

Management Response and Action Plan

Name of Evaluation Report:	Final evaluation of the project “ Support for the Implementation of Judicial Reform in Serbia ”		
Date of Evaluation Report:	16 December 2025	Date of Action Plan:	26 February 2026

Overall management response to the evaluation:

The project team welcomes the thoroughness of the final evaluation, which was well conducted and provides tangible recommendations for further strengthening justice reform support in Serbia. The evaluation correctly highlights the project’s relevance, effectiveness, and potential impact, particularly in supporting the adoption of key laws and bylaws, enhancing transparency, and promoting participatory legislative processes.

At the same time, the project team notes certain issues in the evaluation report. Some observations regarding coordination and quality control of expert inputs do not fully reflect the project’s modalities. Expert support was intentionally tailored to the objectives of each assignment, ranging from advisory guidance and facilitation to analytical opinions, with quality control proportionate to the nature of outputs. Similarly, coordination between international and national experts was adapted to preserve the independence of expert inputs where required. These contextual aspects were explained to the evaluators but may not have been fully captured in the report.

The project team values the constructive recommendations provided and will continue to ensure that future project support applies lessons learned, particularly regarding coordination, quality control, human rights and gender mainstreaming, and strategic planning in line with European standards.

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

The final evaluation report will be shared internally within the Council of Europe as well as with the project donor, the European Union. The report will serve as a key reference for the project team to tailor ongoing activities, strengthen implementation, and inform follow-up actions under the next phase of support. The dissemination will be conducted primarily via email to relevant stakeholders, and key findings may also be highlighted during internal project meetings and briefings.

Management Decision ¹	Entity in Charge	Planned Actions ² (determined by Entity)	Justification ³ for non-acceptance	Target Date for Action	Person Responsible for Action
Recommendation 1: Tasking of Project experts should include detailed ToRs and checklists that reference cross-cutting and other Council of Europe norms, to enhance quality and coherence and facilitate assessment of outputs against ToRs.					
☒ Accepted ☐ Partially accepted ☐ Rejected	Human Rights and Justice Co-operation Department	Building on experience from the previous project, the project team has already noted that Terms of Reference (ToRs) could be better specified and that references to cross-cutting Council of Europe norms could be strengthened. For the current follow-up action " HF44 – Strengthening Legal Culture in Serbia and the Capacities of the Judicial and the Prosecutorial Councils ", specific attention is given to including detailed ToRs and checklists that reference cross-cutting and other Council of Europe norms in all expert engagements.	N/A	31 December 2026	Ksenia Gruss, Project Coordinator Darja Koturovic, Senior Project Officer Caslav Ninkovic, Senior Project Officer
Recommendation 2: Support to the application of the legislative framework and procedures supported by the project should be prioritised, including agreed fit-for-purpose SMART indicators (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) to measure substantive change.					
☒ Accepted ☐ Partially accepted ☐ Rejected	Human Rights and Justice Co-operation Department	The ongoing follow-up action is specifically focusing on the application of the newly adapted legislative framework through its activities. As this is one of the main objectives, the project team is actively supporting and monitoring its	N/A	31 December 2026	Ksenia Gruss, Project Coordinator Darja Koturovic, Senior Project Officer Caslav Ninkovic, Senior Project Officer

¹ The management decision is in relation to the Recommendation (Accepted, Partially accepted, Rejected).

² For implementing accepted recommendations.

³ For recommendations that are partially accepted or rejected.

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		implementation, and the objectives of the new action are formulated to support and measure substantive change, including the use of fit-for-purpose SMART indicators.			
Recommendation 3: Achieving impact under this, and related projects, requires a structured, justice sector reform stakeholder platform. This should enhance coordination of, and synergies between, international technical support and generate combined leverage for political will for reform. As key normative actors, the Council of Europe and EU should have a central role in such coordination.					
☐ Accepted ☒ Partially accepted ☐ Rejected	Human Rights and Justice Co-operation Department	The Council of Europe agrees on the need to strengthen coordination and synergies among international partners supporting justice sector reform in Serbia. It will maintain close contact with the European Union and initiate joint coordination meetings within the framework of the ongoing action. However, the establishment of a fully structured stakeholder platform depends on the engagement and ownership of multiple partners and cannot be guaranteed by the Council of Europe alone, particularly within a technical co-operation project. The Council of Europe will facilitate coordination efforts within its mandate and encourage partner participation.	N/A	31 December 2026	Janos Babity, Head of Office of the Council of Europe Office in Belgrade Evgenia Giakoumopoulou Todorovic, Deputy Head of Office of the Council of Europe Office in Belgrade Ksenia Gruss, Senior Project Officer Darja Koturovic, Senior Project Officer Caslav Ninkovic, Senior Project Officer

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Recommendation 4: Capacity building for oversight institutions (including the HJC and HPC) should be prioritised, including their capacity to apply and monitor the impact of key bylaws addressing transparency, judicial/prosecutorial independence.					
☒ Accepted ☐ Partially accepted ☐ Rejected	Human Rights and Justice Co-operation Department	The High Judicial Council (HJC) and High Prosecutorial Council (HPC) remain the main beneficiaries of the ongoing follow-up action . This action includes a dedicated component aimed at strengthening their capacity to fully apply and monitor the impact of the revised legislation established under the previous project. The current action will continue to provide targeted support to ensure effective implementation of these key bylaws, with a focus on transparency and judicial/prosecutorial independence and capacity building of the Councils' staff.	N/A	31 December 2026	Ksenia Gruss, Project Coordinator Darja Koturovic, Senior Project Officer Caslav Ninkovic, Senior Project Officer
Recommendation 5: The application of HRA as a comprehensive framework should be enhanced, by; - revising log frame content and ensuring consultant/project reports address progress and challenges in the application of all HRA principles - ensuring experts' contracts include a checklist of HRA norms and ToRs stipulate that these norms are addressed in inputs/outputs. - organising targeted applied capacity-building events/knowledge sharing on HRA to justice reform with other justice projects/actors. This might be linked to a small, designated group and piloting of HRA/gender in selected future justice reform activities.					
☐ Accepted ☒ Partially accepted ☐ Rejected	Human Rights and Justice Co-operation Department	The ongoing follow-up action already addresses the Human Rights Approach (HRA) within its activities, and this will be further developed in the next stage starting in 2027, particularly in	The project's primary purpose is supporting justice reform and legal culture in Serbia.	31 December 2026	Ksenia Gruss, Project Coordinator Darja Koturovic, Senior Project Officer

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		connection with the preparation and implementation of the logframe. Expert contracts and Terms of Reference will stipulate HRA considerations to the extent that is meaningful and feasible. While the project will not organise dedicated capacity-building events exclusively on HRA, the principles will be mainstreamed through planned trainings and knowledge-sharing activities with the main beneficiaries, ensuring that HRA themes are considered within the context of justice reform and legal culture in Serbia.	Organising trainings exclusively on HRA would divert from the main objectives. HRA principles will be integrated where feasible into activities and trainings, but the focus remains on delivering the core objectives of justice reform.		Caslav Ninkovic, Senior Project Officer
Recommendation 6: The application of gender mainstreaming (including issues of intersectionality) should be enhanced, by: - revising log frame content and ensuring consultant/project reports address progress and challenges on gender and gender mainstreaming. - ensuring experts' contracts include a gender/gender mainstreaming checklist and ToRs stipulate that these norms are addressed in inputs/outputs. - organising targeted applied capacity-building events/knowledge sharing on gender in justice reform with other justice projects/actors.					
☐ Accepted ☒ Partially accepted ☐ Rejected	Human Rights and Justice Co-operation Department	The ongoing follow-up action addresses gender mainstreaming within its activities, and this will continue to be developed, including through the next stage starting in 2027. Expert contracts and Terms of Reference will include consideration of gender and gender mainstreaming to the extent meaningful and feasible. While the action will not organise dedicated capacity-building events exclusively on gender, gender	The primary purpose of the action is to support justice reform and legal culture in Serbia. Organising trainings exclusively on gender issues would divert focus from the main objectives. Gender	31 December 2026	Ksenia Gruss, Project Coordinator Darja Koturovic, Senior Project Officer Caslav Ninkovic, Senior Project Officer

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		mainstreaming principles will be integrated into planned trainings and activities with the main beneficiaries, ensuring attention to gender and intersectionality within the context of justice reform and legal culture in Serbia.	mainstreaming will be applied as a cross-cutting principle where relevant, through the activities and trainings already planned for the beneficiaries.		