developed specialized expertise in a few additional niches.

Through its past assistance programmes, the CoE has built unique experience, and developed high level expertise on specialized aspects of election reforms, particularly electoral dispute resolution. Interlocutors consider for instance that the CoE is the key organisation providing adequate training on electoral disputes for judges and election administration bodies. Specialized training seminars on standards for election administration bodies, which are often conducted in coordination with ODIHR, are another example of a CoE's niche of excellence.

The CoE has recently developed specific gender-oriented electoral assistance actions, which have a potential as niches of excellence, provided they benefit from cooperation with other leading actors in this area.

Finding 17: CoE electoral assistance actors enjoy privileged trust-based partnerships with their counterparts.

Cutting-edge expertise is considered the main asset of the CoE, and an important advantage compared to other organisations which might have more resources and stronger programme management capacity, but limited topic expertise.

The CoE's role in standard setting and monitoring constitutes another advantage, because it legitimizes assistance and give it more political significance and authority. For many interlocutors, no organisation other than that which emits standards and monitors their implementation is in a better position to assist countries in fulfilling them. The political neutrality of a standard-based approach is also a major factor of trust in elections, an area which is very much based on trust: the CoE advises on compliance with standards, rather than it prescribes a model. Coupled with a demand-oriented relationship with the beneficiary institutions, this confers the CoE the image of a friendly institution and partner. This perception contributes to the acceptability and effectiveness of the CoE's assistance programmes.

These comparative advantages somewhat compensate the CoE's limited ability to offer sizeable assistance and incentives, as compared to other actors such as bilateral donors who offer much higher funding, or the EU whose very high budgets and integration perspective constitute major pull factors. In countries where international actors create strong incentives for changes, the CoE is able to use this conducive context to add weight to its standard-based recommendations.

Finding 18: The CoE requires to attain a level of critical mass to make a measurable difference in the field of electoral technical assistance and capacity building.

Limited resources and programme management capacity, particularly in FOs, are widely considered as the main challenges of the CoE. In view of the multiplicity of actors present in this field, the **CoE's assistance programmes do not reach the critical mass that would be necessary to make a measurable difference** which could be clearly attributed, and which

would compare to the level of contributions offered by other actors. In this sense, the CoE is considered a secondary actor in technical assistance, albeit a valued one.

The CoE can be a key actor of election assistance complementing larger assistance providers, provided there is more systematic international coordination. In the absence of sufficient synergies at country level with other, more sizeable actors, **these comparative advantages are under-utilized.**

5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1: The CoE possesses unique comparative advantages for election support.

The evaluation has identified several success factors which condition the success of election support in a given country:¹⁷

- a) Commitment of political actors and decision-makers, which may be affected by incentives from the part of the CoE and other international stakeholders;
- b) Existence of a clear strategy for change in the CoE;
- c) Strong expertise in the CoE;
- d) Coordination and common message among international providers of election support, in terms of election observation, advocacy and assistance;
- e) Strong civil society and champions of change relaying the CoE's recommendations, which serves as a multiplier of CoE support by supporting reforms and putting pressure on the relevant bodies to perform professionally.

The CoE's electoral assistance draws a unique comparative advantage from the standard setting role of the organisation: they increase the credibility of the organisation and its authoritativeness on electoral matters. The Venice Commission in particular, with its unique position at the junction of standard setting and electoral assistance, has acquired the position of a reference in the field of electoral legislation. The monitoring functions of the CoE also increase its authority.

The high level of expertise mobilised by the CoE is another distinctive feature of the organisation, particularly on specialised topics of technical assistance such as capacity building

¹⁷ This conclusion is also consistent with leading academic research. Judith G. Kelley, in *Monitoring Democracy*, 2012, identifies six success factors for election observation: Democratization process underway - 'Democracy promotion can speed up democratization only when the domestic train is already moving forward'; Political will; Domestic capacity for reform; Leverage / conditionalities in place (most effective: EU accession and aid, US aid); Domestic pressure; Election observer consistency and follow-up. On the other hand, the five main factors constraining effectiveness are identified as: Violence; Winner take all politics, i.e. a political system not allowing for any 'room' for the loser of an election, and therefore, the incumbent has strong incentives to thwart election outcomes; 'Luke-warm' monitoring; International meddling (this mainly refers to US political interference); Domestic capacity constraints.

on resolution of electoral disputes. As a result, the CoE enjoys good reputation, and its capacity building efforts are appreciated by its beneficiaries as useful and targeted, although limited in breadth. The Congress has unique mandate and mechanisms to systematically observe local and regional elections.

Conclusion 2: The CoE has a leading position in legislative advice regarding electoral matters.

The CoE appears as the leading organisation in the area of legislative support, especially through the opinions of the Venice Commission. Venice Commission opinions and documents have reached an unequalled level of authoritativeness in this field, to the point that they are considered as standards by domestic and international partners alike. Although the implementation of recommendations remains reliant on political will, they have a direct impact on the legislation in countries committed to reforms, and provide domestic advocates such as the civil society with strong lobbying arguments.

Conclusion 3: In other fields of election support, tangible achievements place the CoE in a complementary role along leading international actors in election support, although capacity constraints limit the CoE's impact and visibility.

The CoE experiences capacity constraints:

- a) The CoE has limited financial resources dedicated to election assistance, which reduces its size, and makes assistance programmes donor-dependent.
- b) The CoE has limited human resources dedicated to election observation and assistance, though the human resources among its staff and hired experts offer very high quality of expertise.
- c) The CoE has limited political clout at field office level, which reduces its capacity for continuous advocacy on the implementation of standards.
- d) The CoE's election observation is not yet supported by fully fledged methodological material and available training.
- e) The CoE's electoral assistance capacity is constrained by the lack of strategic planning, continuity and result monitoring.

Besides, while CoE stakeholders acknowledge success factors verbally, they have not yet been able to systematically and jointly analyse them in a united effort to strategically plan election support. Programme descriptions do not include an assessment of these factors and do not present how they relate to the proposed actions. This leaves the CoE poorly equipped in terms of fundraising or high level advocacy: both require well-articulated strategies and clear benchmarks.

As a result, the CoE is not in a position to offer incentives, exert leading political leverage, or build capacity at critical level, compared to other organisations which do not face the same

challenges. The CoE is considered a secondary actor in the field of election support, which makes its impact difficult to assess. Its action, although appreciated by those who are privy to it, is not sufficiently visible. The impact of the CoE in the electoral field is real, but it rather acts as a complement to the wider impact of other organisations on the implementation of electoral standards, and it is under-reported. This is the case for instance of the advice, support and specialised capacity building provided to election administration bodies, media regulatory bodies and electoral dispute resolution bodies. This is also the case of election observation results and follow up done by the Congress.

Bearing in mind these constraints, there is a need plan strategically, but also to pool resources in order to optimize and possibly increase them: the CoE needs to optimize potential synergies internally and externally, as a condition to use its comparative advantages and increase impact.

Conclusion 4: The CoE's internal resources can be pooled more systematically to increase efficiency and effectiveness

Internally, CoE entities have developed strong coordination and cooperation where there is potential overlap. However they have not yet established systematic consultation and coordination to identify opportunities for mutual support. As a result CoE entities do not mutualise information, expertise, lessons learned or resources, which increases the potential for dispersion of already scarce resources.

Cross fertilization of experiences and lessons learned is not organised systematically, for instance between the PACE and the Congress Secretariats. While election observation benefits from the Venice Commission's expertise, there is limited pooling of information between election observation results and election assistance programmes. In practice, systematic cooperation mostly takes between DG II and the Venice Commission, originally to avoid overlap.

Conclusion 5: Increased synergies with other international providers of election support can make the most of the CoE's comparative advantage and increase its impact.

While capacity constraints prevent the CoE from becoming a leading actor other than in legislative assistance, there is room for a better defined role of the CoE as a provider of electoral support. By increasing cooperation and mutual support with a wide range of stakeholders, the CoE is progressively asserting its position, and increasing its impact, but this effort can be strengthened:

- a) The cooperation between the Venice Commission and ODIHR is an example of institutionalised synergy. Through the Council for Democratic Elections, and on a

- day-to-day basis, they systematically consult, and issue joint opinions, which in turn increase their authority and impact.
- b) Joint CoE/EU joint programmes demonstrate synergy with the EU in terms of standards, however more could be done in the field to coordinate advocacy and make the most of the EU’s pull factor, and increase the impact of technical assistance within clear long-term CoE strategies for election support.
 - c) Possibly the highest potential synergy lays with the civil society of countries where it plays a strong role. Civil society actors systematically use the CoE’s election observation results, standards and recommendations to advocate for changes in the electoral framework. While the CoE interacts with civil society actors, it does not make full use of this powerful multiplier of CoE’s support.
 - d) The Council for Democratic Elections could engage its members to systematise and organise cooperation between all relevant CoE entities and other international stakeholders.

5.2 Recommendations

Election observation

Issue	Recommendation: DIO recommends
Capacity constraints and synergies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Venice Commission participate in all election observation missions in countries where the Venice Commission has adopted a relevant opinion, following PACE invitation. 2. That the PACE Secretariat invite DG I and DG II staff involved in assistance programmes to participate in the preparation of election observation missions.
Methodology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. That the PACE and Congress Secretariats, subject to adoption by the relevant Congress’ bodies and in cooperation with other CoE actors, design a standard technical briefing to be offered to election observers at the start of observation missions. 4. That the PACE and Congress Secretariats develop, ahead of each election observation mission, a list of concerns deserving the particular attention of the observers.
Impact	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. That the PACE and Congress Secretariats, in their annual reports, analyse recurring issues identified through election observation. 6. That the Secretariats systematically facilitate meetings between PACE/Congress election observers and civil society organisations performing domestic election observation. 7. That the Congress Secretariat, in consultation with DG I, DG II and the Venice Commission, prepare and follow a monitoring plan on the implementation of its Policy in Observing Local and Regional Elections, and report on the results of this monitoring in its annual report.

Electoral assistance

Capacity constraints and synergies	8. That the Venice Commission, DG I media unit and DG II election unit form a Task Force on electoral assistance.
Methodology	9. That the Task Force, subject to agreement of its members, draft long-term election assistance country strategies for countries significant election reforms are to be implemented, and exit strategies for countries where electoral assistance is nearing its end. 10. That the Task Force, subject to agreement of its members, establish criteria on programme feasibility and political willingness, to screen requests for electoral assistance programmes.

Annex 1 – Abbreviations used

AL	Albania
AZ	Azerbaijan
CEC	Central Electoral Commission
CoE	Council of Europe
DG I	Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law
DG II	Directorate General of Democracy
DIO	Directorate of Internal Oversight
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
EU	European Union
FO	Field Office of the CoE
GE	Georgia
HQ	CoE Strasbourg Headquarters
MD	Moldova
ODIHR	OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PACE	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
UN	United Nations
UNDP	UN Development Programme

Annex 2 – List of selected election-related CoE standards and tools

Title	Author	Year (entry into force)	Legal status
Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms	CoE	1953	International legal instrument
Protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms	CoE	1954	International legal instrument
Case law	European Court of Human Rights		Enforcement of international legal instrument
Document of the Copenhagen meeting of the Conference on the human dimension of the CSCE	OSCE	1990	Legally non-binding political commitment
Declaration of principle for international election observation and code of conduct for international election observers	UN	2005	Legally non-binding political commitment
PACE Resolution 1897 (2012) for more democratic elections	CoE (PACE)	2012	Legally non-binding political commitment
PACE Resolution 1705 (2010) on thresholds and other features of electoral systems which have an impact on representativity of parliaments in Council of Europe member states	CoE (PACE)	2010	Legally non-binding political commitment
PACE Resolution 1706 (2010) on increasing women’s representation in politics through the electoral system	CoE (PACE)	2010	Legally non-binding political commitment
PACE Resolution 1619(2008) on the state of democracy in Europe	CoE (PACE)	2008	Legally non-binding political commitment
PACE Resolution 1771 (2010) Final version, An internationally recognised status of election observers	CoE (PACE)	2010	Legally non-binding political commitment
PACE Resolution 1705 (2010) Final version, Thresholds and other features of electoral systems which have an impact on representativity of parliaments in Council of Europe member states	CoE (PACE)	2010	Legally non-binding political commitment
CM Recommendation (2004)11 on legal, operational and technical standards for e-voting	CoE (CM)	2004	Non-binding recommendation
Recommendation Rec (2003) 3 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making adopted on 12 March 2003 and explanatory memorandum	CoE (CM)	2003	Non-binding recommendation
Code of good practice in electoral matters: Guidelines and explanatory report	CoE (Venice Commission)	2002	Non-binding recommendation
Code of good practice on referendums	CoE (Venice Commission)		Non-binding recommendation

Venice Commission Opinions	CoE (Venice Commission)		Country-specific non-binding recommendation
Election observation handbook	ODIHR	2010	Non-binding guidance material
Handbook for long-term election observers	ODIHR	2007	Non-binding guidance material
Election observation, A practical guide for parliamentarians	CoE (PACE)	2014	Non-binding guidance material
Guidelines for the observation of elections by the Parliamentary Assembly	CoE (PACE)	2014	Non-binding guidance material
Resolution 1736 (2010) Final version, Code of good practice in the field of political parties	CoE (PACE)	2010	Non-binding guidance material
Code of Good practice in electoral matters	CoE (Venice Commission)	2002	Non-binding guidance material
Guidelines on an internationally recognised status of election observers	CoE (Venice Commission)	2009	Non-binding guidance material
Congress post-monitoring and post-observation of elections: developing political dialogue – Resolution 353 (2013)REV	CoE (Congress of Local and Regional Authorities)	2013	Non-binding guidance material
Observation of local and regional elections – strategy and rules of the Congress, Resolution 306 (2010)	CoE (Congress of Local and Regional Authorities)	2010	Non-binding guidance material
Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)15 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on measures concerning media coverage of election campaigns (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 7 November 2007 at the 1010th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)	CoE (CM)	2007	Non-binding guidance material
Guidelines for the observation of elections by the Parliamentary Assembly	CoE (PACE)	2014	Non-binding guidance material

Annex 3 - Terms of Reference of the evaluation

1. Introduction

The Work Plan 2014 of the Directorate of Internal Oversight (DIO) of the Council of Europe envisages the conduct of an evaluation of the CoE support to elections.

These Terms of Reference (ToR) set out the concept and organisation of the Evaluation of the Council of Europe (CoE) support to elections. They highlight the expectations towards the evaluation team, in particular towards the external consultant. They provide a background on election support in the CoE, outline the evaluation's purpose, objectives and scope, and define a draft methodology and work plan for this evaluation.

2. Background information on election support in the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe supports the conduct of regular, free, fair and transparent elections in its Member States and in other countries upon request. After the fall of the Berlin wall, regular, free and fair elections became a central precondition for any parliament in Europe seeking special guest status with the Assembly. With the Vienna Declaration, adopted at the first Council of Europe Summit of Heads of State and Government in October 1993, this principle was further developed and became a clear precondition for accession to the Council of Europe.

Other international and regional organisations perform similar work in the CoE's geographic area, chiefly the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), which cooperate intensively with the CoE but is characterized by long term election observation. The European Union (EU) Parliament, the EU Commission, or the Parliamentary Assembly of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) also engage in electoral matters.

The CoE's election support work is based on the principle of a "virtuous cycle" between three distinct aspects:

- **Elaboration of norms and standards** consists in defining the norms and standards applicable to elections, and to which Member States should strive to adhere;
- **Election observation** aims to verify the adherence to these norms and standards, and identify gaps between the standards and the practice;
- **Election assistance** consists in providing advice and technical assistance to the MSs (and other countries upon request) on various aspects of elections such as the elaboration of legislative frameworks, the administration of elections, the raising of voter awareness, or capacity building for domestic election observers.



Figure 2: The dynamics of the work on elections

These three aspects of the CoE’s election support need to reinforce one another, and are ultimately meant to enhance human rights, the rule of law and democracy through regular, free and fair elections. Various CoE actors take a part in each of these three pillars.

Elaboration of norms and standards

The ultimate objective of the CoE’s work on elections is the fulfilment of election standards in its MSs and partner countries, also referred to as Europe’s constitutional heritage. The hard core of norms and standards originates from international legal instruments (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights), and CoE Convention (Article 3 of the Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights provides for the right to periodical elections by free and secret suffrage). However, since these instruments provide only general principles on elections, the constitutional and legal heritage of the MSs is a key source of recognised standards in elections. The European Commission for Democracy through Law (the Venice Commission) performs most of the work of identifying, interpreting and clarifying norms and standards on elections. Its Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters adopted by the Venice Commission in 2002 represents a compendium of applicable norms and standards.¹⁸ The PACE has also adopted a series of resolutions and recommendations regarding elections. Finally, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), in its case law, also contributes to strengthening norms and standards in electoral matters.

Election observation

Since 1974, when the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) first observed elections in Greece, the CoE has conducted over 240 elections observation missions in over 47 countries.

The observation of national-level elections (parliamentary and presidential elections, as well as referenda) is implemented by the PACE, upon invitation by the relevant country. The PACE

¹⁸ CDL-AD(2002)23rev – Venice Commission Code of Good practice in electoral matters, 2002

typically observes elections in countries under the monitoring procedure, or post-monitoring dialogue. The observation missions are composed of PACE Members: therefore elected officials perform the election observation. Rules and guidelines set the frame for election observation, primarily the Guidelines for the observation of elections by the Parliamentary Assembly, which are part of the PACE Rules of Procedures.¹⁹ The PACE often performs election observation as a part of an international Election Observation mission, which often includes the election observation mission of ODIHR, and delegations from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the European Parliament, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the NATO.

As mandated in the Council of Minister's Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2011)2, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (the Congress) observes local and regional-level elections upon invitation by the relevant authority of the member country. The Congress observes elections in all member states of the CoE. The members of observation missions are members of the Congress: therefore locally/regionally elected officials observe local/regional elections. Rules on the Congress' election observation are enshrined, in particular, in its Resolution 306(2010)REV adopted in October 2013. The congress regularly invites the EU Committee of Regions to participate in its election observation missions.

Electoral assistance

Electoral assistance aims to address the shortcomings identified, in particular, through election observation.

Historically, the Venice Commission has been the first to perform election assistance through:

- Issuing opinions upon request;
- Performing research and advice on necessary legislative amendments or on the practical organisation and management of elections, addressed to the central electoral bodies, the legislators and the executive of beneficiary countries;
- Organising training for domestic authorities in charge of election organisation (e.g. training of Central Electoral Commissions and electoral commissions);
- Providing long-term assistance to central electoral bodies through the co-location of experts;
- Organising workshops and conferences for central electoral bodies, other domestic authorities in charge of election organisation, legislators, executive, media and civil society. Such events may be held at national, regional or multilateral levels.

In addition to electoral assistance, the Venice Commission provides the PACE's election observation missions with legal and legislative advice on the occasion of election observation.

While the Venice Commission performs the core of legal and legislative advice, the Congress also takes on part of this advisory work when it comes to the local and regional levels.

The Directorate of Democracy (DG II) implements tailor-made electoral assistance programmes, in cooperation or jointly with the Venice Commission, DG I, the PACE, the Congress and the OSCE ODIHR. Typically, such programmes comprise of the following activities:

¹⁹ AS/Bur(2012)85

- Development of reference texts such as handbooks or curricula for election stakeholders and voters;
- Training, coaching, networking and exposure to international good practices (e.g. through study visits and translation of reference documents) for central electoral bodies and other election stakeholders (in particular women candidates);
- Awareness raising activities targeting the voters (e.g. through TV debates, publications);
- Training, networking and coaching of non-governmental organisations involved in domestic elections observation, voter mobilisation or access of vulnerable categories to their voting rights;
- Training and awareness rising for first-time voters and political elite, through education of students and school pupils, and cooperation with the CoE network of Schools of Political Studies.

The Directorate of Human Rights and Rule of Law (DG I) completes this work by providing training, networking and technical support to the media on the coverage of elections.

Consultation and cooperation

In 2002, the Council for Democratic Elections was created under the aegis of the Venice Commission. This body gathers each trimester, before the plenary session of the Venice Commission, representatives of the Venice Commission, the PACE, the Congress, and when possible from other international organisations. Its offers a consultation and cooperation platform in the electoral field between the Venice Commission as a legal body, the PACE and the Congress as political bodies in charge of election observation, as well as ODIHR as a major stakeholder. The Venice Commission ensures its secretariat, in close consultation with ODIHR.

Since 2008, dedicated Country Action Plans ensure increased coherence and visibility to the CoE's election support. They include activities planned or carried out by DG I, DG II, the Venice Commission, with contributions from the PACE and the Congress. The Council of Ministers' Group on Democracy debates Action Plans ahead of election cycles, and the Council of Ministers' Secretariat regularly reports on its implementation. These action plans further increase transparency, and serve as fundraising tools.

The CoE entities also insure continuous coordination at technical level with other international organisations involved in election support, for instance through regular meetings and exchange with ODIHR or the EU Parliament. High level political coordination is done as required through the CoE Directorate of External Relations. In addition, the respective CoE entities perform continuous internal coordination, for instance through informal agreements on labour division.

3. Evaluation purpose

This evaluation will take stock of achievements and lessons learned in election support, for the purpose of informing future planning, programming and decision making on election support in the CoE.

This evaluation topic was selected according to the following criterion: “the potential of the evaluation in enhancing the coherence of action either among Major Administrative Entities or

among various sources of funding". The evaluation is particularly relevant in view of the multiplicity of actors working in the field of elections, both within the CoE and in wider Europe.

4. Evaluation objectives

This evaluation will serve the following objectives:

- **Objective 1:** Identifying the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the CoE in election support, and informing future decision making on optimizing comparative advantage;
- **Objective 2:** Identifying success stories and good practices that can be replicated, particularly in election assistance;
- **Objective 3:** Identifying ways to improve the working methods, tools and structures used for election assistance and observation respectively;
- **Objective 4:** Identifying risks and areas for improvement of complementarity and cooperation among the various CoE bodies engaged in election support.

5. Evaluation scope

This evaluation will look into election support, in particular election observation as performed by the PACE and the Congress on the one hand, and election assistance as performed by the Venice Commission, DG I, DG II and the Congress on the other hand, regardless of sources of funding (ordinary budget, joint programmes, and voluntary contributions).

6. Evaluation criteria and draft evaluation questions

The evaluation will look into effectiveness, efficiency and added value of election support. The relevance of election support to the overall priorities of the Council of Europe is clearly established by the existence of norms and standards, and the need to work on their fulfilment. Therefore this evaluation will not examine relevance as an evaluation criterion.

Evaluation criterion	Draft evaluation question	Objective
Effectiveness	To what extent do the tools and methods used in election support help the implementation of relevant norms and standards on elections?	2, 3
Efficiency	What are the existing and possible synergies, overlaps or opportunities for enhancing coherence between the CoE and other international organisations, and among CoE bodies, to conduct election support?	1, 2, 3, 4
Added value	To what extent does the CoE possess adequate capacity (in terms of organisational capacity, expertise, funding, human resources, political capital, access...) to conduct election support?	1
	What are the niches of excellence and comparative advantages of the CoE compared to other international organisations in the field of elections?	1

Figure 2: Evaluation criteria, questions and objectives

7. Evaluation methodology

The evaluation will be divided into three phases:

- **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, analyse and interpret the data, and produce the final evaluation report.

Inception phase

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

- Map the existing landscape of election support activities in the CoE;
- Map stakeholders within and outside of the CoE;
- 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.

In complement, the evaluation team will conduct a limited number of mapping interviews with key stakeholders within the CoE, particularly in the Main Administrative Entities (MAEs) of the CoE which will be involved in potential case studies. The latter should be specifically consulted on selection of case studies, and planning/scheduling of data collection missions.

The evaluation team will organize a pilot mission to Georgia, the first and pilot case study, to test the envisaged evaluation methods.

At the end of the inception phase, the evaluation team will submit an **inception report** of maximum 10 pages plus annexes. The inception report will include:

- Refined and final evaluation questions;
- A detailed evaluation matrix;²⁰
- A stakeholder review (e.g. in the form of a table);
- A detailed work plan and schedule for data collection and data analysis (e.g. in the form of a Gantt chart);
- A full-fledged methodology for data collection including list/types of documents to be requested from MAEs, questionnaire(s) for an eventual study and/or for semi-structured interviews, list/types of envisaged survey respondents and/or interviewees, envisaged data collection tools and their justification;
- Areas of inquiry and basic working hypothesis;
- A full-fledged methodology for data analysis, including grids/tables/tools for the synthesis of data gathered through data collection.

The evaluation team will present the inception report to the Reference Group appointed for this evaluation, either in written or through a Reference Group meeting in Strasbourg. The inception report will be reviewed and validated by DIO based on the Quality assurance checklist for

²⁰ Annex 3

inception reports.²¹ These steps constitute preconditions to proceed with the data collection phase.

Data collection phase

The data collection phase will start with the desk research, including the request for documents from relevant MAEs (including relevant ECHR case law) and external stakeholders, collection of documents through internet research and research into the document records of the CoE.

In parallel to the desk research, the evaluation team may administer a web-based survey. The evaluation team may further conduct semi-structured interviews with CoE staff in Strasbourg, PACE Members and members of the Congress who are involved in election observation and monitoring, and if possible members of the Council for Democratic Elections from other international organisations. The evaluation team may conduct interviews with other stakeholders (e.g. representatives of permanent representations to the CoE, of other international organisations or of civil society organisations involved in electoral matters).

The evaluation team will conduct field missions to three more case study countries:

- Albania;
- Azerbaijan;
- Moldova.

During the missions, the evaluation team will hold semi-structured interview with stakeholders including at least:

- CoE staff present in the relevant Field Office, in particular and where applicable, staff directly engaged in election support;
- Members of domestic authorities in charge of electoral matters;
- Members of civil society organisations engaged in elections observation or other electoral matters (such as advocacy for changes to the electoral system, non-profit work on voter registration or participation, support to women in entering politics, support to access to voting rights for vulnerable groups, defence of citizens deprived of their voting rights, etc.), Schools of Political Studies;
- Representatives of other international organisations involved in election support present in the country, if any.

The evaluation team may organise phone interviews/videoconferences with the OSCE Secretariat, ODIHR, and relevant EU stakeholders in Brussels. The evaluation team may also organise focus groups as appropriate, and use the country visits to gather additional documentation where the necessity and opportunity arise.

Data analysis and reporting phase

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

²¹ Annex 5

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 analyse the synthesized data to identify trends and processes, draw findings and conclusions, and analyse 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.²² The draft final report will be presented to the Reference Group in Strasbourg.

***Objective 1:** Identifying the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the CoE in election support, and informing future decision making on optimizing comparative advantage*

In a context where several organisations are involved in election support, questions have been raised in academic research and media sources about possible overlaps, and even mutual contradiction of these various actors. This evaluation needs to identify the **comparative advantages** (or disadvantages) of the CoE in this field.

The evaluation team might use various analytical tools to assess them, and identify external and internal factors that affect comparative advantage. Preliminary scoping research suggests that there exist at least four important factors of comparative advantage:

- Political clout - leverage on, and/or access to decision-makers and influencers on electoral matters (e.g. domestic legislators, executive agencies and independent bodies in charge of organizing elections, media, main civil society actors...)
- Moral credentials: independence from the stakeholders of elections in the respective countries (e.g. running parties or candidates), ensures that the CoE is not perceived as a party to an election, but rather as a neutral goodwill actor, which in turns provides legitimacy.
- Expertise on the subject matter, in terms of existing international norms and standards, domestic law and practice, techniques of election observation and support. This will in turn foster credibility as a competent actor, able to enhance electoral systems and processes.
- Resources (human, logistical and financial), coupled with organisational and technical capacity (e.g. the ability to quickly mobilize and deploy observers and experts) will in turn ensure that the CoE is perceived as a useful partner in enhancing electoral systems and processes.

²² Annex 6

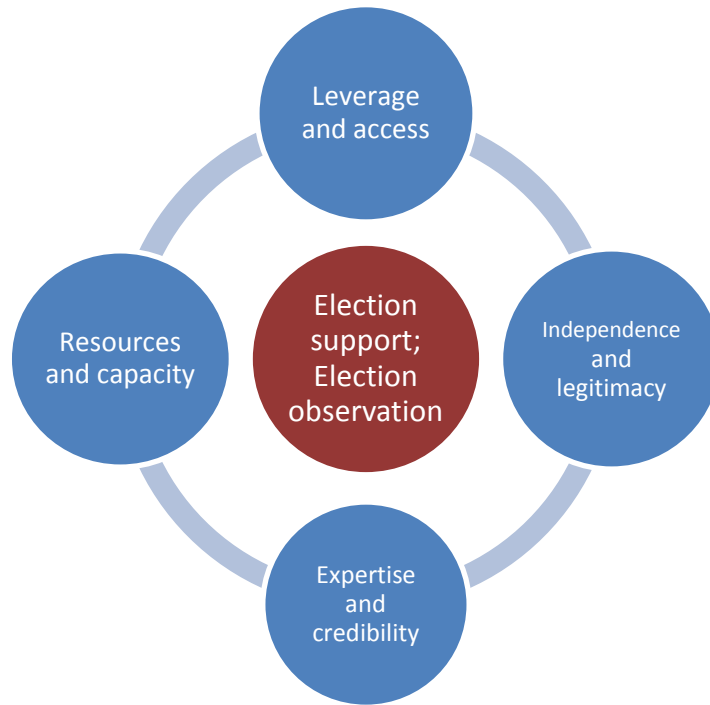


Figure 3: Factors of comparative advantage

Objective 2: Identifying success stories and good practices that can be replicated, particularly in election assistance respectively

The identification of success stories and good practices, and more importantly the analysis of the factors that have led to them, are a part of the CoE’s organizational learning. Success stories and good practices will be identified on the basis of their effectiveness and efficiency. In selecting success stories and good practices, the evaluation team will also factor the possibility for replication in different circumstances, for example:

- In other beneficiary countries;
- In different political contexts;
- In different electoral systems
- In different legal environments;
- By different CoE MAEs;
- With different (usually smaller) human and financial resources
- For different areas of work of the CoE, or for any area of work or the CoE (typically good practices related to management processes)...

Objective 3: Identifying ways to improve the working methods, tools and structures used for election assistance and observation

The evaluation team will analyse data to identify possible shortfalls and their root causes, as well as successes and the factors that have led to them, which will constitute findings. From these findings they will derive lessons learned and good practices, which may be either general, or linked to specific factors such as:

- Applicable to any work on election observation or assistance;
- Applicable to any method of work used inter alia in election observation or assistance (and also in other areas of work of the CoE);
- Applicable to a type of elections;
- Applicable to a type of electoral/political context;
- Applicable to a specific country or group of countries...

Objective 4: Identifying risks and areas for improvement of complementarity and cooperation among the various CoE bodies engaged in election support

The multiplicity of actors engaged in election work within the CoE raises obvious coordination and cooperation issues. The evaluation team will identify possible overlaps, contradictions, or on the contrary synergy and complementarity, as well as ways in which they have been/can be corrected or achieved respectively.

8. Evaluation work plan

Evaluation team and management arrangements

The evaluation will be a team exercise. The evaluation team will be composed of:

- One DIO evaluator/team leader;
- One external consultant.

Additionally DIO may decide to hire an elections expert for a maximum of 10 working days for review of preliminary and/or draft findings.

The DIO Evaluator/team leader will manage and oversee the evaluation, including:

- Guiding the external consultant on the expectations of the DIO and CoE stakeholders;
- Guiding the external consultant in her/his data collection and analysis;
- Facilitating the consultant's access to CoE data and resource persons;
- Overseeing the pilot case study, and contributing about 50% of the pilot case study report;
- Taking on data collection, analysis and reporting on 1 case study (Moldova);
- Contributing to data analysis;
- Overseeing the drafting of the inception report and final report, contributing about 50% of these reports, and preparing the corresponding presentations to the Reference group jointly with the Consultant;
- Reviewing, commenting and validating the inception report, case study reports and final report, as well as corresponding presentations to the Reference group;
- Convening and facilitating the Reference group meetings;
- Presenting the inception and final reports to the Reference group, jointly with the Consultant.

The external consultant will report to the DIO Evaluator. The Consultant will be responsible for data collection and case studies with the guidance and facilitation of the DIO Evaluator, with the

exception of those of the field missions which the DIO Evaluator will take on. The Consultant will conduct most of the evaluation work, including:

- Attending kick-off meetings in Strasbourg;
- Conducting the pilot case study (Georgia) jointly with the DIO Evaluator, and contributing about 50% of the pilot case study report;
- Elaborating a proposed detailed evaluation methodology and the corresponding evaluation matrix;
- Attending the Reference Group inception meeting and holding additional interviews in Strasbourg;
- Conducting data collection, review and synthesis regarding horizontal issues;
- Taking on data collection (including field missions), analysis and reporting on 2 additional case studies (Albania, Azerbaijan);
- Conducting, jointly with the DIO Evaluator, the data analysis;
- Contributing about 50% of draft inception and final reports and their corresponding presentations;
- Finalizing the inception and final reports based on comments received from the CoE stakeholders;
- Attending the Reference Group inception meeting;
- Presenting the inception and final reports to the Reference Group during the Reference Group meetings, jointly with the DIO Evaluator.

Missions to the selected field locations will be dispatched as follows:

- 1 joint mission of the DIO Evaluator and the Consultant to the pilot case study Georgia;
- 1 mission by DIO Evaluator to Moldova, the second case study;
- 1 mission to Albania and 1 mission to Azerbaijan by the Consultant, respectively the third and fourth case studies.

The common methodology developed as a result of the inception phase, the pilot case study with joint drafting of the pilot case study report, as well as regular exchange of data and joint preparation of draft inception and final reports, will ensure a harmonized approach within the evaluation team.

Qualifications of the external Consultant

The external consultant hired for this evaluation will have the following skills and competencies:

Required skills

- Master degree or above in a relevant field (social sciences, political science, business administration);
- Extensive knowledge of evaluation principles, methodology and best practices, including qualitative and quantitative methods;
- Proven record and at least 10 year experience in designing, managing and leading evaluations in the context of international cooperation;

- Professional fluency in English language, proven skills and at least 15 years of experience drafting and editing in English language;
- Experience in evaluating international cooperation initiatives in the Council of Europe geographical area;
- Knowledge and understanding of the Council of Europe, its normative instruments, its structure and its action;
- Previous experience in working with the Council of Europe or another international organisation.

Desirable skills

- Knowledge and experience of election support;
- Knowledge of the Council of Europe's programming tools;
- Professional command of French language

The Consultant will be asked to submit, if possible, two examples of previous evaluation reports.

Reference group

At the start of the evaluation, DIO will establish a Reference group composed of major stakeholders in the CoE. The Reference group will comment on the final report, with particular focus on the usefulness and feasibility of the draft recommendations.

After an initial meeting to approve the ToR the Reference group will meet at least once, upon submission of the final report. Should the need arise, the DIO Evaluator may convene further meetings with the Reference group, in whole or in sub-group(s).

Deliverables

The Consultant will be responsible for the submission of the following deliverables:

- Structured electronic file containing all reviewed documents, minutes from interviews conducted, and survey results if any;
- Contribution (50%) to the draft pilot case study report (Georgia);
- Contribution (50%) to the draft inception report and corresponding short presentation for the Reference Group;
- Draft case study reports for Albania and Azerbaijan, of maximum 15 pages each plus annexes;
- Contribution (50%) to the draft final evaluation report and corresponding short presentation for the Reference Group;
- Final evaluation report incorporating comments from CoE stakeholders.

Case study reports will include at least the following chapters:

- Executive summary (maximum 1 page);
- Introduction including the presentation of evaluation scope, purpose, objectives and methodology (maximum 2 pages);
- Background including description of election support and case studies (maximum 3 pages);

- Findings (maximum 7 pages);
- Synthetic conclusion and recommendations (maximum 2 pages)
- Annexes, including at least a table of recommendations, the ToR and its annexes, the inception report and its annexes, reports from reference groups, compendium of synthetic case study reports, list of documentary sources and interviewed/surveyed persons, survey results if any and any other data analysis tool.

The final report will include at least the following chapters:

- Executive summary (maximum 2 pages);
- Introduction including the presentation of evaluation scope, purpose, objectives and methodology (maximum 3 pages);
- Background including description of the evaluation subject and selected case studies (maximum 6 pages);
- Findings (maximum 10 pages);
- Synthetic conclusion and recommendations (maximum 4 pages)
- Annexes, including at least a table of recommendations, the ToR and its annexes, the inception report and its annexes, reports from reference groups, compendium of synthetic case study reports, list of documentary sources and interviewed/surveyed persons, survey results if any and any other data analysis tool.

Annex 4 - Inception report

1. Introduction

The Work Plan 2014 of the Directorate of Internal Oversight (DIO) of the Council of Europe (CoE) envisages the conduct of an evaluation of the CoE support to elections.

This inception report presents the work to date, and expands on the terms of reference of this evaluation, to specify the methods that will be used to complete data collection and analysis. This report draws on preliminary desk research, interviews with the stakeholders in the CoE in Strasbourg, and the pilot case study mission to Georgia from 28 April to 08 May 2014.

2. Data collection methodology

The evaluation team has chosen a semi-structured 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 (document review)
- Primary qualitative data (semi-structured interviews) from different and complementary sources based on stakeholder mapping.

It was not considered necessary to organize a survey.

Document collection

Through the inception period, the evaluation team has collected the following types of documents:

- CoE documents highlighting election standards and guidelines. These documents mostly originate from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and the Venice Commission. The main features of this research are summarized below in Section 3.1 CoE Standards.
- Opinions of the Venice Commission and PACE documents concerning the fulfilment of these standards and guidelines in the case study countries (Albania, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova).
- Minutes of meetings for the Council for Democratic Elections.
- Programmatic documents on election assistance of the CoE (logframes and reports of election assistance programmes, publications issued thanks to these programmes).
- Election observation reports for the case study countries.
- Documents from other international organisations (UN, European Union, OSCE/ODIHR) highlighting the election standards and guidelines originating from these organisations.

Stakeholder map and semi-structured interviews

The evaluation team has elaborated semi-structured interview guidelines²³, and tested them during the pilot case study visit to Tbilisi with a total of 22 stakeholders. This will guarantee a harmonized approach to all case studies.

The stakeholders' map was elaborated in coordination with the CoE stakeholders in Strasbourg

²³ Annex I

and in the CoE Field Office in Tbilisi. The stakeholders were selected according to a mapping tool that ensured representation of complementary points of view:

- Electoral assistance implementers with an insider’s viewpoint: CoE field office staff involved in election support; partner civil society organizations which contributed to the CoE election assistance programmes;
- Election support cooperation partners: government bodies, independent authorities (such as the Central Election Commission), legislators, education institutions and civil society organizations which received election assistance, used the CoE standards, election observation results and advice, and/or cooperated with election observation missions;
- Other civil society organisations with an external point of view: domestic or international civil society actors which are involved in election observation or electoral assistance, but have not cooperated with the CoE;
- Donor international organizations and bilateral actors (embassies);
- Other international organizations and bilateral actors (embassies/development agencies) with an external point of view.

For this pilot visit, the team chose not to prioritize stakeholders based on their level of involvement, in order to gather the widest possible array of points of view, and test assumptions on the amount and type of input that can be expected from the various types of stakeholders.

Preliminary review of interviews from the pilot visit suggests the following general distribution of input:

Figure 1: Overview of stakeholders’ inputs based on pilot visit

	Favourable/critical	Detailed/general	Facts/opinions
Implementers	Favourable	Detailed	Mostly facts
Cooperation partners	Mostly favourable	Variable	Very variable
Civil society	Mostly favourable	Very detailed	Both facts and opinions
Donors	Mostly favourable	General	Mostly opinions
International community	Variable	General	Mostly opinions

During the following missions, the evaluation team will continue gathering these complementary points of view. In case of time pressure the team will prioritize the stakeholders who were at the same time most involved in election support, and whose expected type of input is most complementary:

- Implementers
- Cooperation partners
- Civil society (possibly smaller range than during the pilot visit)
- Donors and limited number of international community representatives.

Annex II presents the overall map of stakeholders.

3. Data analysis

CoE standards

Election support aims to support better fulfilment of CoE standards and guidelines on elections. The document review has enabled to summarize these standards and guidelines. Through the case studies, the evaluation team will attempt to connect election support interventions and their results to the relevant CoE standards. This approach reflects the virtuous circle of election support (standard setting-monitoring-assistance).

The inception phase has revealed, however, that there is no commonly agreed definition of standards. Two main approaches coexist:

- Standards should be understood *stricto sensu*. They are constituted by legally binding documents, primarily Conventions and their corresponding protocol(s), as well as case law;
- Standards should be understood in a wider context. Beside legally binding documents, they also include recommendations, guidelines, codes of practice and other non-binding documents. Such documents become “international standards” if the follow up that is given to them is substantive, if they are commonly referred to by governments, parliaments, other international organizations, and civil society organisations.

The Venice Commission has endeavoured to prioritize its recommendations in light of the legal hierarchy of standards, and with a focus on the core standards and recommendations on electoral matters.

This discussion is particularly relevant to evaluation questions related to effectiveness. Therefore, the evaluation team has integrated this aspect in the interview questions. The evaluation team, in coordination with the Reference Group members, has also established a (non exhaustive) list of standards, recommendations, guidelines and other tools related to elections:

Data review

Data consist primarily of information derived from desk research (CoE reports on election assistance; PACE and other organisations’ reports on election observation) and interviews with cooperation partners, civil society representatives, donors and CoE headquarter and field office staff.

We anticipate that most information will be of qualitative nature. The pilot case study in Georgia suggests that there is limited quantitative data on elections.

Preliminary data review suggests that in the context of election assistance, there has been an uneven use of SMART indicators to monitor effectiveness. This is confirmed by a review of CoE reports on election assistance. Concerning election observation, a quantitative approach is limited by the lack of statistical data on elections (e.g. while gender equality is one of the objectives of the CoE electoral assistance, in Georgia, the CoE Field Office confirmed the lack of participation data by gender or for specific groups of vulnerable voters; Georgia’s Central Election Commission will collect gender-disaggregated data for the first time in the context of

the local elections on 15 June 2014). It is also likely that such data would be collected unevenly among case study countries, and would be difficult to compare. The existing quantitative data (election statistics) may therefore be used for descriptive purposes in the analysis, but would be difficult to link to the CoE's support.

The validity of qualitative information will be confirmed by applying the method of triangulation to verify and substantiate all data.²⁴ In practice this implies putting the same evaluation questions to the mapped stakeholders with different viewpoints. For example, in the context of the pilot case study in Georgia, the effectiveness of the Central Election Commission and the State Inter Agency Task Force on Elections was discussed at all interviews.

Qualitative data (from interviews words most often used for each question) will be entered in the Interview analysis tool²⁵, and the team will derive statistical data from this table to determine the level of positive versus negative feedback on various aspects of the CoE election support work. The team will then enter these results, as well as additional quantitative data, into overall data review matrix.²⁶ This tool will serve to compare the situation in the case study countries, and connect it to the evaluation indicators.

Areas of inquiry and basic working hypothesis

The following points present observations from the document review and the pilot case study in Georgia. Observations are organised in line with the three main evaluation issues of effectiveness, added value and efficiency.

Effectiveness

- CoE assistance was said to have contributed to enhanced capacities of relevant state actors. All types of stakeholders point to the enhanced capacities of Georgia's Central Election Commission.
- However measurement of effectiveness is constrained by limited use of SMART indicators to measure effectiveness of election assistance and observation. This is partly explained by the nature of election support, e.g. it is difficult to measure the cooperation partners' enhanced capacity in terms of ensuring / maintaining a compliant legal framework and the extent to which the cooperation partner participants in the activity have developed an enhanced understanding of the legal framework.
- CoE support for civil society organisations (e.g. grants for capacity development for domestic election observation, media coverage of elections, coaching and training, etc.) contributes to capacity development of domestic election observation and advocacy, and also enhances the standing of civil society *vis-à-vis* government. A working hypothesis is that a vibrant civil society scene constitutes a positive factor, if not a necessary condition

²⁴ 'Triangulation is broadly defined as synthesis of data from multiple sources through collection, examination, comparison, and interpretation. By first gathering and then comparing multiple datasets to each other, triangulation helps to counteract limits to validity in each'. WHO, Overview of triangulation methodology: Synthesis of multiple data sources for evaluation and decision-making in HIV epidemics, based on initial experiences, http://www.searo.who.int/LinkFiles/Facts_and_Figures_08Tri-Resource_Guide_Generalized.pdf

²⁵ Annex III

²⁶ Annex IV

for the success of the CoE election support. This suggests avenues for further work with such actors, as already initiated in the area of Government/civil society dialogue on elections

- Several interviewees identified threats to the effectiveness of the work of the Venice Commission (review of draft legislation upon request of the Georgian cooperation partners). Allegedly, there have been occasions when the government submitted a draft for review by the Venice Commission, obtained positive feedback, and subsequently adopted a somewhat different text whilst claiming to have received Venice Commission endorsement. Monitoring of government action is complicated by time constraints and translation issues. The Venice Commission is aware of this threat (note references to translation issues in the opinions of the Venice Commission). Overall, several interviewees stated that the impact of the Venice Commission's advice could be reduced by the fact that it is prompted by requests (as the timing and topics may be dependent upon these requests). It should be noted, however, that the Venice Commission has received in the past few years an increasing number of requests for opinions from the PACE, which could contribute to address the above-mentioned limitations.
- Many interviewees pointed to the need to ensure continuous cooperation and capacity building for elections, especially between the electoral years. However several CoE stakeholders highlighted that electoral assistance is mostly funded by extra-budgetary (in particular voluntary) contributions, and that donors tend to contribute more willingly ahead of an important election, when there is a sense of urgency. Some cooperation partners also display more eagerness to receive assistance in such periods.
- With a long term perspective, several interviewees pointed to the following hypothesis: in transition periods, election support often contributes, if indirectly, to political alternance, provided there is political will for cooperation from the partner country. This first political alternance constitutes a sensitive period, during which assistance and monitoring should be kept at a high level.
- Against this background, election observation by the PACE, which is only a part of the PACE monitoring, could be a tool to be further employed in the area of cooperation. However, there was consistent stakeholder feedback indicating room for enhancement of the PACE election monitoring procedures (for instance by elaborating on the existing guidelines for election observers) and on clearer definition of the PACE observers' role as compared to observers from other organisations (in particular OSCE/ODIHR). Several stakeholders highlighted that these questions applied not only to the PACE, but to most parliamentary organisations observers (European Parliament, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, NATO Parliamentary Assembly). The observation of elections at local and regional levels by the Congress was generally welcomed by stakeholders, who deplored a shortage of election observation by other organisations in this area.
- More generally, bearing in mind the multiplicity of actors in the field of election support, and the timeframe in which election support generates effects, it is difficult to establish causal links at impact level between the CoE's interventions and changes in the electoral environment of the countries concerned. However, at results level, the evaluation team will explore effectiveness issues.

Added value

- Most stakeholders see the CoE as a secondary, not a primary actor in the area of elections. However they almost all point to the CoE's added value with regard to its legal expertise and credentials, as well as to the positive perception of the Organisation in Georgia.
- Most stakeholders point to the added value of the work of the Venice Commission (specific examples include contributions to the Electoral Law, and party financing).
- Many interviewees consider that the increase in EU funding and monitoring of EU requirements ahead of signing association agreements, or ahead of membership, has put the EU to the fore, compared to the CoE, but also the OSCE/ODIHR, the OSCE mission or UNDP. However, several respondents have observed that, while EU requirements and funding create an increased interest in cooperation, they do not seem to have always a direct impact on the practical implementation of standards, in particular regarding the quality of electoral processes.
- The EU Delegation sees the CoE added value in terms of providing advice on election standards (as short-term, punctual function) and notes a more limited role on capacity development of a more long-term nature.
- Little feedback was received on the added value of PACE election observation, though this can be explained by the general perception of the joint character of the observation effort of international and European observers. It also appears that the size of the OSCE/ODIHR missions lends it more visibility (compared with the smaller PACE missions).
- Most interlocutors pointed that election observation and election assistance, together, have contributed to more legitimate election process and election results. Several interviewees, particularly from state authorities and the civil society, indicated that this factor indirectly contributed to curb post-electoral violence.
- Looking towards the future a working hypothesis is that there is scope – and a specific niche - for intensifying support at local and regional level, most notably in terms of strengthening civil society organisations. However, several CoE stakeholders point to limited resources to intensify cooperation at the local and regional level.
- Several interlocutors with various points of view warned against diminishing the political standing of the CoE field office in Georgia, and considered that the CoE might lose added value in election support unless it is more vocal in the national debates around elections. Many also suggested that the CoE could have significant added value in facilitating this debate, reaching out to the wider public and to usually silent segments of the civil society.

Efficiency

- Cooperation partners and the EU Delegation have a good understanding of CoE capacities in the area of election assistance, noting specifically the work of the Venice Commission.
- “Donor coordination” remains an area of inquiry, with questions on the ways to improve it given the low weight of the CoE compared to other actors.
- The EU Delegation gave critical feedback on potential CoE provision of capacity development (other organisations were considered more experienced, less expensive and less bureaucratic).

- However, the EU Delegation appears to have limited insights into the full range of thematic areas covered by the CoE, and related competences in terms of providing capacity development.
- Generally, the evaluation team received highly positive feedback on the role of the field office and the necessity of its involvement, despite the limited resources (one project staff at the Georgia Field Office). Some interviewees noted, however, opportunities to increase cooperation between field and headquarter staff.

4. Semi-structured interview guidelines

Introduce the team and the evaluation, including concept of evaluation, scope, and purpose as part of a learning and improvement process.

1. What has been your involvement and role in the evolution of the electoral legislation and practice? Have you worked with the COE in this field, and how?
2. How would you describe the different phases and evolution of the electoral framework in [name of country], and what would you say was the CoE's role in this?
3. In your opinion, what were the main results of this reform and of this support in particular, were there any notable successes? How does election organization work as a result of the reform?
4. What have been the negative sides of this work or the aspects you think should be done differently?
5. What are the main challenges facing [name of country] today in the field of elections?
6. What international standards on elections do you use in your work? What are the CoE standards you use?
7. Generally how would you assess the CoE as a cooperation partner? How do you assess the election support work of the CoE as compared to other IOs or bilateral actors?

5. Checklist for evaluators

List of questions to be asked if not covered by answers to the main questions

On effectiveness of CoE election assistance / observation

Are there concrete examples/illustrations of changes that occurred as a result of the CoE support, for instance in:

- Capacity of Central Election Commissions and other relevant actors (other government actors, Civil Society actors)
- Legislation and regulatory framework
- Strengthened awareness of voters and increased participation to elections (in general terms; and specifically women and gender balance in election committee in polling stations, young people, minorities, disabled, inmates... Also consider acceptance of election results, timeliness of counting and announcement of results...)

- Efficient organisation of elections
- Overall fairness and transparency of the elections

For MoJ, CEC: CoE recommendations (give examples to interlocutor)

- In your opinion, what were the most important recommendations the CoE has given? Where they appropriate/useful/timely?
- Were there differences depending on who in the CoE gave these recommendations (Venice Commission/other entities)? Did you ever feel there were conflicting messages?
- What was the follow up to these recommendations? Where they implemented, by whom and how?
- What data/information would you advise to use if we were to show how the situation has changed in the electoral field as a result of CoE support?
- *If no answer:* E.g. statistical data on participation of minorities, women, youth as voters or candidates?

On efficiency and partnership management

Adequacy of external coordination / cooperation arrangements (Cooperation Partners; Donors; alternative providers of support, e.g. ODIHR, UN agencies, etc.)

- Is CoE support provided in a timely manner?
- Is CoE support delivered with adequate expertise?

On added value/comparative advantage of CoE election support

- Is there something different about the CoE as an actor in your country, compared to other organizations? (test awareness of the virtuous circle)?
- Looking specifically at election technical assistance, what differentiates CoE support from support provided by other actors (ODIHR, etc.)?
- Looking specifically at election observation, what differentiates CoE support from observation conducted by other actors (ODIHR, OSCE PA, EP, NATO PA)?

6. Stakeholder map

Type	Institutions	Role	Involvement in the programme
Executive institutions	state Ministry of Justice	Target group/user	Medium
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Partner (Facilitates observation missions)	Low
	Inter-ministerial ad hoc bodies	If any, varies from country to country	Medium
Legislative institutions	state Members of Parliament regularly contributing to election law	Target group/user	Medium
Other (independent) state institutions	Election administration bodies (e.g. Central Election Commissions)	Target group	Very high
	Judiciary institutions (e.g.	User/target group	Medium

		Courts dealing with electoral disputes)		
		Public broadcasting institutions	User/stakeholders external to CoE support	Medium
Domestic society actors	civil	Domestic election observation and advocacy NGOs	Target group/implementing partner/user/stakeholders external to CoE support	High
		Groups and NGOs representing voters' groups (e.g. youth groups, national minority NGOs...)	User/partner/target group	Medium
International society actors	civil	International NGOs (e.g. ISFED, Transparency International, ...)	Partners/stakeholders external to CoE support	Medium to high
		Bilateral civil society actors engaged in election support (e.g. NDI, IRI...)	Stakeholders external to CoE support	Medium
International governmental actors		Bilateral embassies	Stakeholders external to CoE support	Low
		Donor countries' bilateral embassies	Donor	High
		Bilateral development agencies (e.g. USAID, GTZ...)	Stakeholders external to CoE support	Low
International intergovernmental actors		EU (Brussels-based)	Donor	High
		EU Delegations (country-based)	Stakeholders external to CoE support	Medium
		OSCE Mission	Partner/stakeholder external to CoE support	Medium
		UNDP/UN Representatives High	Partner/stakeholder external to CoE support	Medium
		UN Women	Partner/stakeholder external to CoE support	Low
CoE officials and experts		CoE officials in Strasbourg	Implementers	High
		CoE officials in Field Offices	Implementers	High
		External experts (trainers, advisers...)	Implementing partners	Medium to high
Educational institutions		Schools of Political science	Target group	High

Definition of roles:

- Implementers: CoE officials in charge of the implementation of the CoE support to elections.

- Target group: an organization/institution/individual which the CoE activities aim to support, and which this support aims to impact on.
- User: an organization/institution/individual which is not directly targeted by CoE activities, but which may use the product of these activities (e.g. standards, opinions, recommendations, manuals, public reports including election observation reports, training curricula...) for their own purposes (eg advocacy).
- Implementing partner: organization/institution/individual to which the CoE outsources certain activities;
- Partner: organization/institution/individual with which the CoE teams up for the implementation of specific activities (eg co-funding of events, joint provision of expertise, joint elaboration of reports/opinions/recommendations)
- Donor: organization/institution/individual which awarded the CoE funds for the discharge of programmes.

Stakeholder external to CoE support: organisations/institutions/individuals which do not pertain to any above category, but which have had an active part in the evolution of the electoral law and practice of a given or several countries.

7. Evaluation matrix

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation question	Evaluation sub-question	Measure(s) / Indicator(s)	Data collection instrument(s)	Data source(s)	Data analysis	Evaluator responsible
Effectiveness	To what extent has CoE support to elections been effective?	1.1 Has CoE election assistance contributed to enhanced capacity of relevant government actors in terms of organising elections (e.g. Central Election Commissions)?	Monitoring indicators on enhanced capacity where available (proxy indicator: adequate CEC financial and human resources, increased local observer financial and human resources) / Qualitative feedback on enhanced capacities (e.g. availability of election observation standards / guidelines, enhanced quality of election organisation, enhanced quality of domestic election observation reports, enhanced working relations between CEC and civil society), more aligned legal framework	Desk research / interviews	CoE TA reports Election observation reports Venice Commission Opinions Interview feedback	Triangulation	Camille Massey
		1.2 Has CoE election assistance contributed to enhanced capacity of relevant civil society actors in terms of monitoring elections (e.g. NGOs involved in domestic election observation, media covering elections etc.)?					

EVALUATION OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE SUPPORT TO ELECTIONS

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation question	Evaluation sub-question	Measure(s) / Indicator(s)	Data collection instrument(s)	Data source(s)	Data analysis	Evaluator responsible
		1.3 Has CoE election assistance contributed to enhanced capacity of relevant government actors in terms of preparing / maintaining a compliant legal framework for elections (e.g. relevant government officials have acquired understanding / capacity to draft election 'rules' in compliance with standards)?					
		1.4 Has CoE PACE election observation identified improvements / shortcomings in the context of election day observation?	Qualitative feedback on the number / type of changes identified and related government action	Desk research / interviews	Election observation reports Interview feedback	Triangulation	Roland Blomeyer
		1.5 Have CoE PACE recommendations (following election observation) contributed to government action?					
Added value	To what extent does CoE support to elections represent added value / comparative advantage?	2.1 What distinguishes CoE election assistance (complementarity / differences in comparison with other actors, e.g. ODIHR)?	Qualitative feedback	Desk research / interviews	Interview feedback	Triangulation	Camille Massey
		2.2 What distinguishes CoE election observation (complementarity / differences in comparison with other actors, e.g. ODIHR, OSCE PA, EP, NATO PA)?					Roland Blomeyer
Efficiency	Is CoE support to elections delivered efficiently / with adequate resources?	3.1 Are CoE 'external' coordination / cooperation arrangements adequate in terms of avoiding overlaps / gaps in assistance (with Cooperation Partners; Donors; alternative providers of support, e.g. ODIHR, UN agencies, etc.)?	(Cooperation Partner, Donor, Headquarters, Field Office) Qualitative interview feedback on coordination / cooperation mechanisms and frequency of meetings	Desk research / interviews	Interview feedback		Roland Blomeyer
		3.2 Are 'internal' arrangements for coordination and exchange of information before, during and after headquarter missions adequate (between CoE headquarters and the Field Office)?	Qualitative feedback on adequacy / timeliness of	Desk research / interviews	Interview feedback		Roland Blomeyer

EVALUATION OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE SUPPORT TO ELECTIONS

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation question	Evaluation sub-question	Measure(s) / Indicator(s)	Data collection instrument(s)	Data source(s)	Data analysis	Evaluator responsible
			information exchange				
		3.2.1 With regard to the Venice Commission?					
		3.2.2 With regard to PACE?					
		3.2.3 With regard to Congress?					
		3.2.4 With regard to DG I?					
		3.2.5 With regard to DG II?					
		3.3 Are sufficient resources in place at the CoE headquarters to deliver / assist election support?	Staff and budget	Desk research / interviews	Staff and budget Interview feedback		Camille Massey
		3.3.1 At the Venice Commission?					
		3.3.2 At PACE?					
		3.3.3 At Congress?					
		3.3.4 At DG I?					
		3.3.5 At DG II?					
		3.4 Are sufficient resources in place at the Field Office to deliver / assist election support?	Field Office contacts to Cooperation Partners, Field Office contacts to Civil Society, Field Office staff specialised in election support	Desk research / interviews	Interview feedback		Roland Blomeyer