

COUNCIL OF EUROPE EVALUATION GUIDELINES



October 2020

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List of abbreviations

CM	Committee of Ministers
CoE	Council of Europe
DG DEVCO	Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (EU Commission)
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (EU Commission)
DGI	Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law
DGII	Directorate General of Democracy
DIO	Directorate of Internal Oversight
DPA	Directorate of Political Affairs
DSG	Deputy Secretary General
EU	European Union
GDD	Travel Management (Gestion des déplacements)
GR-PBA	Rapporteur Group on Programme, Budget and Administration
JP	Joint Programme/Project
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MAEs	Major Administrative Entities
MSA	Multiservice Assistant
OAC	Oversight Advisory Committee
OB	Ordinary Budget
ODGP	Office of the Directorate General of Programmes
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
PACE	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
PMM	Project Management Methodology
PO	Private Office
RG	Reference Group
ROM	Results-Oriented Monitoring
SG	Secretary General
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
VC	Voluntary Contribution

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Why Evaluation Guidelines?

In the preface to the New Council of Europe Evaluation Policy the Secretary General emphasises the importance she places on Evaluation:

“The new Evaluation Policy approved by the Committee of Ministers in November 2019 reflects international norms and standards, in particular as regards the independence, credibility and utility of the evaluation function and the transparency of evaluation results. It is a decisive step forward towards a strengthened organisational culture of evaluation, learning and accountability.

I consider the policy to be a milestone in enhancing the Organisation’s capacity to assess its performance and demonstrate its comparative advantage and value. At a strategic level, evaluation can help us debate, set priorities and take decisions on the best way forward for achieving the Council of Europe’s goals. At programme level, it can help us to further increase the impact of our support to member States and to ensure the continued confidence of our member States and donors in the Organisation’s work.

Making use of evaluation reports may bring innovative thinking, improve existing ways of working, promote internal collaboration and thus coherence, while at the same time enhancing dialogue with our partners. I trust that senior management and staff across the Organisation will fully embrace and implement the new policy.

For my part, I will continue to foster an enabling environment for the further development of the evaluation culture within the Organisation.”

In particular the Secretary General mentions the importance to “*fully embrace and implement the new policy.*”

The updated guidelines reflect changes made in the new Evaluation Policy (Paragraphe 2 CoE Evaluation Policy) as well as additional practical information on how the policy will be implemented. They will be submitted to the Committee of Ministers (CM) for them to take note of and will be regularly updated to introduce new processes and procedures related to evaluation or that are relevant to it.

The updated Evaluation Guidelines serve:

- To have a common organisational approach in the application of procedures and to assure quality of evaluations;
- To explain concepts, principles, processes, procedures and tools to be used throughout evaluations;
- To take into account the new Evaluation Policy approved by the Committee of Ministers in November 2019 and to update the Evaluation Guidelines of 2014.

The Committee of Ministers takes note of the Guidelines.¹

¹ The Committee of Ministers decision of 8 December 2020 ([CM/Del/Dec\(2020\)1391/11.5](#)).

1.2 Which evaluations do the Evaluation Guidelines concern?

They cover evaluations in relation to all the pillars of the biennial Programme and Budget financed by ordinary budget, other budgets, including partial agreements and extrabudgetary resources.

1.3 Who are they addressed to?

There will be multiple users of the Guidelines:

- Staff of the Directorate of Internal Oversight;
- Council of Europe staff;
- Committee of Ministers concerning procedure for consideration of evaluation reports in the CM;
- Secretary General (SG) for ensuring compliance with the Evaluation Policy;
- Senior management to oversee their staff's evaluation practices and take into account the results of evaluations;
- Oversight Advisory Committee (OAC) to provide assurance to the CM in respect of the adequacy of the evaluation function;
- Consultants, to abide by quality assurance checklists and code of conduct;
- Donors and other stakeholders to be informed on how evaluations are undertaken in the Organisation;
- Peer reviewers to assess the evaluation function.²

1.4 How to use the Evaluation Guidelines?

The Evaluation Guidelines are organised in a number of easy-to-use sections that can be used in sequence or as individual references:

- [Section 1](#): Introduction to the Evaluation Guidelines;
- [Section 2](#): The role of evaluation in the Council of Europe (CoE);
- [Section 3](#): Information on the evaluation system;
- [Section 4](#): Evaluations managed by Directorate of Internal Oversight (DIO) - also interesting for staff whose area of work is being evaluated by DIO;
- [Section 5](#): Evaluations managed by Major Administrative Entities (MAEs).

Both Sections 4 and 5 include sub-sections on the identification of topics to be evaluated, the planning, preparation and implementation of an evaluation and the evaluation follow-up. External evaluation consultants can find guidance on the evaluation process in Section 4 or Section 5, depending on whether their respective evaluation is commissioned by DIO or an MAE.

² CoE's evaluation function represents both the DIO at central level and MAEs at a decentralised level.

2. ROLE OF EVALUATION IN THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Section 2 presents the general role and concept of evaluation in the CoE including its legal basis, definition, objectives and principles. This section is expected to be of importance to all readers of the Guidelines.

2.1 Background: Evaluation Culture and Policy

2010

Establishment of the Evaluation Division in the Directorate of Internal Oversight to enhance accountability by reporting on results to member states, donors and partners in order to:

- ✓ help take better decisions by informing the planning, programming, budgeting, implementation and reporting cycle;
- ✓ learn and share knowledge for improving results by a commitment to act on feedback;
- ✓ improve working methods and internal co-ordination;
- ✓ make better assessments for cost-efficiency;
- ✓ support critical and creative thinking, reform and innovation;
- ✓ alert and address potential risks.

2017

Initiatives were taken for developing the evaluation culture in the Council of Europe further:

- ✓ Independent peer review of the Evaluation function calling for its reinforcement, for a new Evaluation Policy and for the development of a stronger evaluation culture;
- ✓ In the context of the Programme and Budget cycle for 2018-2019, the Secretary General made proposals to reinforce the evaluation function and recognised the role of evaluation in the on-going reform: “during the biennium, a renewed focus will be placed on evaluating activities and programmes for their efficiency, effectiveness and impact [and] the Organisation’s Evaluation Policy will be reviewed and updated as necessary, taking into account the peer review exercise”;³
- ✓ The Committee of Ministers invited the Secretary General to develop an effective evaluation culture within the Organisation, with a view to further rationalising activities as appropriate.⁴

2019

- ✓ In May 2019, Helsinki Ministerial session adopted the following decision: “Acknowledging the results of the reform process achieved to date, the Committee of Ministers invited the Secretary General and the incoming Secretary General to continue the structural and administrative reforms, including further strengthening the Organisation’s independent evaluation function, to ensure even greater efficiency, effectiveness, flexibility and value for money.”⁵
- ✓ The new Evaluation Policy was approved by the CM in November 2019 ([CM\(2018\)159-final](#)). The Secretary General in its preface states: “*It is a decisive step forward towards a strengthened organisational culture of evaluation, learning and accountability.*”

2020

- ✓ Evaluation Guidelines are updated as required by Paragraph 2 of the CoE Evaluation Policy.

³ [SG/Inf\(2017\)28-rev.](#)

⁴ Committee of Ministers’ decision [CM/Del/Dec\(2017\)1300/11.1-Part1](#), paragraph 12.

⁵ [CM/Del/Dec\(2019\)129/2a.](#)

2.2 Results Based Management and Evaluation

What is RBM?

The [Practical Guide on Results Based Management - Approach of the Council of Europe](#) defines RBM on page 23 as follows:

“Results-based Management (RBM) is a management strategy aiming at changing the way institutions operate. RBM helps shifting from a logic of resources and activities to a logic of results. This is done through the production of programmes and budgets structured around public policy objectives and the development of monitoring and evaluation systems. They are less concerned with the volume of expenditure than with the results achieved.”

Evaluation is an integral part of the RBM approach and assesses whether the topics evaluated have contributed to make the intended change.

In an RBM framework, evaluation contributes to learning and accountability of the organisation in terms of “accountability for results”, not only for spending resources or implementing activities, but primarily for achieving the set objectives. It does so by applying the OECD DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability and added value defined in the next Section.

By making such an assessment, evaluation “feeds [...] information into decision-making processes”⁶ by way of independent judgement and provides actionable recommendations for the management. Evaluation also makes essential contributions to RBM by informing its planning, programming, budgeting, implementation and reporting cycle.⁷

Evaluation helps assess whether this “shift” from the logic of resources and activities towards results has been achieved at different levels such as at the level of strategies, policies, programmes and projects. It checks how RBM is operationalised.

2.3 Definition of evaluation and criteria for its application⁸

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Network on Development Evaluation (EvalNet) revisited the definitions and use of the OECD DAC evaluation criteria in 2018-2019 and adapted definitions which were adopted and declassified by the DAC at its meeting on 10 December 2019.⁹ As the evaluation criteria of the Council of Europe were based on these criteria, the Guidelines have been adapted to take into account these changes following the approval of the Evaluation Policy in November 2019 by the Committee of Ministers.

These criteria¹⁰ are the following:

- **relevance:** the extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries, global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change;

Definition of Evaluation

Evaluation is a systematic and impartial **assessment** of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance.

⁶ Results-Based Management. Approach of the Council of Europe. Practical guide (March 2020. Version 1.1), p. 31.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 41 and 45.

⁸ [Evaluation Policy \(CM\(2018\)159-final\)](#), evaluation criteria adapted to those of the OECD DAC.

⁹ For a summary of key changes please see [Global Consultation on Adapting the Evaluation Criteria](#).

¹⁰ Updated [OECD DAC Evaluation Criteria](#).

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- **coherence:** the compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution;
- **effectiveness:** the extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups;
- **efficiency:** the extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way;
- **impact:** the extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects;
- **sustainability:** the extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue, or are likely to continue;
- **added value:** ability of the Council of Europe, through its specific approach, composition and working methods to make a significant contribution.

Evaluation should be distinguished from: ¹¹

- **Self-assessment:** reporting on progress in the achievement of results. It is conducted by the management of the intervention itself with the purpose of adapting activities to changing circumstances. Self-assessments feed into evaluations but do not follow evaluation standards and processes and are not covered by CoE's Evaluation Policy;
- **Project monitoring:** continuous examination of progress achieved with an on-going intervention by its management in order to track compliance with a plan and take corrective action if necessary. Monitoring is not to be confused with the monitoring mechanisms of the CoE that assess member States' compliance with Conventions;
- **Results-oriented monitoring of the EU:** external monitoring system of DG DEVCO¹² and DG NEAR,¹³ aimed at enhancing the European Commission's internal control, accountability and management capacity with a strong focus on results;
- **Internal audit:** an entity of the Organisation independent from its management and operations. It is designed to look at the key risks facing the Organisation, which may have an adverse effect on the achievement of the Organisation's objectives, and on how the Organisation is managing those risks. Internal audit also looks at the adequacy of governance of entities and functions and at the efficiency and effectiveness of internal controls. Internal audits usually result in recommendations for improvement across the Organisation;
- **External audit:** a provider of audit services external to the Organisation (e.g. the National Audit Office of a Member State or an audit firm), which focuses on finance and the key risks associated with the Organisation's financial management.

2.4 Evaluation principles: how are the evaluation function and evaluations assessed?

2.4.1 Key International standards and norms

In accordance with the OECD DAC-UNEG Framework for Peer Review,¹⁴ evaluation functions and their products must be independent/impartial, credible and useful. These are also among the key principles that are set out in the CoE Evaluation Policy.

- ✓ **Independence and impartiality:** evaluations deliver objective assessments;
- ✓ **Credibility:** robust evidence-based findings, evaluations conducted in an impartial, professional,

¹¹ [Please see Annex: Relation to other oversight functions; A.1, p.30 of UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation \(2016\) for further examples.](#)

¹² European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development.

¹³ European Commission's Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations.

¹⁴ [DAC-UNEG Framework for Peer Review](#), p. 8.

- technically competent and transparent manner;
- ✓ **Utility:** evaluations inform decisions, contribute to accountability for results and organisational learning.

The Council of Europe is committed to apply the guiding principles above as stated in the Evaluation Policy.¹⁵

Figure 1: Evaluation Principles¹⁶



2.4.2 How are these principles guaranteed in practice?

Independence and impartiality¹⁷

- ✓ The DIO/Evaluation Division is established independently from strategic and operational management functions;
- ✓ In both DIO and MAE evaluations, independence is also assured by involvement of independent consultants who provide their unbiased judgement and impartial advice;
- ✓ The DIO reports directly to the Secretary General;
- ✓ The Director of DIO has the authority to initiate, carry out and report on any action within his/her mandate.¹⁸ The Director of DIO informs the Oversight Advisory Committee and the Committee of Ministers of any restrictions and limitations in the conduct of his/her duties;
- ✓ The DIO carries the responsibility of developing the evaluation work programme;
- ✓ The DIO has full discretion to directly interact with all relevant stakeholders and to publish and disseminate its evaluation reports to the decision-makers;
- ✓ Evaluation staff and evaluation team members must demonstrate professional integrity and not have been (or expect to be in the near future) directly involved in the policy setting, design or management of the evaluation subject nor have any other form of conflict of interest;
- ✓ Evaluators carrying out CoE evaluations apply the CoE [Charter on professional ethics](#) of 15 July 2005 and the CoE Code of Conduct for Evaluation ([Appendix 1](#)). This is to ensure the integrity and impartiality of the

¹⁵ [Evaluation Policy](#), paragraphs 11, 12 and 14. In addition, para 23 states that the Council of Europe evaluations, where appropriate, assess whether and how evaluatees strengthen human rights and address issues of discrimination and gender inequality. Furthermore, cross-cutting dimensions such as gender mainstreaming, civil society participation and, as appropriate, attention to other relevant groups are incorporated in the evaluation process. Evaluations should encourage and enhance participation, tackle discrimination and enable inclusion.

¹⁶ Based on model in [WPF Evaluation Policy \(2008\)](#), p.9.

¹⁷ Established by DIO mandate and the CoE Evaluation Policy.

¹⁸ CoE Evaluation Policy, paragraph 16.

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evaluators on the one hand, and on the other hand, the quality and validity of the evaluation work.

The **credibility** of evaluation depends on:

- ✓ The expertise and independence of the evaluators: DIO evaluators undergo continuous professional development and training, external consultants are selected on the basis of their expertise;¹⁹
- ✓ The soundness of the methodological approach: checked by independent quality assessors;
- ✓ The adequacy of resources: assured by the SG and the CM;
- ✓ The transparency of the evaluation process: as described in the Evaluation Guidelines;
- ✓ The participation of stakeholders: an inclusive data collection process;
- ✓ The impartiality and factual accuracy of reporting: the reference group made up of stakeholders which follows the evaluation process and checks the accuracy of information.

The **utility** of evaluation is related to its :

- ✓ relevance for decision-making: the needs of the SG, CM and senior management are taken into account during the preparation of the work programme;
- ✓ timeliness for decision-making: DIO submits evaluation reports to the SG for ensuring the preparation of an action plan and management response and subsequently transmits published evaluation reports and related action plans to the Chair of the Ministers' Deputies for consideration to support decision-making;
- ✓ Contribution to organisational learning:
 - Follow-up of recommendations. DIO reports annually on the implementation of accepted evaluation recommendations to the SG and presents its annual report to the CM, including information on the implementation of recommendations;
 - Internal Network of CoE evaluation practitioners to exchange experience;
 - Events to disseminate results with consultants/subject matter experts and all stakeholders;
- ✓ Transparency - timely publication of evaluation reports and management responses.

¹⁹ Ibid., paragraph 12.

3. THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S EVALUATION SYSTEM AND ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF OTHER ENTITIES

Section 3 describes the Council of Europe's evaluation system represented both by the Directorate of Internal Oversight at central level and Major Administrative Entities at a decentralised level. It explains the CoE's evaluation architecture and the role of the different parts of the Organisation in it.

3.1 Types of evaluations

The Council of Europe's evaluation system consists of:

- DIO-managed evaluations,
- Decentralised evaluations.

The Evaluation Policy also foresees "joint evaluations" which are funded and managed jointly by DIO and donors or partner organisations.²⁰

Evaluation process is inclusive and participatory at all stages.

3.1.1 DIO-managed evaluations

- Funded by DIO's resources;
- Managed by DIO using internal capacities and expertise of DIO and/or external consultants;
- Typically assess areas of high significance or strategic importance or specific programmes within the organisations programme and budget;
- DIO assures the quality of the entire evaluation process, including the final report and tracks the implementation of recommendations;
- All completed evaluations are submitted to the Secretary General and transmitted to the Chair of the Ministers' Deputies.

3.1.2 Decentralised evaluations

- Managed by MAEs other than DIO and funded through the Ordinary Budget, partial agreements or extra-budgetary resources;
- Assess a single programme, funding agreement, strategy, entity, or other area of action;
- Submitted to the donor who requested it, steering committee, or relevant Committee of Ministers' rapporteur group through the Secretary General and take into account the requirements of donors and/or of a governing body;
- Conducted by external and independent consultants/evaluators who have not been involved in the design, implementation or management of the subject under evaluation or expected to be so in the near future;
- Meet the same level of norms and standards as independent evaluations, including CoE Evaluation Guidelines and ethical guidelines,²¹ as well as the Code of Conduct for Evaluation ([Appendix 1](#));
- According to the new Evaluation Policy, the recommendations of decentralised evaluations are formally followed up on. As per Section II of the Evaluation Policy, decentralised evaluation reports and their action plans shall be submitted by the MAE to the SG. They shall also be submitted to the DIO at the latest within two months of the receipt of the final report and provide information on the MAE's plans for their publication and dissemination. They shall be published on the DIO Internet and Intranet sites of the CoE.²²

²⁰ Ibid., paragraph 31.

²¹ [Charter on professional ethics of 15 July 2005](#).

²² CoE Evaluation Policy, Section II, pp. 14-15.

In line with the requirements of the Evaluation Policy, page 16, DIO is responsible for assurance of the quality of decentralised evaluations. A Quality Assurance Framework has been established (see [Section 5.6](#)) that provides guidance, technical assistance and professionalisation support, as well as regular reviews of its implementation for advising on the selection of consultants, on the terms of reference and on draft evaluation reports.

3.2 The Directorate of Internal Oversight (DIO)

3.2.1 DIO's Role in Evaluation

Section II of the [Evaluation Policy](#) outlines the responsibilities and tasks of the DIO Evaluation Division with regard to **normative work, planning, design/implementation, use and support to decentralised evaluation**.

Evaluations are conducted or managed by DIO staff and assisted by external consultants as necessary. Internal DIO team arrangements are decided on a case by case basis depending on subject matter of the evaluation, expertise requirements and budgetary considerations. The process for the selection of external consultants is carried out following CoE's procurement procedures based on the ToR drafted by DIO in consultation with stakeholders.

3.2.2 DIO's Staff

DIO staff engaged in designing, conducting and managing evaluation activities should possess the relevant professional and technical competencies:

- university degree in a relevant field;
- substantial professional experience in managing and conducting evaluations;
- good knowledge of evaluation methodology, recognised evaluation standards, techniques (including for conducting interviews and establishing samples and surveys), procedures and reporting, including projects funded by extra-budgetary resources;
- analytical thinking, problem solving and judgement skills.

In terms of personal values, evaluators are expected to demonstrate integrity, loyalty and discretion. The [UNEG Evaluation Competency Framework](#) can be consulted for a more detailed competency profile of evaluators.

As a policy of DIO, all staff are expected to regularly follow trainings and update their qualifications. The DIO Evaluation Division also participates in meetings of various international bodies and professional evaluation networks.

3.2.3 DIO's Budget

The annual evaluation budget of DIO with the planned results and performance indicators is included in the Internal Oversight Section of the Council of Europe's **biennial Programme and Budget** document. In accordance with Section VI of the Evaluation Policy, these resources may be supplemented by voluntary contributions and in-kind non-monetary contributions such as secondments.²³

3.3 Other Stakeholders in the Evaluation System

In the new Evaluation Policy the roles of the Committee of Ministers, Secretary General, Oversight Advisory

²³ CoE Evaluation Policy, paragraph 48: DIO and MAEs can receive financial voluntary contributions, and in kind non-monetary contributions (e.g. in the form of secondments and short-term expertise); any such voluntary contribution should be made respecting the norms and standards applicable to independent evaluations, including DIO Evaluation Guidelines and ethical guidelines as well as the code of conduct for evaluators.

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Committee, CoE management and staff have been more clearly defined.²⁴

Responsibilities of CoE entities, other than DIO are defined in Section II of the Evaluation Policy which are summarised in **Figure 2** below. This section highlights only the main responsibilities. Figure 2 shows that all entities are involved in the process of planning and also in making use of the evaluations depending on their role and responsibilities.

3.3.1 Committee of Ministers

The Committee of Ministers, approves the Evaluation Policy and the appointment of the DIO Director, provides sufficient resources for evaluations and takes note of the evaluation work programme.

The Ministers' Deputies can contribute to the development of the work programme in different ways, such as:

- a. Through informal collective meetings organised with DIO where the permanent representations have the occasion to express their needs for decision-making before the DIO work programme is developed (e.g. before renewing a programme, a Country Action Plan, a Strategy or a Policy);
- b. Taking a formal decision that an evaluation should be undertaken;
- c. Taking a formal decision to include an evaluation component in a new intervention (such as a programme, policy, strategy).

The Ministers' Deputies also have a role in discussing evaluation reports, their recommendations and following up on their implementation.

Two months after an evaluation report is declared final by its Director, the DIO transmits published evaluation reports and, if available, the related action plan to the Chair of the Ministers' Deputies and makes proposals for consideration in what way the report might be of interest to the Ministers' Deputies and its rapporteur groups. The DIO presents findings, conclusions and recommendations to the relevant governance bodies.²⁵ The Minister's Deputies take note of and/or consider the published evaluation reports and the proposed follow-up. Of particular importance are the recommendations that require budgetary allocations for their implementation. The Committee of Ministers may decide to follow the implementation of evaluation recommendations of individual evaluation reports or through the DIO annual report to the Ministers' Deputies.

3.3.2 Secretary General

The Secretary General, in addition to her/his responsibilities outlined in the Evaluation Policy, is responsible for ensuring that management responses are prepared, by the Secretariat, for each evaluation report and for the implementation of the action plans to address recommendations. The DIO submits to the Secretary General an annual report on the state of implementation of recommendations to facilitate her/his decision-making on accepted recommendations that are yet to be implemented.

3.3.3 Oversight Advisory Committee

The Oversight Advisory Committee is governed by its own Terms of Reference, which are regularly reviewed ([CM/Res\(2018\)5](#)). It serves in an advisory capacity and reports to the Committee of Ministers and may advise the Secretary General on the independence, credibility, performance and value added of the evaluation function as well as on the appointment of the Director of Internal Oversight.

It advises the Secretary General as necessary on the work programme and budget of the evaluation function and reports to the Committee of Ministers in accordance with its terms of reference. It also advises on the timely and effective implementation of evaluation recommendations.

²⁴ CoE Evaluation Policy, pp. 14-15.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

3.3.4 CoE Management and Staff

The CoE Management, in addition to its responsibilities outlined in the Evaluation Policy, is requested to appoint members to the reference groups senior enough to take position on behalf of their MAEs.²⁶ Decentralised evaluations have to follow the Evaluation Guidelines as well as the organisation’s quality assurance framework and are subjected to the same rules of dissemination and publication as DIO evaluations.²⁷

Figure 2: Stakeholders and their roles²⁸

	Committee of Ministers	Secretary General	CoE Management and Staff	Oversight Advisory Committee	Directorate of Internal Oversight	Decentralised Evaluations
Design/ Implementation			✓		✓	✓
Evaluability			✓			✓
Normative work	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Planning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Resourcing	✓	✓	✓			✓
Support to decentralised evaluation			✓		✓	
Use	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

3.4 CoE Evaluation quality assurance system

DIO has established quality assurance mechanisms in line with the OECD DAC evaluation quality standards²⁹ and UNEG norms and standards³⁰ for the purpose of continuous improvement of the quality and usefulness of its evaluation processes and evaluation reports.

The principal components of the quality assurance mechanism are outlined in [Appendix 3](#) and involve the following responsibilities of the DIO:

- sets the standards for the Council of Europe for planning, conducting and using all evaluations in the form of guidance material and methodological tools available on its website;
- assures the quality of DIO-managed and decentralised evaluations in accordance with the aforementioned standards and Guidelines; consults with stakeholders concerned on the terms of reference/inception reports as well as draft evaluation reports;
- makes use of reference groups and, if relevant, of subject-matter experts, to ensure that the evaluation process meets quality expectations;

²⁶ The composition of the reference group is decided on the basis of the topic to be evaluated.

²⁷ CoE Evaluation Policy, pp. 14-15.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 14-17.

²⁹ [OECD DAC \(2010\). Evaluating Development Co-operation – Summary of Key Norms and Standards, Second edition. Paris: OECD.](#)

³⁰ [UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation \(2016\).](#)

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- may commission periodic meta-evaluations to assess quality of DIO managed evaluation reports and/or those of decentralised evaluations;³¹
- periodically commissions an external peer review of the Evaluation Policy and evaluation function;
- provides staff with relevant training/coaching advice and guidance material to strengthen the necessary skills and knowledge required to carry out evaluations and evaluability assessments of programmes, policies and strategies.³²

For an independent quality assurance of the Evaluation Function, a **peer-review**³³ exercise is conducted by external experts approximately every 4-5 years.

The detailed process for quality assurance of decentralised evaluations is described in [Section 5](#).

³¹ CoE Evaluation Policy, Chapter IV, p.11.

³² Evaluability is defined as the “extent to which an activity or a programme can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion”. An Evaluability Assessment “calls for the early review of a proposed activity in order to ascertain whether its objectives are adequately defined and its results verifiable”. (OECD DAC (2002). Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management. Paris: OECD).

³³ [Based on DAC-UNEG Framework for Peer Review.](#)

4. EVALUATIONS MANAGED BY DIO

Section 4 provides an overview of the preparation, conduct and finalisation process of DIO-managed evaluations. This section is of importance to all readers of the guidelines.

4.1 Preparation of the DIO Evaluation work programme

4.1.1 What is the CoE evaluation universe?

A general definition of what is to be evaluated is provided under Paragraph 6 of the Evaluation Policy:

Evaluation is a systematic and impartial assessment of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance.

Paragraph 27 of the Evaluation Policy sets out the areas that can be assessed by DIO managed evaluations:

- a) The biennial Programme and Budget:
 - Projects, programmes/sub-programmes;
 - Thematic and cross-cutting evaluation;
 - Regional or country programme evaluation.
- b) Organisational evaluation:
 - The functioning of the Council of Europe;
 - Institutional arrangements;
 - Council of Europe offices;
 - Partial agreements.

4.1.2 How is the work programme developed?

Consultation process

- DIO follows important decisions, debates, events and developments in the Council of Europe throughout the year such as ministerial sessions, meetings of ministers' deputies, rapporteur groups, PACE sessions and activities of other MAEs to have a good understanding of organisation's key concerns;
- DIO consults with the SG/DSG, PO, Senior Management, permanent representatives in order to understand the decision-making needs. In addition, permanent representatives could propose decisions to be taken by the CM for evaluations and also propose to integrate evaluations into programmes or any areas of action by the CoE. Specific proposals concerning evaluation topics to be considered for inclusion in the Work Programme may be transmitted to the Director of DIO by MAEs. Requests arising once a work programme has begun to be implemented would have to be considered in the light of resources available to carry out any request.
- DIO consults with donors as well as the EU when needed.

Drafting the Work Programme

- Bearing in mind the selection criteria for evaluation topics attached to the Evaluation Policy, such as the weight to be given to the contribution to decision-making, strategic significance, feasibility, significance of investment, coverage and diversity, organisational learning and assessment of risk to organisation's mandate and reputation;
- Bearing in mind the consultation process above and having followed developments in the CoE, DIO selects topics to be evaluated;
- Consults the MAEs in charge of their topics for the feasibility of evaluations:

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- data collection is feasible (i.e. documentation is available for the chosen intervention and relevant staff is accessible);
- the timing of the evaluation is appropriate (i.e. no overlapping evaluation efforts are being undertaken);
- the chosen intervention lends itself well to providing valuable lessons for the organisation and to facilitate strategic decisions.

Finalising the work programme and endorsement by the SG

- DIO submits the work programme to the SG;
- SG reviews and endorses the work programme;
- The Oversight Advisory Committee may report to the CM and advise the Secretary General as appropriate on the work programme in accordance with its terms of reference;
- GR-PBA takes note of the work programme.

4.2 Planning and scoping

4.2.1 Planning and Monitoring

Each evaluation starts with the creation of an initial planning for the evaluation. The plan is prepared and validated prior to commencing the work, indicating the key milestones and deadlines. The plan is regularly reviewed and updated during the course of the evaluation process to take account of any factors which may affect the plan. Any changes to the initial plan are validated as part of the management process of the assignment. Evaluators record the time spent on each evaluation and on other tasks ([Appendix 4](#)).

Detailed planning is included in the ToR of each evaluation. The ToR are shared with the reference group and other stakeholders in order that they are aware at what points during the process their input will be required.

4.2.2 Scoping interviews with CoE evaluation stakeholders

In the initial stage of planning an evaluation, a meeting is held by DIO with CoE evaluation stakeholders in order to learn about their expectations for the evaluation exercise in terms of:

- key issues the evaluation should address;
- stakeholders to be consulted, their accessibility;
- possible methodological issues in data collection;
- possible risks and how to mitigate them;
- political and other considerations to bear in mind.

4.2.3 Preparation of Evaluation Dossier by MAE

Following the consultations, the relevant MAEs are asked to prepare a set of documentation for DIO. An “evaluation dossier” prepared by the MAE can consist of:

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

e. Other documents, as relevant.

4.2.4 Preparation of Terms of Reference (ToR)

After scoping interviews and desk study of documents, DIO prepares the ToR for the evaluation that clearly set out **purpose, objectives, scope, evaluation questions and the criteria** the evaluator must meet.

DIO Guidelines for Developing Terms of Reference for Evaluations, including a Quality Checklist for ToRs, will be made available as a separate document on the DIO Website.

In certain circumstances, a **concept note** may also be prepared to clarify how entities and processes work in more detail.

4.2.5 Establishment of Evaluation Reference Group (RG)

All MAEs concerned are informed of the launch of the evaluation and are requested to appoint a **senior** member and a substitute member to the reference group. The members of the RG represent their MAE and speak on their behalf. They are therefore advised to consult with their hierarchy and inform them of the evaluation and decisions taken.

A representative of PO is always invited to join the reference group. The initial composition of the RG in terms of entities is proposed by DIO on a case-by-case basis, usually including evaluation stakeholders in CoE headquarters, but this does not exclude representatives from the field offices. Depending on the evaluation's country/regional and thematic focus, the RG may also include country representatives and/or representatives of donors.

The mandate of the RG is to advise the evaluation team on matters related to the evaluation (such as its scope and objectives), to facilitate the evaluation team's access to relevant information and to provide feedback on findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation by commenting, in particular, on the ToR/concept note, inception report and draft final report.

A **concept note** is prepared at the outset of an evaluation in complex evaluations. It outlines the purpose and objectives of the evaluation, key stakeholders, possible evaluation questions, budget, estimated timeline and activities/deliverables.

An **inception report** is prepared after the initial review of relevant documentation. It sets out the conceptual framework to be used in an evaluation, the key evaluation questions and methodology, including information on data sources and collection, sampling and key indicators. The inception report also includes a timeline for the evaluation project and drafts of data collection instruments.

4.2.6 First Reference Group meeting

The first evaluation reference group meeting is organised to receive feedback on the ToR/Concept Note or Inception Report. The reference group members are provided with the documents and asked to prepare their feedback for the meeting within a specific timeframe. The feedback can refer to the scope and objectives of evaluation and evaluation questions, appropriateness of case studies (specific themes and countries selected), but can also provide suggestions on methodology. The conclusions are circulated after the meeting and the ToR/Concept Note or the Inception report is taken into account accordingly.

4.2.7 Recruitment of external evaluators

The need for the recruitment of external consultants is decided on a case-by-case basis and depends on the volume of evaluation tasks, the substance matter and specific expertise required for the evaluation, as well as the availability of resources.

In case of contracting an external consultant, the type of tendering procedure is decided according to the budget allocated to the evaluation. The tendering procedure is organised in accordance with CoE [Procurement procedures](#)³⁴ and takes into account the rules and regulations of the [Tenders Board](#) using the [Model for the issuing of calls for tenders](#).

For a list of external consultants, DIO maintains a database of evaluation consultants, which may be referred to.

The Call for Proposals is announced on the website of Council of Europe using the [Model website notice for a call for tenders](#). Usually, the call for proposals is also announced on the website of the [European Evaluation Society](#). The answers to questions posed by tenderers are made available to all tender participants. For this purpose, a Q&A link is created on the webpage of the relevant call for tenders where a document can be accessed containing all questions posed and answers given. The document is updated for each question received.

The best tender proposal is selected based on the selection and adjudication criteria outlined in the Call for Tenders using a scoring system. The tender is awarded to the proposal which receives the highest total score calculated from overall scores of the Technical and Financial Proposals. The technical proposals will be evaluated on the basis of selection criteria such as:

- suitability of methodological approach;
- consultants' experience and knowledge of evaluation, in particular, within the context of international cooperation;
- experience and knowledge of the evaluators in the thematic areas covered by the present call for tenders;
- experience and knowledge of the evaluators in the countries concerned.

The financial proposals will be considered only for submissions that passed a minimum technical score. Once the best tender proposal is selected, the results of the tender are communicated to all of the tender participants.

Final payment will be dependent upon satisfactory quality of the deliverables.

4.3 Conduct and management of evaluation by DIO

4.3.1 Opening meeting of evaluators

Evaluators can be taken to refer to DIO staff or externally contracted consultants, depending on the needs of the evaluation. An opening meeting is held to assure a common understanding of the evaluation purpose, questions and tasks and to agree on the evaluation schedule.

4.3.2 Desk research/Initial Analysis

During the desk research phase, evaluators collect information from the dossiers provided by MAEs. In addition, at this stage, evaluators might carry out scoping interviews and consult other relevant CoE documents. The information is then analysed with a view to adjust the evaluation questions and to develop an appropriate evaluation methodology (methods of data collection, criteria for sampling). The findings of the desk study phase are presented in an Inception Report.

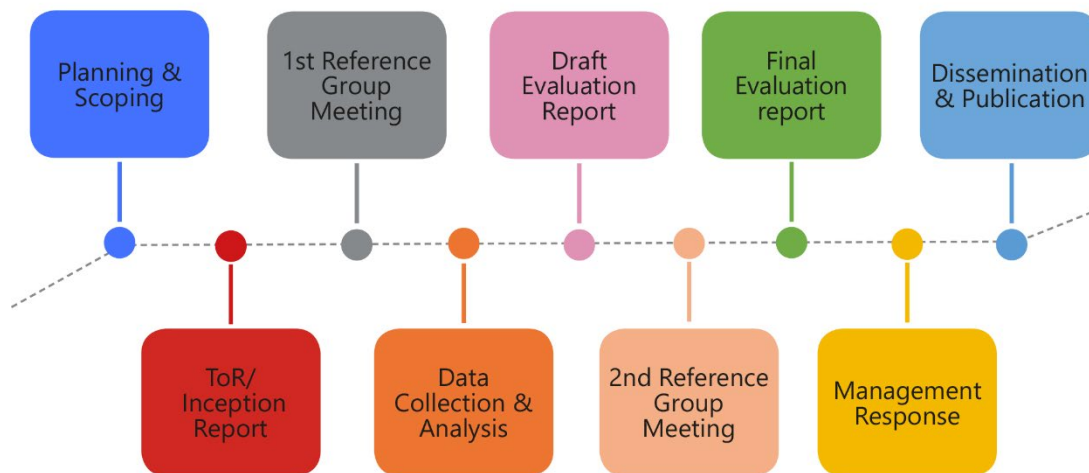
³⁴ Different procedures are foreseen for services below 5.000 Euro (direct negotiations), between 5.000 and 150.000 € (direct negotiations incl. consultations with at least three potential suppliers), and above 150.000 € (international public tender).

4.3.3 Inception Report

The Inception Report reiterates the purpose of the evaluation, its objectives, its context and its scope. Further, the Inception Report elaborates the evaluation criteria, specifies tailored evaluation questions and the evaluation methodology using an Evaluation Matrix³⁵ and presents the evaluation work plan. The evaluation team may organise written consultations with stakeholders on the Inception Report, in particular on the proposed methodology.

A Quality Assurance Checklist for the Inception Report is in [Appendix 5](#).

The inception report is presented to the Reference Group for feedback.



4.3.4 Data Collection and Analysis Methods

The evaluation methodology must be sufficiently rigorous to ensure a complete, fair and unbiased assessment. Data should ideally come from a variety of sources to ensure their **accuracy**,³⁶ **validity**³⁷ and **reliability**.³⁸

The evaluator develops the evaluation methodology based on the evaluation criteria and questions determined in the ToR. The time for collection, the cost, and the usefulness of the data must be considered in deciding what data to collect. For **quantitative data** collection, different methodologies can be used, such as surveys, desk study research or structured interviews. **Qualitative data** is collected through methods such as semi-structured individual interviews or focus group discussions.

[CoE data protection rules](#) are applied in all situations. Advice of the organisation’s Data Protection Officer will be sought by evaluators as necessary.

In some cases, data collection requires missions (official journeys) to field offices or other locations. The CoE Heads of Offices, are informed and consulted on the organisation of the mission and may be asked for logistical assistance.

³⁵ see *DIO Guidelines for Developing Terms of Reference for Evaluations*.

³⁶ The exactness or precision of an assessment.

³⁷ The extent to which the assessment methods and resulting data measure what was intended.

³⁸ The degree with which repeated observation and/or measurements taken under identical circumstances will yield the same results.

To make sure that biases and technical gaps are minimised, the method of **data triangulation**³⁹ is used, which implies that several data collection methods are employed. Any limitations of each data collection method should be stated in the report. Among the methods that may be used are the following:

Desk reviews - provide useful baseline information and an historical perspective of the project or programme. They include written documentation, but also videos, electronic data or photos. The documentation review is not limited to the project’s or programme’s activities and can cover any information on the strategy or global approach, closely related or not.

Direct observation - consist mainly of what can be seen during field missions and project sites visits, as well as events such as conferences, trainings and seminars. They can be subjective as human vision and perception is selective, based on fields of interest or cultural sensitivities. It is important to cross-validate facts and elements collected.

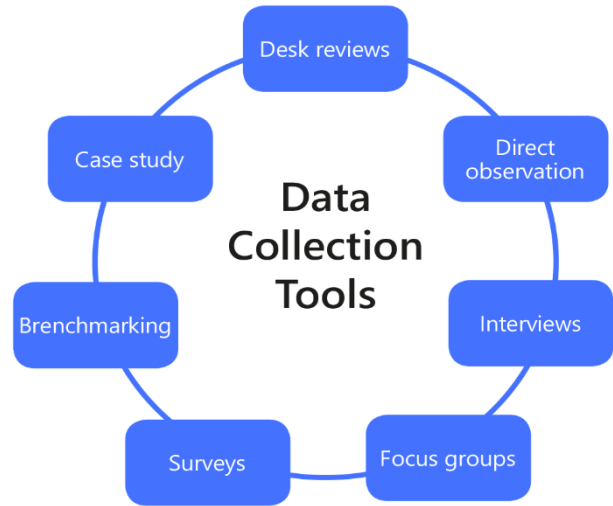
Interviews - an important methodology for collecting data and information. An Interview Guide should be developed providing the interviewer with an outline of topics or issues to be covered, but letting him/her vary the wording and order of the questions to some extent. A template for an Interview Guide is in [Appendix 6](#). There are several types of interviews:

- Structured/strict interviews require an interview’s guide, following strictly and systematically questions prepared in advance. Same questions are asked of all interviewees, implying a diminished risk of “manipulating” the questions;
- Semi-structured interviews explore the possibilities for new questions that can emerge during the interview;
- Conversational interviews remain very open in asking questions or in formulating them.

Focus groups - Interviewing a group of persons through brainstorming or group discussions. They require specific techniques and the selection of the groups should follow precise criteria and procedures. Two persons should manage the discussion, one taking notes and the other guiding the debate and observing people’s behaviours.

Questionnaires and surveys - Important tools to gather data from a large number of people in a structured way that allows for statistical analysis. They can be short and simple, with ‘yes-no’ answers, or long and complex using open questions, numerical scales or ‘agree-disagree’ scales. The more extended the survey is, the more complex its analysis and interpretation are. Questionnaire/survey questions are prepared and formulated based on the objective(s) and scope of the evaluation. Before and after surveys are also used, especially to measure awareness-raising activities.⁴⁰

Case study - The selection of a particular story, specific events or of projects/programmes activities that can give an insight of a project’s effectiveness and impact. The case study in isolation does not necessarily prove anything, it helps to illustrate data and find commonalities. Only when using several cases, one can extrapolate some common principles.



³⁹ Triangulation is a technique that facilitates validation of data through cross verification from two or more sources. In particular, it refers to the application and combination of several research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon.

⁴⁰ [Dillman DA., Tortora RD, Bowker D. \(1998\). Principles for Constructing Web Surveys.](#)

Benchmarking - Involves a process of comparing one's own performance to an appropriate comparison which might be the industry standard or a similar organisation. It is a continuous process of research, comparative analysis, adaptation and implementation of best practices to improve the performance of processes in an organisation.⁴¹

Sampling⁴² methods also play an important role in ensuring validity of data. There are two major categories of sampling methods:

- **Random sampling** means that each object of the sample has an equal chance to be selected for assessment. It is used mainly in surveys or other *quantitative data* when there is a need for generalising from the sample to the study population.
- **Purposeful sampling** is used in interviews focus groups, case studies and other *qualitative data* when the sample is established for a specific purpose and focuses on the importance of selecting information-rich examples from which one can draw findings for the study.

Some criteria for selection of interviewees may be:

- a) Interviewees who represent the "typical" user or participant of the intervention;
- b) To illuminate the potential of the intervention: interview people who have made the most out of the training/service which have been offered;
- c) To explore challenges to strategies and activities: interview those who did not seem to get as much from the intervention or chose not to participate in activities;
- d) For diversity of views: interview representatives from all of the different stakeholder groups in the intervention, including gender balance;
- e) For in-depth experience and institutional memory: interview long-term participants;
- f) For critical observer's viewpoint: interview stakeholders, who are external to the intervention such as civil society organisations, domestic authorities, other international organisations etc.

Particularly in cases where there is an overall interest, before carrying out interviews with permanent representations, evaluators shall offer the possibility of an interview to all representations.

4.3.5 Draft Evaluation Report

The draft evaluation report synthesises all the results of the work conducted in the framework of the evaluation. The report should be concise, structured, logical, clear and complete. It should present information on:

- object of the evaluation,
- evaluation purpose,
- objective(s) and scope,
- evaluation methodology,
- findings,
- conclusions,
- recommendations/lessons learnt.

The criteria to assess the quality of the report⁴³ are as follows:

1. the report is well structured, logical, clear and complete;
2. the report presents a clear and full description of the 'object' of the evaluation;
3. the evaluation's purpose, objectives and scope are fully explained;

⁴¹ <http://www.qualiteperformance.org/comprendre-la-qualite/outils-d-evaluation-le-benchmarking>.

⁴² Sampling is concerned with the selection of a subset of individuals or files from within a study population to extrapolate characteristics of the whole population.

⁴³ Based on [UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports \(2010\)](#).

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4. the report presents a transparent description of the methodology applied to the evaluation that clearly explains how the evaluation was specifically designed to address the evaluation criteria, yield answers to the evaluation questions and achieve evaluation purposes; the limitations of the methodology are made explicit;
5. findings respond directly to the evaluation criteria and questions detailed in the scope and objectives section of the report and are based on evidence derived from data collection and analysis methods described in the methodology section of the report;
6. conclusions present reasonable judgments based on findings and substantiated by evidence, and provide insights pertinent to the object and purpose of the evaluation;
7. the report contains a section on lessons learnt and best practices, which are relevant and applicable to the organisation as a whole;
8. recommendations are relevant to the object and purposes of the evaluation, are supported by evidence and conclusions, and were developed with the involvement of relevant stakeholders;
9. the connection between findings, conclusions and recommendations is demonstrated through graphic means;
10. recommendations may be supplemented with suggested modalities of implementation and opportunities for improvement;
11. the report illustrates the extent to which the design and implementation of the object, the assessment of results and the evaluation process incorporate a gender equality perspective and human rights based approach.

A Quality Assurance Checklist for Evaluation reports is in [Appendix 7](#). The DIO also maintains a roster of external quality checkers who may be contracted for strengthening quality assurance process.

4.3.6 Second Reference Group meeting

The second evaluation reference group meeting is organised approximately two to three weeks after the DIO sends out the Draft Evaluation Report. The reference group members are asked to prepare their comments on the report and send them back prior or after to the meeting. The feedback should concern the relationship between findings, conclusions and recommendations, the relevance, usefulness and implementability of recommendations as well as identifying any factual errors. The results of the reference group meeting are to be summarised in Reference Group Meeting conclusions. After the meeting, the conclusions can be sent to the RG for further written comments. The comments of the reference group will be considered when finalising the report.

Other relevant stakeholders may also be consulted when appropriate and will be given the opportunity to comment on the draft report. The final evaluation report will acknowledge any substantive disagreement. In disputes about facts that can be verified, the evaluators do further investigations and change the draft where necessary. In case of conflicting views stakeholders comments are reproduced verbatim, in an annex or footnote, to the extent this does not conflict with the rights and welfare of stakeholders.⁴⁴

4.3.7 Declaring the Report final

The Director of DIO declares the report final and on the same date submits it to the Secretary General with reference group members in copy, together with an Action Plan template for preparation of the Management Response, in accordance with paragraphs 44 and 45 of the Evaluation Policy. The final report is published within two months of finalisation and transmitted to the Chair of the Ministers' Deputies.

⁴⁴ [Quality Standards for Development Evaluation, DAC Guidelines and Reference Series](#), OECD, 2010, section 3.15, p. 14.

4.4 Evaluation follow-up

4.4.1 Management Response/Action Plan

Council of Europe evaluation reports require a management response.⁴⁵ The Secretary General has the responsibility to ensure that the Secretariat prepares a management response, including an Action Plan. In practice, MAEs to whom **evaluation recommendations** are addressed are required to prepare the management response and an action plan that describes the activities that they commit to carry out in order to implement the recommendations. DIO sends an action plan template to the entities together with instructions on how to complete it ([Appendix 8](#)). Depending upon the nature of the evaluation and the recommendations, the Private Office may arrange a meeting with entities concerned in order to facilitate the process of identifying actions required for the implementation of the recommendations, particularly if they require actions at an organisation-wide level.

The entities concerned are requested to return the completed action plan template to DIO **within two months after receiving it**. In the management response and action plan, they state whether they accept the recommendations or not, by which date they intend to implement accepted ones and what actions are envisaged to be taken for their implementation. In case a recommendation's implementation is spread over a substantial time period, the entities can propose milestones.

The options for recommendations in the action plan are the following:

- Accepted - actions to implement the recommendation should be indicated;
- Rejected - the reason for rejecting the recommendation should be stated;
- Under consideration - the reason why the recommendation is under consideration should be stated and the deadline for decision on the recommendation be indicated.

In case of diverging views on recommendations between the Major Administrative Entities (MAEs), the Secretary General takes a decision on the issues raised and is the final arbiter on the adequacy of proposals for the effective implementation of recommendations and management responses by the MAEs. The completed management response and action plan shall be sent to DIO within two months after the report having been declared final. They are published on the DIO intranet and internet sites and transmitted to the Chair of the Ministers' Deputies together with the final report.⁴⁶ In case of a delay in submitting the management response within the set deadline (two months), the report will be published without it.⁴⁷

The Secretary General is responsible for the implementation of action plans to address recommendations.⁴⁸

4.4.2 Dissemination and Publication of Evaluations

For learning and accountability purposes, evaluation products should be actively disseminated. As per Paragraph 42 and 43 of the Evaluation Policy, the DIO is responsible for making completed evaluations accessible to key partners and stakeholders. They are further published together with the related management response and action plan on DIO's intranet/internet webpages.

DIO Evaluation reports and Management Response are prepared in one of the official working languages of the CoE. DIO translates executive summaries, recommendations and management response into the official language that is not the language of the report.

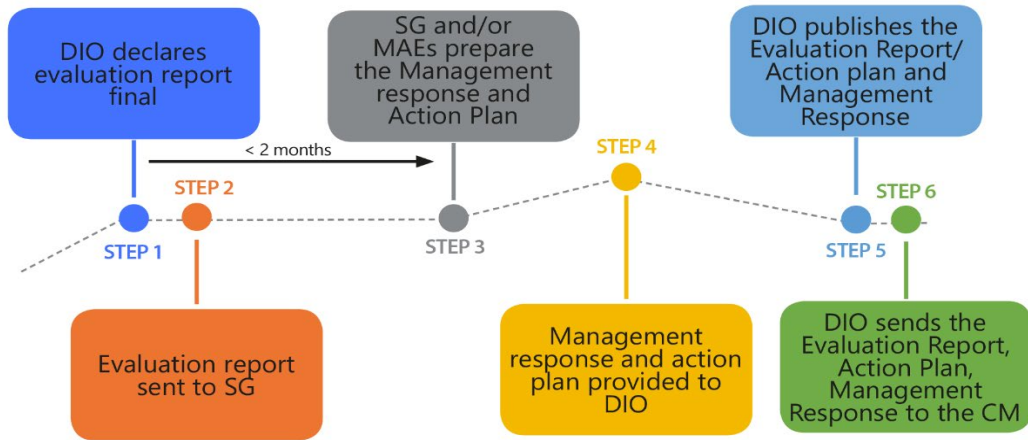
⁴⁵ CoE Evaluation Policy, paragraph 44.

⁴⁶ Ibid., paragraph 40.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 14.

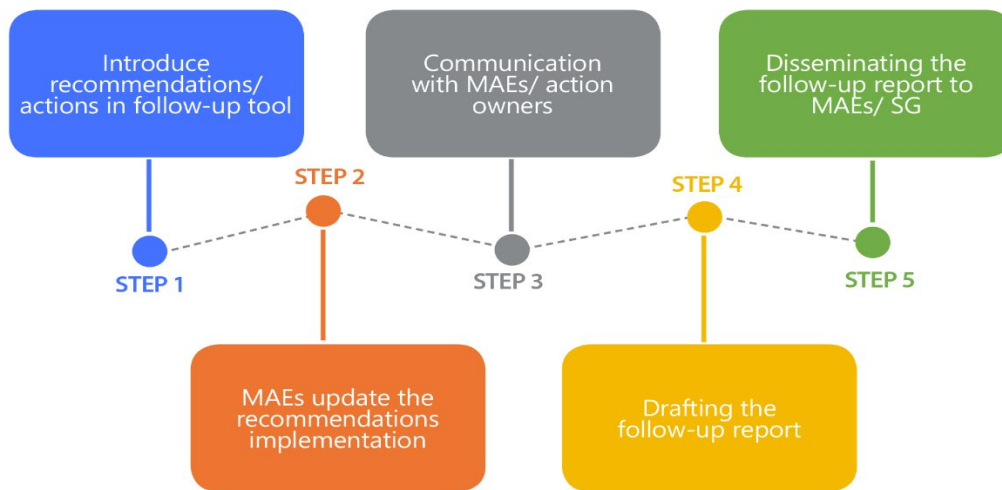
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4.4.3 Follow-up Reports

In order to promote evaluation usage and strengthen accountability within the CoE, DIO systematically follows up on the implementation of evaluation recommendations by management.

MAEs are required to provide information to DIO on the status of the implementation of all outstanding recommendations on annual basis.



DIO follows up on recommendations that have either been accepted or are under consideration. DIO will collect evidence and assess whether completed actions sufficiently address the implementation of recommendations. DIO may request further information. Following this review, the status of recommendations will be one of the following:

- **Accepted:** actions to implement the recommendation are underway or are planned;
- **Implemented:** The implementation of the recommendation has been completed and the recommendation will be closed. This recommendation will be removed from the report for the subsequent follow-up process.

During the follow up process, in addition to recommendations that have been implemented/are being implemented, DIO will consider along with MAEs any particular factors affecting a recommendation and consider whether there are justifiable reasons to change the status of an accepted recommendation as follows:

- **Obsolete:** This recommendation is no longer relevant as it has been overtaken by events. The recommendation will be closed,

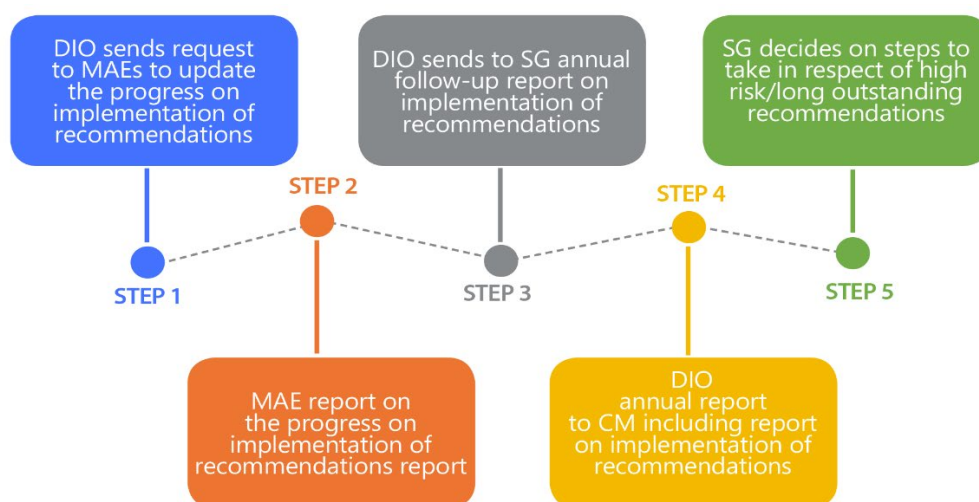
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- **Closed without Implementation:** The recommendation is not considered obsolete and the implementation of recommendation will not take place. The SG may decide on whether efforts to implement these recommendations should be increased or whether DIO should close these recommendations without implementation.

In line with the current practice, certain recommendations that have not been implemented (high risk and/or long outstanding) may also be brought to the attention of the Secretary General in order for her/him to take decisions on the follow up to be given to them. The DIO will also advise the SG on any issues they consider relevant in respect of the adequacy of the implementation of action plans to address recommendations.

DIO reports to the Secretary General annually on the state of implementation of recommendations as well as to the Committee of Ministers on the function, findings and recommendations of evaluations, on compliance, quality assurance, and follow-up to evaluations conducted (see paragraph 46 of the Evaluation Policy).

The OAC also advises on the timely and effective implementation of evaluation recommendations.⁴⁹



4.4.4 Promotion of learning and dissemination of good practices

Evaluation can make an important contribution to organisational learning if key lessons generated by evaluations are easily accessible for stakeholders. When an evaluation report is finalised, DIO extracts the lessons it contains and can communicate them to stakeholders. DIO may also integrate lessons learnt from decentralised evaluation reports in the dissemination activities. Each evaluation report should have a Lessons Learned section.

4.4.5 Responsibility of Evaluatees

A good evaluation process also depends on responsibility of the evaluatees. Evaluatees are respectful of evaluators and the evaluation process. They do not seek to put undue pressure, engage in disrespectful behaviour or attitude that jeopardises the carrying out and completion of the evaluation exercise.⁵⁰ Evaluatees fully co-operate during the evaluation process and actively contribute to their design, preparation and implementation, including by: a) providing the evaluators with a complete information dossier, b) facilitating access to stakeholders, and c) commenting on the draft terms of references and draft reports (including the feasibility of recommendations).⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 15.

⁵⁰ Ibid., paragraph 22.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 15.

5. EVALUATIONS MANAGED BY MAEs: DECENTRALISED EVALUATIONS

Decentralised evaluations are evaluations which are managed by MAEs other than DIO and funded through the Ordinary Budget or extra-budgetary resources. They typically assess a single programme, funding agreement, strategy, entity, or other area of action and are submitted to the relevant Committee of Ministers' rapporteur group through the Secretary General, steering committee or donor who requested it. Decisions to launch decentralised evaluations at entity/programme/project level take into account the requirements of donors and/or of a governing body. Decentralised evaluations are conducted by external consultants/evaluators who have not been involved in the design, implementation or management of the subject under evaluation. They shall meet the same level of norms and standards as independent evaluations, including DIO Evaluation Guidelines and ethical guidelines as well as the CoE Code of Conduct for Evaluation ([Appendix 1](#)).

Under the Evaluation Policy, DIO is responsible for assurance of the quality of decentralised evaluations. DIO has an obligation to establish a framework that provides guidance, quality assurance, technical assistance and professionalisation support, as well as for regularly reviewing its implementation and for advising on the selection of consultants, on the drafting of terms of reference and on draft evaluation reports.⁵² As part of the quality assurance framework, and as specified in the Evaluation Policy, all staff members are required to seek DIO's support during the evaluation process on the definition of the Terms of Reference (ToR), selection of the external consultants and the quality check of the draft evaluation report.⁵³

DIO will monitor the application of the Guidelines in respect of decentralised evaluations, and review as necessary, to ensure that quality standards are satisfactorily met.

5.1 Evaluation planning and preparation

5.1.1 Criteria for initiating an evaluation

As part of the growing evaluation culture⁵⁴ in the CoE, all staff members may be involved in initiating/managing an evaluation at some point. The evaluations could be related to a programme of activity (financed by OB, partial agreements) or a cooperation activity, such as a joint project (JP/VC). The decision whether to evaluate may be decided in agreement with donor organisations, or the decision may be made by entities/managers or other bodies as part of a continuous reflection process to examine results. Concerning CoE-EU Joint Programmes, evaluation is distinct from *Results-Oriented Monitoring*⁵⁵ (ROM) exercises carried out by the European Commission.

Entities/managers may initiate an external evaluation, taking into account the relevant governance aspects of the organisation and the programme/project. Decentralised evaluations should follow the quality assurance

⁵² Ibid., Section IV, p. 17.

⁵³ The quality assurance framework to be put in place is developed on the basis of the findings of the report on *Stocktaking of Decentralised Evaluations with a view to establishing an evaluation framework and designing a quality assurance system*, prepared by DIO in 2019.

⁵⁴ "An **evaluative culture** denotes an organizational culture that deliberately seeks out information on its performance in order to use that information to learn how to better manage and deliver its programmes and services, and thereby improve its performance." (Mayne, J. (2008). Building an evaluative culture for effective evaluation and results management. ILAC Brief No. 20).

⁵⁵ ROM exercises are frequently carried out by the European Commission for CoE-EU Joint Programmes (JPs) and can be situated *in between* traditional monitoring exercises and evaluations. The EU ROM system conducts monitoring missions using a standardised methodology to rapidly assess selected projects. The system is based on regular on-site assessments of ongoing projects that are given simple scores against the evaluation criteria (efficiency, effectiveness, potential impact, relevance and sustainability) using a strongly structured methodology. ROM exercises monitor ongoing projects financed by the EU with a contribution of at least €1 million, and assess a sample of 10% of projects below this threshold.

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framework in order to determine the most appropriate evaluation approach.

When deciding whether to evaluate, care must be taken to avoid the duplication of efforts. As part of the quality assurance framework, DIO and the MAE concerned will inform and consult each other at an early stage of an evaluation. Equally, if a project is being evaluated as part of a larger programme facility, then a project-specific evaluation may not be needed.

It may be particularly appropriate to conduct an evaluation:

- For a project or programme with unknown/unclear or disputed outcomes/results;
- For large and expensive interventions (2 Million EUR and above);
- For pilot initiatives or innovative projects or programmes;
- Where an extension or a 2nd phase of a project is being considered;
- Where CoE has a strategic interest;
- Where donors/stakeholders are interested in an evaluation.

When deciding on whether to evaluate, the following factors should also be considered:

- Whether it will add new knowledge;
- Whether security issues or lack of data would undermine its credibility;
- Whether it is clear how the process or the results will be used;
- Whether it is clear who the intended users are.⁵⁶

Before deciding whether to evaluate an intervention, evaluation managers⁵⁷ should consider the following:

- Is the evaluation required by the donor as part of the programme/project intervention? Is it part of the contractual agreement?
 - Not all project interventions need to be evaluated, especially when they are a part of larger programme facility, unless there is a strong interest for all stakeholders to do so.
 - What resources are available for the evaluation in terms of budget and staff? The Stocktaking of Decentralised Evaluations Report⁵⁸ showed that 60% of all decentralised evaluations in the CoE cost between €10 000 and €20 000. The evaluation budget will depend on the methodology selected, the number of service days, need for travel and the level of experience of the consultant. DIO recommends to have an evaluation budget of at least 1% of the total intervention budget.
 - Staff time spent on preparing for an evaluation, liaising with consultants, and reviewing deliverables can be considerable.
- What type of evaluation would be most appropriate? (ex-ante, mid-term, final (ex-post), impact)
 - Timing and delivery of an evaluation are of key importance. If the report is delivered too late, it may not be useful for future planning. Mid-term evaluations are useful in such cases.
- How long will the evaluation take? Is there sufficient time to complete it?
 - DIO recommends that evaluations of JP or VC interventions for carrying out all stages of a project evaluation should be no less than three months. The average duration of a decentralised evaluation in the CoE is 6 months, from the ToR drafting stage to the finalisation of the report.

⁵⁶ Based on [SIDA's Evaluation Handbook: Guidelines and Manual for Conducting Evaluations at SIDA](#), April 2020.

⁵⁷ Project Managers in MAEs managing the evaluations.

⁵⁸ Stocktaking of Decentralised Evaluations with a view to establishing an evaluation framework and designing a quality assurance system, DIO, 2019, p. 12.

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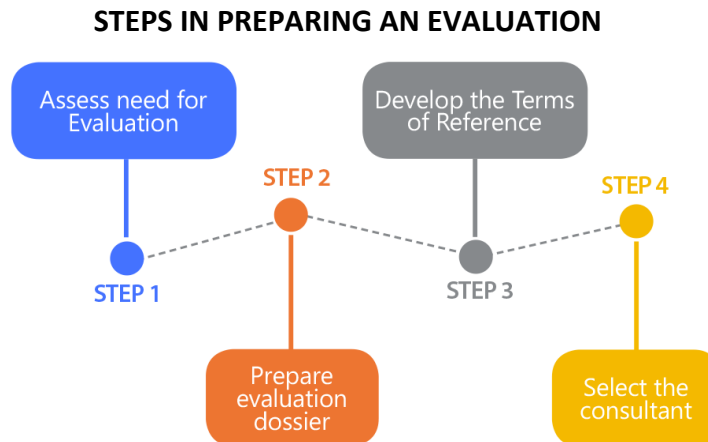
5.1.2 Evaluation information resources for CoE staff

- [DIO Website](#) contains a regularly updated page for decentralised evaluations with additional information resources made available to all staff.
- Repository of Decentralised Evaluation reports and ToRs (*in development*).⁵⁹
- [MSA Multiservice Assistant](#) (Ref. 9400) provides the following types of support to MAEs:
 - Explanation of evaluation standards and processes,
 - Advice on budgets required for evaluations,
 - Review of the draft Terms of Reference (TOR) of the evaluation,
 - Provision of CVs and contacts of external consultants who can be engaged for conducting the evaluation,
 - Assistance to apply the human rights approach in evaluation in order to promote the rights of the most disadvantaged,
 - Support regarding the evaluability of interventions (e.g. theories of change, programme logics, indicators, monitoring, research methodology, etc.).
- [ODGP's PMM Website](#) provides guidance for programme/project evaluations. PMM IT tool has a new option for uploading evaluation reports in the "Documents" section.
- Community of Practitioners: as part of the quality assurance framework, a community of practitioners, an informal group composed of staff members with experience and/or interest in evaluations, will meet regularly. The aim of the group is to facilitate the support to decentralised evaluations and further promote the evaluation culture in the CoE. Participation in the community is open to all staff members on a voluntary basis. DIO organises meetings of the group 2-3 times per year to discuss evaluation-related topics in the organisation, share good practices and receive first-hand feedback from staff. Staff members will be welcome to propose evaluation topics.
- Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Focal Points in MAEs: the stocktaking exercise on decentralised evaluations⁶⁰ undertaken to identify the detailed elements necessary to apply the requirements of the Evaluation Policy, proposed an action to MAEs to appoint Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) focal points in DGs which deal with a high output of projects and decentralised evaluations (DGI, DGII and ODGP). Focal points would receive additional M&E training and be available, alongside DIO, to provide direct assistance to their colleagues. This will improve monitoring knowledge within the organisation, strengthen the thematic context of evaluations, as well as expertise. Focal points also act as liaisons with DIO, when any additional assistance is needed. DIO remains available to provide direct advice on evaluations to all staff.
- For staff members who are interested in learning more about the theory and best practices in evaluations, there are various useful external resources available, for example:
 - <https://www.betterevaluation.org/>
 - <http://www.uneval.org/>
 - <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/>

⁵⁹ DIO will work with DIT to examine the possibilities of collaborative spaces within the new document management system (DMS) to ensure that document sharing is handled in the most efficient and effective way.

⁶⁰ Stocktaking of Decentralised Evaluations with a view to establishing an evaluation framework and designing a quality assurance system, DIO, 2019, p. 40.

5.2 Preparation



5.2.1 Preparation of evaluation dossier

The evaluation dossier contains all relevant information on the intervention to be evaluated as well as other relevant information and documentation such as relevant decisions of CoE bodies or reports of CoE monitoring mechanisms on particular topics.

All staff should ensure that all relevant documents are properly stored and made available during the evaluation, especially related to project interventions where project staff may have left the organisation. Lack of relevant documents can affect the findings of the evaluation.

Please refer to [Section 4.2.3](#) for a list of types of documents to be included in an “evaluation dossier” prepared by the relevant MAE.

5.2.2 Preparation of terms of reference (ToR)

The evaluation manager prepares the ToR for the evaluation that clearly sets out purpose, objectives, scope, evaluation questions and the criteria the evaluator must meet and provides guidance on expectations concerning the final evaluation report, i.e. by appending the Quality Assurance Checklist for Evaluation Reports (see [Appendix 7](#)). ToRs also need to include expected skills and competencies of the evaluation team.

Selecting the appropriate methodology is the key element of the ToR. ToRs should include envisaged evaluation design and approach, not only data sources and data collection techniques.

Once the draft ToR has been prepared, the Quality Assurance Checklist for ToRs should be applied by staff managing the evaluation. **DIO’s Guidelines on the Development of the ToRs** are available on the DIO Website.

All draft ToRs are required to be quality checked by DIO.⁶¹ Evaluation managers should allow up to **10 working days** for DIO to review the ToR.

If applicable, evaluation managers are encouraged to consult donor organisations and ask for comments on the draft ToR, as there may be specific evaluation questions donors may be interested in.

5.2.3 Selection of Consultant

In case of contracting an external consultant, the type of tendering procedure should be decided as per article

⁶¹ As part of the quality assurance framework for decentralised evaluations, an evaluation handbook will be made available.

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40 of the [Financial Regulations](#) according to the budget allocated to the evaluation and will be organised in accordance with CoE [Procurement procedures](#) and as outlined in the [Procurement guidelines](#).

A transparent and open procurement procedure is used for selecting the evaluation consultants. The evaluation consultants possess a mix of evaluative skills and thematic knowledge. Gender balance and geographical representation are considered when making the selection.⁶²

Evaluators are independent from the programme intervention, including its policy, operations and management functions, as well as intended beneficiaries. Possible conflicts of interest are addressed openly and honestly. The evaluation team is able to work freely and without interference. The team is assured of co-operation and access to all relevant information.⁶³

In addition to the regular procurement procedure for intellectual services that can be applied by MAEs, DIO has established a pool of evaluation experts, whose services can be requested by all MAEs by contacting DIO. The DIO database of experts consists of experts with both thematic and geographic focus and is updated by DIO regularly. DIO will provide feedback on consultants latest **within 10 working days** of the request for consultants made by MAE staff. DIO can provide advice on suitable consultants, but the final decision on selection remains with the MAE.

The best tender proposal is selected based on the selection and adjudication criteria outlined in the Call for Tenders, such as:

- suitability of methodological approach;
- consultants' experience and knowledge of evaluation, in particular, within the context of international cooperation;
- experience and knowledge of the evaluators in the thematic areas covered by the present call for tenders;
- experience and knowledge of the evaluators in the countries concerned;
- drafting skills demonstrated through a written sample submitted as part of the bid.

In case the MAE, or a particular service within an MAE, has a frequent need for evaluation consultants, then a [Framework Agreement](#) should be considered.

Staff are required to systematically apply the principle of impartiality when selecting consultants. Consultants should not have been previously engaged, formally or informally, in the programme activity they are evaluating or expect to be so in the near future.

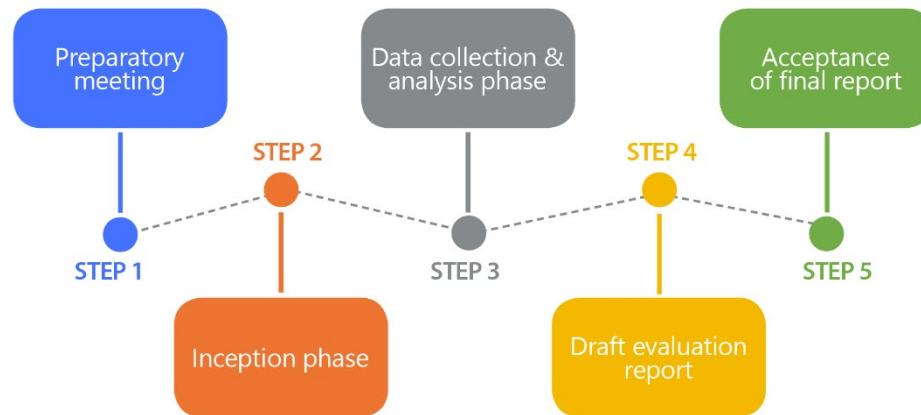
Evaluation managers should apply for a VAT exemption, as applicable, prior to concluding the contract with the selected consultant, by following the *VAT exemption guidelines*.

⁶² Based on OECD/DAC Quality Standards section 3.1.

⁶³ Ibid., section 3.2.

5.3 Managing the evaluation

STEPS OF MANAGING AN EVALUATION



5.3.1 Preparatory meeting

The evaluation exercise usually starts with a preparatory meeting between the evaluation manager and the external evaluation consultant. This can be done remotely (phone, video-call etc.) or in person. In case of donor-funded and jointly managed evaluations the meeting may be also attended by representatives of the donor.

For larger evaluations (programme lines, Country Action Plans, OB evaluations), the evaluation manager may consider establishing a steering committee or a reference group for the evaluation, which consists of the main evaluation stakeholders. The reference group advises the evaluation team on matters related to the evaluation, facilitates the evaluation team's access to relevant information and provides feedback on findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation by commenting in particular on the ToR and draft final report. In cases of smaller project evaluations, reference groups are not advised. Project steering committees can act as reference groups, if needed.

5.3.2 Inception phase

During the inception phase, evaluators collect information from the dossiers provided by the MAE. It is of great importance for the quality of the evaluation that staff ensures **all relevant documents are stored and managed in and organised a systematic way**, and that they are readily available at the request of the evaluator.

In addition, evaluators might consult other relevant CoE documents. The information is then analysed with a view to adjust the evaluation questions and to develop an appropriate evaluation methodology (methods of data collection, criteria for sampling). The desk study is to be concluded by the production of an Inception Report. In case of smaller evaluations (under €10 000 in value), an Inception Report is not necessary.

For Evaluations of interventions of 3 million Euros and above, an Inception Report is advised. Inception Report reiterates the purpose of the evaluation, its objectives, its context and its scope, as set out in the Terms of Reference. Further, the Inception Report elaborates the evaluation criteria, specifies tailored evaluation questions and the evaluation methodology possibly using an Evaluation Matrix (see template in ToR Guidelines) and presents the evaluation work plan.

A Quality Assurance Checklist for the Inception Report may be consulted in [Appendix 5](#).

5.3.3 Data collection and analysis phase

During the data collection phase, the evaluation manager supports the evaluator(s) with access to data and relevant stakeholders. In case of missions, the evaluation manager usually provides logistic support and assists in the organisation of the mission following standard CoE procedures (e.g. [GDD](#)).

5.3.4 Draft Evaluation Report

The draft report synthesises all the results of the work conducted in the framework of the evaluation. The report should be concise, structured, logical, clear and complete. It should present information on the object of the evaluation, the evaluation purpose, objective(s) and scope, the evaluation methodology, findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learnt. In addition, the evaluation manager should check the report for any language issues, factual inaccuracies, correct use of CoE terminology and overall presentation while following the [CoE visual identity](#) guidelines and/or donor's visibility requirements.⁶⁴

The evaluation manager may see fit to organise written or oral consultations with stakeholders on the Draft Evaluation Report, in particular on the conclusions and recommendations.

Other relevant stakeholders may also be consulted when appropriate and will be given the opportunity to comment on the draft report. The final evaluation report will acknowledge any substantive disagreement. In disputes about facts that can be verified, the evaluators do further investigations and change the draft where necessary. In case of conflicting views, stakeholders comments are reproduced verbatim, in an annex or footnote, to the extent this does not conflict with the rights and welfare of stakeholders.⁶⁵

The criteria to assess the quality of the report⁶⁶ are as follows:

1. the report is well structured, logical, clear and complete;
2. the report presents a clear and full description of the 'object' of the evaluation;
3. the evaluation's purpose, objectives and scope are fully explained;
4. the report presents a transparent description of the methodology applied to the evaluation that clearly explains how the evaluation was specifically designed to address the evaluation criteria, yield answers to the evaluation questions and achieve evaluation purposes; the limitations of the methodology are made explicit;
5. findings respond directly to the evaluation criteria and questions detailed in the scope and objectives section of the report and are based on evidence derived from data collection and analysis methods described in the methodology section of the report;
6. conclusions present reasonable judgments based on findings and substantiated by evidence, and provide insights pertinent to the object and purpose of the evaluation;
7. the report contains a section on lessons learnt and best practices, which are relevant and applicable to the organisation as a whole
8. recommendations are relevant to the object and purposes of the evaluation, are supported by evidence and conclusions, and were developed with the involvement of relevant stakeholders;
9. the connection between findings, conclusions and recommendations is demonstrated through graphic means;
10. recommendations may be supplemented with suggested modalities of implementation and opportunities for improvement;

⁶⁴ Depending on contractual arrangements.

⁶⁵ [Quality Standards for Development Evaluation, DAC Guidelines and Reference Series, OECD, 2010](#), section 3.15, p. 14.

⁶⁶ Based on UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports (2010). Available at: http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/shared/mainsite/about_iom/eva_techref/UNEG_Eval_Report.pdf.

11. the report illustrates the extent to which the design and implementation of the object, the assessment of results and the evaluation process incorporate a gender equality perspective and human rights based approach.

The entity that commissioned the report should apply the Quality Assurance Checklist for the Draft Evaluation Report, as in [Appendix 7](#). DIO carries out an additional quality check and indicates any issues that need to be addressed before publication.

Staff are required to immediately notify the Director of DIO of any undue pressure from any source to influence the results of an evaluation.

5.3.5 Acceptance of Final Report

The final report is accepted by the MAE commissioning the evaluation and submitted to the Secretary General. It is made available to DIO for publication along with the Management Response and Action Plan, if available, within two months of finalisation⁶⁷ (see [Section 5.4.2](#)).

Concerning programme/project evaluations, all final evaluation reports should also be uploaded into the [PMM IT tool](#) under the “Documents” tab, and marked as **PER – Project Evaluation Report**. This functionality has been put in place by ODGP and will allow for all programme/project evaluation reports to be stored and searchable in one place.

5.4 Dissemination and publication

5.4.1 Dissemination of evaluation report

After the acceptance of the final evaluation report by the MAE concerned, the report is also sent to the relevant Committee of Ministers’ rapporteur group through the Secretary General, steering committee or donor who requested it.⁶⁸

The final report should be disseminated internally to all relevant CoE entities (e.g. DIO, PO, ODGP, DPA, CoE external offices etc., as appropriate), as well as externally, to the donors and key stakeholders (governing/management boards, government counterparts, beneficiaries, interviewees etc.). Where applicable, the executive summary of the final report should be translated into the local language, before being sent to local stakeholders, provided there are sufficient funds available.

A brief outline of the plan for dissemination should be included in the management response/action plan template, as in [Appendix 8](#). The MAE commissioning the evaluation may consider dissemination activities, such as news items, presentations/events, workshops, informal meetings, public discussions, etc.

5.4.2 Publication of evaluation report

As specified under **Paragraph 42** of the new [CoE Evaluation Policy](#), all final decentralised evaluation reports and their action plans shall be published on the DIO Internet and Intranet sites.

Reports or their findings may also be made public in ways considered appropriate by the MAE (i.e. website of the project/programme, information brochures, news items on the MAE’s website etc.). In case of donor-funded evaluations, publication requirements of the donor as well as visibility requirements should be followed.

⁶⁷ CoE Evaluation Policy, paragraph 41.

⁶⁸ Ibid., paragraph 28.

5.5 Preparing the Management Response and follow-up

5.5.1 Management response and action plan

As set out in the new Evaluation Policy, Section V, all CoE evaluation reports require a management response. The management response consists of : (i) a general statement providing management’s overall view on the report findings and recommendations, and (ii) details on whether management accepts individual recommendations and how it intends to address accepted recommendations (action plan). It should be accompanied by a brief plan for dissemination (see template in [Appendix 8](#)).

The response should be prepared **no later than two months** after an evaluation report has been declared final by the MAE and shall be published at the same time as the evaluation report or once it is received, if this is after the publication of the report.

MAEs are required to make available the final decentralised evaluation reports and action plans to DIO and to the SG **within two months** of the receipt of the final report.⁶⁹

Management response and action plan template are available in [Appendix 8](#).

5.5.2 Implementation of recommendations

A Management response signals a strong commitment to follow-up on recommendations. MAEs should aim to implement evaluation recommendations as soon as is possible from the date of the acceptance of the final report, although some may take a significant amount of time if they look to address organisational/transversal issues. The progress on the implementation of recommendations should be documented and made accessible to DIO upon request for the preparation of the DIO annual follow-up report, which is presented to the Secretary General and information on follow up is provided to the Committee of Ministers. The follow-up report includes information in respect of acceptance and non-acceptance of recommendations, and highlights success stories, lessons learned and areas for improvement, as necessary. [Section 4.4](#) provides more information.

5.6 Quality assurance framework for decentralised evaluations

A quality assurance framework for decentralised evaluations, in line with the requirements of the Evaluation Policy,⁷⁰ has been established with an aim to ensure that MAEs receive all the necessary support to carry out evaluations while allowing the organisation to have a complete overview of all evaluations, ensure their quality and subsequently collect lessons learned and help improve organisational learning. All staff members should seek DIO’s support during the evaluation process on the definition of the Terms of Reference (ToR), selection of the external consultants and the quality checking of the draft evaluation report.⁷¹

The framework comprises of a three-level approach:

1. First level of quality assurance comprises of **self-assessment** carried out by all staff members involved in managing evaluations. Staff members will carry out quality checks of ToRs, consultants and draft evaluation reports by using the tools provided by the DIO:
 - Basic guidance tools with standardised elements for all decentralised evaluations are made available on the DIO website.

⁶⁹ Ibid., Section II, p. 15.

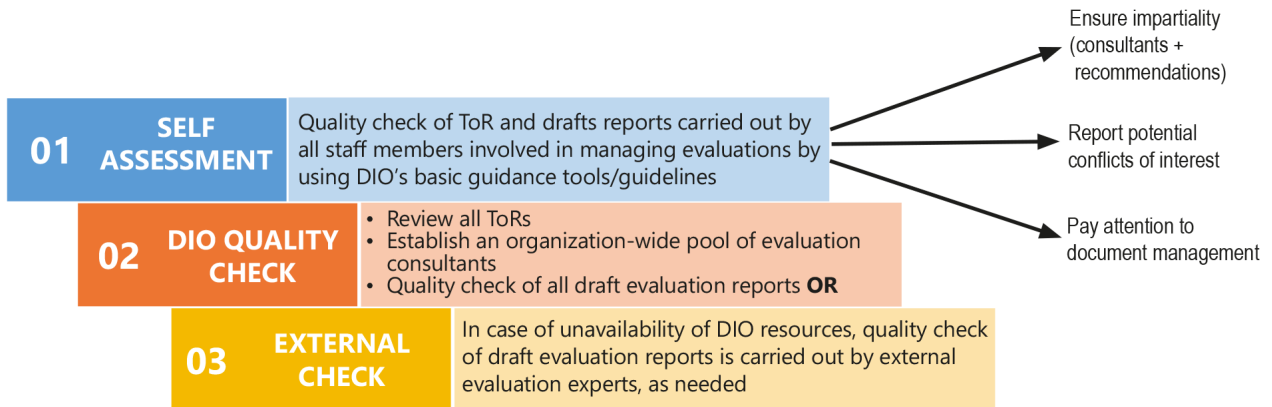
⁷⁰ Ibid., paragraph 29.

⁷¹ The quality assurance framework to be put in place is developed on the basis of the findings of the report on *Stocktaking of Decentralised Evaluations with a view to establishing an evaluation framework and designing a quality assurance system*, prepared by DIO in 2019.

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- MAEs should systematically quality check ToRs at the drafting stage using checklists provided in the Guidelines, with particular attention to methodology.
 - When applicable, donors should be consulted on draft ToRs, and where appropriate other relevant stakeholders.
 - All staff involved in evaluations need to ensure quality assurance of evaluation reports following the procedure set out in these Guidelines.
2. Second level of quality assurance is carried out by **DIO** in terms of ToRs, consultants and draft reports:
 - Staff members who are involved in an evaluation are required to contact DIO to quality check the ToR and evaluation reports.
 - DIO will establish a pool of evaluation consultants who would have to meet certain quality criteria to be put at the disposal of MAEs.
 - DIO will provide advice and support on the selection of consultants.
 3. Third level of quality assurance concerns only draft evaluation reports and can be applied when DIO staff resources are limited. In such cases, the quality check of draft reports is provided by an **external consultant**, commissioned by DIO. DIO will maintain a pool of quality check experts for this purpose, to be renewed every two years.

DIO will regularly carry out a review of decentralised evaluation reports to ensure that the quality of reports is maintained and that findings and lessons learned are collected at the level of the whole organisation.



APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Council of Europe Code of Conduct for Evaluation⁷²

1. The conduct of evaluators in the Council of Europe (CoE) should be beyond reproach at all times. Any deficiency in their professional conduct may undermine the integrity of the evaluation, and more broadly evaluation in the CoE itself, and raise doubts about the quality and validity of their evaluation work.
2. The CoE Code of Conduct applies to all DIO staff, staff in other MAEs who manage evaluations and consultants working for the CoE (all of which are referred to as “Evaluator”). In addition, the CoE staff must abide by the [general Ethical Framework of the CoE](#) and the consultants on the terms of their consultancy agreements.
3. The provisions of the CoE Code of Conduct apply to all stages of the evaluation process from the conception to the completion of an evaluation and the release and use of the evaluation results.
4. By confirming their participation in an evaluation, evaluators are deemed to agree with, respect and comply with the CoE Code of Conduct for Evaluation. Guidance and advice may be sought at any time from the Ethics Officer. To promote trust and confidence in evaluation in the CoE, all CoE staff engaged in evaluation and evaluation consultants working for CoE are required to commit to the following obligations:

Respect of Fundamental Values

5. The Council of Europe upholds certain fundamental values and principles such as gender equality, non-discrimination, prohibition of sexual and other forms of harassment, prohibition of ill-treatment of human beings. These shall be adhered to at all times by the evaluators. It is recalled that evaluators and members of the Secretariat themselves enjoy protection against any form of harassment. (See also [Rule No. 1292 on the protection of human dignity at the Council of Europe](#))

Independence

6. Evaluators shall ensure that independence of judgment is maintained and that evaluation findings and recommendations are independently presented.

Impartiality

7. Evaluators shall operate - and be seen to operate - in an impartial and unbiased manner and give a balanced presentation of strengths and weaknesses of the policy, program, project or organisational unit being evaluated.

7.bis Evaluators shall assess the information and facts presented to them in the context of an evaluation objectively, without bias or prejudice, or considerations of a political nature. Evaluators should not accept any external instruction and should not be influenced by considerations which are unrelated to the evaluation (e.g., belonging to the same professional category as the one under evaluation).

Conflict of Interest

8. When confirming his/her participation, the evaluator shall disclose any potential conflict of interest or incompatibility that may hamper, or be seen as hampering his/her role as an evaluator. This requirement applies also at any later stage of the evaluation process should any change in situation occur.

9. Before undertaking evaluation work with CoE, each consultant will complete a Declaration of Honour which is integrated in the Act of Engagement.

10. CoE staff involved in evaluation have to complete a [Declaration of Interests in the Context of Procurement and](#)

⁷² Drafted on the basis of [UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System](#).

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[Grant Award.](#)

11. Evaluators shall not accept any gifts or other forms of advantages in relation to an evaluation.

Honesty and Integrity

12. Evaluators shall show honesty and integrity in their behaviour, when determining the evaluation costs, tasks, limitations, scope of results likely to be obtained and presenting their procedures, data and findings, including any limitations or uncertainties of interpretation within the evaluation.

Competence

13. Evaluators shall accurately represent their level of skills and knowledge and work only within the limits of their professional training and abilities in evaluation, declining assignments for which they do not have the skills and experience to complete successfully.

Accountability

14. Evaluators are accountable for the completion of the agreed evaluation deliverables within the timeframe and budget agreed, while operating in a cost effective manner.

Obligations to participants

15. Evaluators shall respect and protect the rights of human subjects and communities, in accordance with the European Convention of Human Rights and other human rights conventions. Evaluators shall respect differences in culture, local customs, religious beliefs and practices, personal interaction, gender roles, disability, age and ethnicity, while using evaluation instruments appropriate to the cultural setting. Evaluators shall ensure prospective participants are treated as autonomous agents, free to choose whether to participate in the evaluation, while ensuring that the relatively powerless are represented. Evaluators shall make themselves aware of and comply with legal codes (whether international or national) governing, for example, interviewing children and young people.

Confidentiality

16. Confidentiality must be preserved throughout the process, before, during and after the evaluation. This applies to information received and the various versions of the draft report.

Avoidance of Harm

17. Evaluators shall act to minimise risks of and avoid harms to, and burdens on, those participating in the evaluation, without compromising the integrity of the evaluation findings.

Accuracy, Completeness and Reliability

18. Evaluators have an obligation to ensure that evaluation reports and presentations are accurate, complete and reliable. Evaluators shall explicitly justify judgements, findings and conclusions and show their underlying rationale, so that stakeholders are in a position to assess them.

Transparency

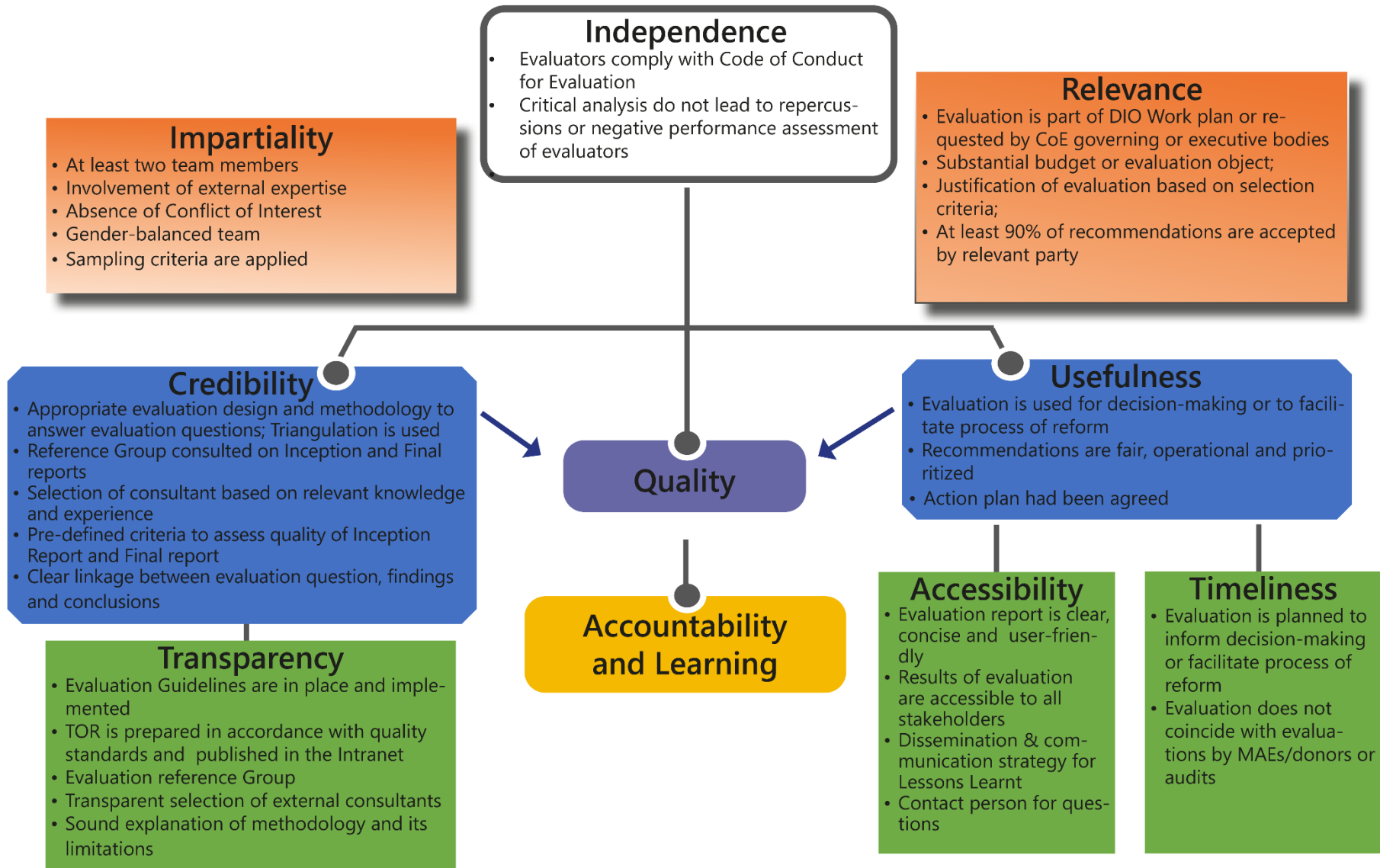
19. Evaluators shall clearly communicate to stakeholders the purpose of the evaluation, the criteria applied and the intended use of findings. Evaluators shall ensure that stakeholders have a say in shaping the evaluation and shall ensure that all documentation is readily available to and understood by stakeholders.

Omissions and wrongdoing

20. Where evaluators find evidence of wrong-doing or unethical conduct, they are obliged to report it to the proper oversight authority such as the Internal Audit, Investigation Unit or the Ethics Officer.

Appendix 2 - Evaluation principles with Quality Assurance Elements

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Appendix 3 - Quality Assurance Checklist for DIO-managed Evaluations

Quality Checklist for Evaluation				
Evaluation Title: Evaluation of.....		Check	Date	Cross reference
1. Independence				
QA 1.1	Evaluators complied with CoE Code of Conduct for Evaluation.			Signature of the Act of Engagement with the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the appendix
QA 1.2	Evaluation critical analysis did not lead to repercussions for the evaluation function staff and did not impact negatively on their performance assessments.			Evaluation Policy paragraphs 14; 16; 18; 22
QA 1.3	Evaluators and the DIO Director did not encounter restrictions and limitations in the conduct of their duties, including undue pressure and disrespectful behaviour.			Evaluation Policy paragraphs 16; 22
2. Impartiality				
QA 2.1	Evaluation team was not involved in any activities under the evaluation object and is not in a situation of conflict of interest or a potential conflict of interest.			Evaluation Policy paragraph 19 Selection of evaluation team Signature of the certificate of conflict of interest, which could be included in the Act of Engagement Call for proposals, and if needed, external quality assurance
QA 2.2	External expertise was involved for the evaluation exercise.			Call for proposals, and if needed, external quality assurance
QA 2.3	Evaluation team consisted of at least two team members.			Selection of evaluation team
QA 2.4	Evaluation team is gender-balanced.			Evaluation Policy paragraph 23 /Selection of evaluation team
QA 2.5	To minimise possible bias and misrepresentation, sampling criteria were applied. Potential bias were identified and stated.			Use of data triangulation Limitations section of evaluation report

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3. Transparency			
QA 3.1	Evaluation process followed CoE Evaluation Guidelines.		Evaluation Policy paragraph 26 Reference to Guidelines in ToR
QA 3.2	ToR and/or Inception report for evaluation were prepared.		ToR and/or Inception report
QA 3.3	ToR/Inception report were shared with key evaluation stakeholders to receive input.		ToR and/or Inception Report sent to Reference Group
QA 3.4	Evaluation Reference Group was established and was composed of the main evaluation stakeholders to accompany the evaluation process.		Evaluation Policy paragraph 36
QA 3.5	External consultants were selected in accordance with CoE tender requirements.		Tender file
QA 3.6	Methodology for evaluation included a sound explanation of data collection and sampling methods and the limitations of those methods.		Methodology section of the evaluation report
QA 3.7	Clear linkage is demonstrated between evaluation questions, findings, conclusions and recommendations.		Findings, conclusions and recommendations section of the evaluation report. External quality assurance.
QA3.8	Evaluation Report is transmitted to the Chair of Ministers' Deputies.		The evaluation report/action plan and management response are transmitted to the Chair of the Ministers' Deputies with French/English translation of executive summary, management response and action plan, depending on the language of the report
4. Credibility			
QA 4.1	Evaluation methods were appropriate to answer evaluation questions.		Evaluation Policy paragraph 12. Method of data triangulation is used
QA 4.2	Reference Group has been consulted on Terms of Reference or Inception report and draft Evaluation Report and their feedback incorporated.		The ToR/Inception Report/Draft evaluation report was sent to Reference group and their feedback/comments were taken into account in the report
QA 4.3	The Terms of Reference/ Inception Report Quality Assurance Checklist has at least 80% of checks.		Quality assurance of the ToR/Inception report

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QA 4.4	The external consultant has been selected based on his/her level of experience and knowledge of international cooperation, relevant geographic area and/or relevant thematic sector.			The final score is calculated from overall scores of the Technical and Financial Proposals. Best proposal is selected on this basis.
QA 4.5	The Final Report Quality Assurance Checklist has a satisfactory result.			Quality assurance checklist for evaluation report
5. Timeliness				
QA 5.1	Evaluation is planned to be used to inform decision-making or to facilitate a process of reform (i.e. to prepare follow-up interventions or strategies, or to develop or revise interventions or strategies).			Evaluation Guidelines 4.2.1. Evaluation logbook (planning template Appendix 4) was used
QA 5.2	Evaluation does not coincide in time with evaluations of the same intervention conducted by MAEs and/or donors and with audits.			Consultation with the CoE evaluation stakeholders
QA 5.3	Evaluation has been completed in accordance with the schedule.			The report is declared final by the Director of DIO and sent to SG
6. Accessibility				
QA 6.1	Evaluation Report is clear and concise and information is presented in a user-friendly format.			The final report is accepted by the Director of DIO and sent to SG
QA 6.2	Results of evaluation are accessible to all evaluation stakeholders (i.e. evaluation report is published and disseminated).			Evaluation reports are disseminated among all stakeholders who participated in the evaluation. Evaluation reports are published on the DIO website
QA 6.3	A strategy for dissemination of main lessons learnt is in place (i.e. events, briefings, workshops, posters etc.).			When evaluation report is finalised, DIO extracts the lessons it contains and communicates them to stakeholders
QA 6.4	Information on contact person for questions on evaluation is provided to evaluation users.			Title pages of the evaluation report
7. Relevance				
QA 7.1	The evaluation is included in the current (or amended) DIO Work Programme.			Evaluation Policy Chapter II: The committee of ministers Evaluation Policy paragraph 14
QA 7.2	The ToR feature a rationale for the evaluation.			Drafting ToR / Consultation with CoE evaluation stakeholders
QA 7.3	At least 90% of recommendations are accepted by relevant stakeholders.			Acceptance rate in Management Response/Action Plan

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8. Usefulness				
QA 8.1	Evaluation is used to inform decision-making or to facilitate a process of reform (i.e. to prepare follow-up interventions or strategies, or to develop or revise interventions or strategies).			Evaluation Policy paragraph 11
QA 8.2	Evaluation Report has been disseminated to decision-makers.			The evaluation report was disseminated among the stakeholders/SG/CM
QA 8.3	Based on evaluation report, follow-up actions have been agreed and management response completed.			Evaluation Policy paragraphs 38 and 45.

Appendix 4 - Evaluation Planning Template Example

Evaluation Planning					
Evaluation title	Who	Planned Date	Actual Date	Comments	Relevant Links
Preliminary Work					
Desk research/ Concept note					
Draft ToR					
Final ToR and Tender File					
Consultation of suppliers and selection					
Start of contract with consultant					
Inception Phase					
Initial Analysis of Available Documentation					
Scoping interviews					
Inception Report 1					
DIO comments for Inception report sent					
Inception Report 2					
Inception report sent to reference group					
Comments received from reference group					
Reference group meeting 1					
Final Inception report					
Data Collection and Analysis					
Analysis of documentation					
Missions					
Working paper on Field visit					
Interviews in Strasbourg					
Survey					
Data analysis					
Synthesis of results presentation					
Report and Action Plan					
First Draft report					
DIO comments for draft report sent					
Second Draft report					
Draft report sent to Reference Group					
Comments received form Reference Group					
Reference Group meeting 2					
Final Draft report					
Final Evaluation Report					
Management Response					
Draft Management response sent					
Final Management response received and published					
Publication of Final Report					

Appendix 5 - Quality Assurance Checklist for Inception Report⁷³

Quality Assurance Checklist for Evaluation Inception Report		
Evaluation Title:		
1. Evaluation Purpose - The Inception Report specifies the purpose of the evaluation and how it will be used.		
2. Evaluation Objectives - The Inception Report includes clearly defined, relevant and feasible objectives.		
3. Evaluation Context - The Inception Report includes sufficient and relevant contextual information.		
4. Evaluation Scope - The Inception Report includes the scope of the evaluation.		
5. Evaluation Criteria		
5.0	The Inception Report specifies the criteria that will be utilised to guide the evaluation.	
5.1	The Inception Report specifies the evaluation criteria against which the subject to be evaluated will be assessed, including, for example, relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and/or sustainability.	
5.2	The Inception Report spells out any additional criteria of relevance to the particular type of evaluation being undertaken, such as evaluations of development, humanitarian response, and normative programmes.	
5.3	The scope of the evaluation is feasible given resources and time considerations.	
5.4	The Inception Report includes an assessment of relevant human rights and gender equality aspects through the selection of the evaluation criteria.	
6. Tailored Evaluation Questions		
6.0	The Inception Report includes a comprehensive and tailored set of evaluation questions within the framework of the evaluation criteria.	
6.1	The Inception Report contains a set of evaluation questions that are directly related to both the objectives of the evaluation and the criteria against which the subject will be assessed.	
6.2	The set of evaluation questions adds further detail to the objectives and contributes to further defining the scope.	
6.3	The set of evaluation questions is comprehensive enough that they raise the most pertinent evaluation questions, while at the same time being concise enough to provide users with a clear overview of the evaluation's objectives.	
6.4	Given the information available and the context of the evaluation, it will be possible to collect sufficient, evidence in order to answer the evaluation questions.	
6.5	The Inception Report includes an assessment of relevant human rights and gender equality aspects through the selection of the evaluation questions.	
7. Methodology		
7.0	The Inception Report specifies the methods for data collection and analysis, including information on the overall methodological design.	

⁷³ Based on UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Terms of Reference and Inception Reports (2010).

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7.1	The Inception Report contains a clear and accessible methodological plan. Preferably, a standalone section, such as an Evaluation Matrix that is clearly delineated from other information contained in the Inception Report.	
7.2	The Inception Report states the overall methodological approach and design for the evaluation. Examples of approaches include participatory, utilization-focused, theory-based and gender and human rights responsive. Examples of overall design include non- experimental, quasi- experimental and experimental.	
7.3	The Inception Report specifies how a human rights and gender perspective will be incorporated in the evaluation design.	
7.4	The Inception Report specifies an evaluation approach and data collection and analysis methods that are human rights based and gender sensitive and for evaluation data to be disaggregated by sex, ethnicity, age, disability, etc.	
7.5	The data collection and analysis methods in the Inception Report are sufficiently rigorous to assess the subject of the evaluation and ensure a complete, fair and unbiased assessment. For example, there will be sufficient data to address all evaluation questions.	
7.6	The evaluation methodology includes multiple methods (triangulation); preferably with analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data and with a range of stakeholders covered by the data collection methods.	
7.7	Logical and explicit linkages are provided between data sources, data collection methods and analysis methods. For example, sampling plans are included.	
7.8	The evaluation methodology takes into account the overall purpose of the evaluation, as well as the needs of the users and other stakeholders.	
7.9	The evaluation methodology explicitly and clearly states the limitations of the chosen evaluation methods.	
7.10	The Inception Report specifies that the evaluation will follow CoE ethical guidelines.	
8. Evaluation Work Plan		
8.0	The Inception Report includes a work plan.	
8.1	The Inception Report work plan states the outputs that will be delivered by the evaluation team, including information on the degree to which the evaluation report will be disseminated to stakeholders.	
8.2	The Inception Report work plan describes the key stages of the evaluation process and the project timeline.	
8.3	The Inception Report work plan establishes clear roles and responsibilities for evaluation team members, the commissioning organisation and other stakeholders in the evaluation process.	
8.4	The Inception Report work plan describes the evaluation quality assurance process.	
8.5	The Inception Report work plan describes the process, if any, for obtaining and incorporating evaluand comments on a draft evaluation report.	
8.6	The Inception Report work plan includes an evaluation project budget.	

Appendix 6 - Template for interview/focus group guide

NAME OF EVALUATION

Date: DD Month YEAR

Name(s) and function(s) of interviewee(s):

Evaluation phase (inception/data collection):

In-person/phone interview (please specify)

Location (for in-person interviews/focus groups):

Name(s) of interviewer(s):

In confidence/quotable (please specify)

Standard introduction by interviewer(s): thanks, self-introduction(s), introduction of evaluation purpose, clarification of quoting policy and data protection considerations. The standard text below is to be adapted to the context.

“Thank you for taking the time to meet me/us [/to participate in this focus group]. I am an independent consultant hired by [/an evaluator belonging to] the Council of Europe’s Evaluation Division. As a part of an evaluation team, I am conducting the evaluation of [name of the evaluation topic]. The purpose of this evaluation is to better understand how [name of the evaluation topic] has worked over [period covered by the evaluation], to assess its impact and whether it was useful to its beneficiaries. This exercise is not an audit: our aim is to learn from this experience and identify how our own performance as an organisation can be improved in the future. We will be grateful for your open feedback. Our notes will not be shared with the persons who have implemented the program, and unless you authorise us to quote you by name, they will not be quoted in a way that can be attributed to you.”

Example of typical questions for semi-structured interviews:

1. Role of interviewee(s) in the evaluated action XYZ
 - Please describe your role in XYZ.
 - Within XYZ, who were your main contact points?
2. Description of the action XYZ from the interviewee’s point of view
 - Please describe XYZ from your point of view: what did it consist of?
 - Were there different stages, and which ones?
3. Process evaluation assessment
 - How did you feel about the implementation of XYZ?
 - What is your opinion about the way the Council of Europe conducted it?
 - Were you properly informed of the developments of XYZ?
 - Were you properly consulted, was your needs/your opinions taken into account, and at which stages?
 - [If relevant] How did coordination with/among [list of partners] go?
 - If you had been in charge of it, what would you have done differently? Why?
 - If you were to advise our Council of Europe colleagues implementing a similar action in another country, what would you tell them? What should they keep in mind?
 - To what extent did the process of implementing XYZ take into consideration the needs of less powerful/disadvantaged stakeholder groups?
 - What lessons have you learnt when implementing XYZ?
 - What, if any, was the competitive advantage/added value of the CoE in implementing XYZ?

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4. Results and impact assessment
 - How do you use [outputs of XYZ]?
 - As far as you know, how do [other stakeholders] use [outputs of XYZ]?
 - In the end, what were the results of XYZ?
 - What did it change for you personally?
 - How do you feel about these results?
 - Do you think these results were intended? Do you think they were in line with the objectives of [name of relevant Council of Europe Entity]?
 - Would you have had different objectives?
 - What results would you have liked XYZ to have for you?
 - To what extent have different groups of stakeholders benefited differently from the results of XYZ?

5. Sustainability
 - In the future, what do you intend to do with [outputs of XYZ]?
 - How do you see [results of XYZ] in five years? Why?

6. Closing of the interview
 - “Thank you again for your time, and for sharing your opinion with me/us. This is very valuable for us/the Council of Europe to continue improving its performance. Should you have questions, or remember of some further information you might have not have thought of today, you may reach me/us with the following contact details.”

Appendix 7 - Quality Assurance Checklist for Final Evaluation Report⁷⁴

Quality Assurance Checklist for Evaluation Reports	
This checklist is intended to help evaluation managers and evaluators to ensure the final product of the evaluation - evaluation report - meets the expected quality. It can also be shared with the evaluation consultants as part of the TOR prior to the conduct of the evaluation or after the report is finalised to assess its quality.	
Evaluation Title:	
1. The Report Structure	
1.0	The report is well structured, logical, clear, concise and complete.
1.1	The report uses gender sensitive and human rights-based language throughout, including data disaggregated by sex, age, disability, etc.
1.2	<p>Report is logically structured with clarity and coherence (e.g. background and objectives are presented before findings, and findings are presented before conclusions and recommendations). The report follows the proposed structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Summary (maximum two pages); • Introduction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Purpose and scope of the evaluation (what is the intended use of the evaluation?); ○ Description of the intervention; Evaluation methodology incl. limitations; Difficulties encountered during the evaluation; • Findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Findings related to each evaluation question; Findings related to additional evaluation questions that came up while carrying out the evaluation; • Conclusions; • Recommendations, possibly including suggested modalities of implementation; • Lessons learnt; • Annexes (including list of interviews and of documents reviewed, questionnaires, formats for structured and semi-structured interviews, etc.).
1.3	<p>The title page and opening pages provide key basic information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of the evaluation object; • Timeframe of the evaluation and date of the report; • Locations (country, region, etc.) of the evaluation object; • Names and/or organisations of evaluators; • Name of the organisation commissioning the evaluation; • Table of contents which also lists Tables, Graphs, Figures and Annexes; • List of acronyms.
1.4	<p>The Executive Summary is a stand-alone section of 2-3 pages that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of the evaluation object; • Evaluation objectives and intended audience; • Evaluation methodology; • Most important findings and conclusions; • Main recommendations.

⁷⁴ Based on UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports (2010).

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1.5	<p>Annexes increase the credibility of the evaluation report. They may include, inter alia:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TOR; • List of persons interviewed and sites visited; • List of documents consulted; • More details on the methodology, such as data collection instruments, including details of their reliability and validity; • Evaluators biodata and/or justification of team composition; • Evaluation matrix; • Results framework. 	
2. Object of Evaluation		
2.0	The report presents a clear and full description of the 'object' of the evaluation.	
2.1	The logic model and/or the expected results chain (inputs, outputs and outcomes) of the object is/are clearly described.	
2.2	The context of key social, political, economic, demographic, and institutional factors that have a direct bearing on the object is described. For example, the partner government's strategies and priorities, international, regional or country development goals, strategies and frameworks, the concerned agency's corporate goals and priorities, as appropriate.	
2.3	<p>The scale and complexity of the object of the evaluation are clearly described, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of components, if more than one, and the size of the population each component is intended to serve, either directly or indirectly; • The geographic context and boundaries (such as the region, country, and/or landscape) and challenges where relevant; • The purpose and goal, and organisation/management of the object; • The total resources from all sources, including human resources and budget(s) (e.g. concerned agency, partner government and other donor contributions). 	
2.4	The key stakeholders involved in the object implementation, including the implementing agency(s) and partners, other key stakeholders and their roles.	
2.5	The report identifies the implementation status of the object , including its phase of implementation and any significant changes (e.g. plans, strategies, logical frameworks) that have occurred over time and explains the implications of those changes for the evaluation.	
3. Evaluation Purpose, Objective(s) and Scope.		
3.0	The evaluation's purpose, objectives and scope are fully explained.	
3.1	The purpose of the evaluation is clearly defined, including why the evaluation was needed at that point in time, who needed the information, what information is needed, how the information will be used.	
3.2	The report should provide a clear explanation of the evaluation objectives and scope including main evaluation questions and describes and justifies what the evaluation did and did not cover.	
3.3	The report describes and provides an explanation of the chosen evaluation criteria, performance standards, or other criteria used by the evaluators.	
3.4	As appropriate, evaluation objectives and scope include questions that address issues of gender and human rights.	

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4. Evaluation Methodology	
4.0	The report presents a transparent description of the methodology applied to the evaluation that clearly explains how the evaluation was specifically designed to address the evaluation criteria, yield answers to the evaluation questions and achieve evaluation purposes.
4.1	The report describes the data collection methods and analysis, the rationale for selecting them, and their limitations. Reference indicators and benchmarks are included where relevant.
4.2	The report describes the data sources, the rationale for their selection, and their limitations. The report includes discussion of how the mix of data sources was used to obtain a diversity of perspectives, ensure data accuracy and overcome data limits.
4.3	The report describes the sampling frame – area and population to be represented, rationale for selection, mechanics of selection, numbers selected out of potential subjects, and limitations of the sample.
4.4	The evaluation report gives a complete description of stakeholder’s consultation process in the evaluation, including the rationale for selecting the particular level and activities for consultation.
4.5	The methods employed are appropriate for the evaluation and to answer its questions.
4.6	The evaluation approach and data collection and analysis methods are gender equality and human rights responsive and appropriate for analysing the gender equality and human rights issues identified in the scope.
4.7	The report presents evidence that adequate measures were taken to ensure data quality, including evidence supporting the reliability and validity of data collection tools (e.g. interview protocols, observation tools, etc.)
4.8	The report illustrates the extent to which the design and implementation of the object, the assessment of results and the evaluation process incorporate a gender equality perspective and human rights based approach.
5. Findings	
5.0	Findings respond directly to the evaluation criteria and questions detailed in the scope and objectives section of the report and are based on evidence derived from data collection and analysis methods described in the methodology section of the report.
5.1	Reported findings reflect systematic and appropriate analysis and interpretation of the data.
5.2	Reported findings address the evaluation criteria (such as efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, impact and relevance) and questions defined in the evaluation scope.
5.3	The report assesses if the design of the object was based on a sound gender analysis and human rights analysis and implementation for results was monitored through gender and human rights frameworks, as well as the actual results on gender equality and human rights.
5.4	Findings are objectively reported based on the evidence.
5.5	Gaps and limitations in the data and/or unanticipated findings are reported and discussed.
5.6	Reasons for accomplishments and failures, especially continuing constraints, were identified as much as possible.
5.7	Overall findings are presented with clarity, logic, and coherence.
6. Conclusions	
6.0	Conclusions present reasonable judgments based on findings and substantiated by evidence, and provide insights pertinent to the object and purpose of the evaluation.
6.1	The conclusions reflect reasonable evaluative judgments relating to key evaluation questions.

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6.2	Conclusions are well substantiated by the evidence presented and are logically connected to evaluation findings.	
6.3	Stated conclusions provide insights into the identification and/or solutions of important problems or issues pertinent to the prospective decisions and actions of evaluation users.	
6.4	Conclusions present strengths and weaknesses of the object (policy, programme, project or other intervention) being evaluated, based on the evidence presented and taking due account of the views of a diverse cross-section of stakeholders.	
7. Lessons learnt and best practices		
7.0	Lessons learnt are specific and relevant to the topic of the evaluation.	
7.1	Lessons learnt and best practices are clearly linked to specific findings.	
7.2	Lessons learnt and best practices are tied to clearly identified factors.	
7.3	Lessons learnt and best practices are replicable in the organisational context.	
8. Recommendations		
8.0	Recommendations are relevant to the object and purposes of the evaluation, are supported by evidence and conclusions, and were developed with the involvement of relevant stakeholders.	
8.1	The connection between findings, conclusions and recommendations is demonstrated through graphic means.	
8.2	The report describes the process followed in developing the recommendations including consultation with stakeholders.	
8.3	Recommendations are firmly based on evidence and conclusions.	
8.4	Recommendations are relevant to the object and purposes of the evaluation.	
8.5	Recommendations clearly identify the target group for each recommendation.	
8.6	Recommendations are clearly stated with priorities for action made clear.	
8.7	Recommendations are actionable and reflect an understanding of the commissioning organisation and potential constraints to follow-up.	
8.8	Reported findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons provide adequate information on gender equality and human rights aspects.	
8.9	Recommendations are supplemented with suggested modalities of implementation and opportunities for improvement.	

Appendix 8 - Instructions for Preparing an Action Plan and Template for Action Plan

Evaluation can play an important role in organisational learning and accountability. It can provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful for the CoE's operations. For evaluations to be effective, the recommendations they produce need to be incorporated into decision-making processes. In order to promote evaluation usage, DIO systematically follows up on issued recommendations.

The management of the organisational entity to which a recommendation is addressed is responsible for establishing an action plan that states whether the recommendation is accepted and what actions are envisaged to be taken for its implementation. In the case of recommendations being addressed to several entities, managers concerned prepare the action plan either individually or as a joint effort depending on the nature of the recommendation. In any case the action plan should be the result of extensive formal and informal discussions of the main findings and recommendations of the evaluation among relevant decision-makers.

In order to assist managers in prioritising action for an effective implementation of recommendations, DIO evaluation recommendations are classified as follows:

- **Recommendations** address an important deficiency or weakness in an intervention's design, delivery, performance, or achievement of results, which, if not remedied, will put at risk the likelihood of the intervention achieving its mandated objectives.
- **Opportunities for improvement** address a deficiency or weakness in an intervention's design, delivery, performance, or achievement of results, which may not necessarily impact the achievement of the intervention's mandated objectives, but which, if remedied, would add value to overall implementation of the intervention or increase its efficiency. Opportunities for improvement are not being followed up on by DIO.

Action plans are prepared in line with the instructions provided by DIO. The following information is required in respect of recommendations:

1. **Recommendation ID:** This field is completed by DIO with a unique identifier for each recommendation.
2. **Recommendation:** This field is completed by DIO. It contains the text of the recommendation.
3. **Management Decision:** Indicate here whether the recommendation is accepted, rejected, or under consideration (this option should be selected in case decisions need to be taken by governing or executive bodies regarding political issues, resource allocation, etc.).
4. **Proposed actions** (for accepted recommendations): Please provide details on all the actions that you are intending to take for the implementation of this recommendation. If several actions are required, identify several milestones within the implementation process and provide target dates (month and year) for their completion.
5. **Justification** (for recommendations that are rejected, or under consideration): If a recommendation is rejected or part of it is, provide the reasons for this decision. If the recommendation is under consideration, provide the reasons for this and the date by which the management decision (accept or reject the recommendation) will be able to be taken.
6. **Person in Charge:** Indicate the person who is responsible for implementing the accepted and partially accepted recommendations.
7. **Target Date:** Indicate the date (month and year) in which the completion of the implementation of the entire recommendation is expected

DIO will follow up on the implementation of the action plan on an annual basis.

The state of follow-up of recommendations is reported to the Secretary General and the Committee of Ministers. Recommendations that have been accepted, but not fully implemented in line with the action plan, may be submitted to the Secretary General for a decision on further action.

Template for Management Response and Action Plan

Name of Evaluation Report:			
Date of Evaluation Report:		Date of Action Plan:	

Overall management response to the evaluation:

[FOR DECENTRALISED EVALUATIONS] Dissemination plan for the evaluation: please briefly explain with whom the report will be shared (internally, other CoE entities, donors, beneficiaries etc.), methods (email, events, website etc.), resources, timeframe and person responsible.

Management Decision ⁷⁵	Entity in Charge	Planned Actions ⁷⁶ (determined by Entity)	Justification ⁷⁷ for Non-Acceptance	Target Date for Action	Person Responsible for Action
Recommendation 1:					
<input type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input type="checkbox"/> Under consideration					
Recommendation 2:					
<input type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input type="checkbox"/> Under consideration					

⁷⁵ The management decision is in relation to the Recommendation (Accept, Partially Accept, Reject, Consider).

⁷⁶ For implementing accepted recommendations.

⁷⁷ For recommendations that are rejected or under consideration.