EVALUATION OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S SUPPORT TO MEMBER STATES IN ADDRESSING CHALLENGES RELATED TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Contents

List of acronyms

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEPEJ	European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice
CM	Committee of Ministers
CommHR	Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights
The Convention	European Convention on Human Rights
Congress	Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
CPT	European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DG	Directorate General
DGA	Directorate General of Administration
DGI	Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law
DGII	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity
DIO	Directorate of Internal Oversight
DIT	Directorate of Information Technology
DLAPIL	Directorate of Legal Advice and Public International Law
DMS	Document Management System
DPAER	Directorate of Political Affairs and External Relations
DPB	Directorate of Programme and Budget
EC	European Commission
EDQM	European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines and Healthcare
ESC	European Social Charter
EU	European Union
GREVIO	Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
HoO	Head of Office
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IT	Information Technology
INGOs	International non-governmental organisation
NGO	Non-governmental organisation

ODGP	Office of the Directorate General of Programmes[1]
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
MAE	Major administrative entity
PACE	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
P&B	Programme and Budget of the Council of Europe
PO	Private Office of the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General
PR	Permanent Representation to the Council of Europe
RBM	Results-based management
SG	Secretary General
SMT	Security Management Team (day-to-day management of the crisis)
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

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1. The ODGP – Office of the Directorate General of Programmes is renamed as the Directorate of Programme Co-ordination, with effect from 1 November 2022.

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Executive summary

Object of the report

This report presents the results of the evaluation of the Council of Europe's support to member states in addressing challenges related to the Covid-19 pandemic. The evaluation examined the programmatic response of the Organisation to Covid-19 in assisting member states to fulfil their commitments to maintaining human rights, rule of law and democracy. The evaluation analysed the criteria of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency with a series of evaluation questions in order to improve future crises responses and modernise working methods and technology. The main users of the evaluation are Council of Europe stakeholders and decision-makers.

Methodology

The evaluation was conducted internally by the Evaluation Division of the Directorate of Internal Oversight (DIO). It involved a mapping exercise of outputs, a benchmarking exercise to identify good practice in crisis management in response to Covid-19 and was informed by a qualitative data collection methodology drawing on general data confronted with specific case study data. It took place over one year, from April 2021 to March 2022, including inception, desk/field and reporting phases.

Multiple data sources

Surveys
- Staff: 573 respondents (out of 1636)
- External (PACE, Congress, WfD): 43 respondents (out of 1404)

Interviews
- 59 managers interviewed
- 10 permanent representations

Benchmarking exercise
- 7 international organisations (EC, OSCE, UNESCO, UNODC, OHCHR,

Mapping exercise

Case study
- Georgia, Greece, Germany
- 52 interviewed, 21 women 31 men

- Intergovernmental committee
- Monitoring mechanism
- PACE
- Congress
- Co-operation
- Civil society
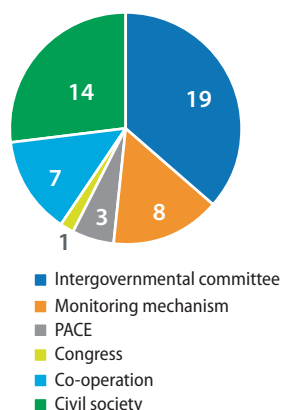
Key findings and conclusions

The evaluation revealed the real need for and added value of the Council of Europe's strategic triangle of standard setting, monitoring and co-operation as well as interaction with the PACE, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (Congress) and the Conference of International non-governmental organisations (INGOs). At the same time, it proved difficult to capture the essential features of Council of Europe work in relation to the pandemic, which meant that this need was sometimes obscured by the immediate health threat. Adjustments to the Organisation's work were made early and on a timely basis, but the strong and clear strategy that was formulated was not always prioritised and operationalised. The global scale and unprecedented impact of Covid-19 called for a strong programmatic response, over and above the equally vital business continuity of the Organisation.

The response was effective in that guidance, support, exchange of good practice, political dialogue, and scrutiny among many other elements were reliable, high standard and highly valued by member states. Resources were often spread thinly and there were limited connections between many interventions, including with other international organisations and member states, which meant that the Council of Europe's response was not perceived as forceful. This led to some disappointment among stakeholders, although the unprecedented nature of the situation should be borne in mind when considering the Organisation's response.

The Council of Europe operated exceptionally well during the pandemic despite the constraints and restrictions linked to it, making the period a highly productive one. The response revealed an automatic, organic resilience in the Organisation, predominantly down to the plethora of instruments and committees that are relatively autonomous in their governing structure. At the same time this automated response contributed to limitations on strategic communication and co-ordination that hampered the effectiveness of the response. The Council of Europe was able to pilot new working methods and technologies, which has increased the strong demand for innovation in the Organisation. This will be a powerful driver for the continuing administrative reform and a catalyst for further improvement. The Organisation has recently created a Task Force on Crisis Management and Business Continuity which findings from the evaluation can feed into.

As a result of the pandemic and the way it reacted the Organisation is now more flexible and adaptable in the delivery of its interventions.

Recommendations

There were two clusters of recommendations resulting from the evaluation findings and conclusions relating to crisis preparedness and crisis response:

Crisis preparedness and checklist	Institutional capacity to manage crisis
1. Develop a checklist of actions to determine most appropriate programmatic responses to crises. (High priority)	2. Develop and provide advice on fast reaction adjustments to programming in crises. (High priority)
4. Prepare a set of steps to facilitate rapid decision making in a crisis and identify crisis response programmes. (High priority)	3. Reinforce RBM and strategic management guidance to improve focus on results in crises. (Medium priority)
5. Include the possibility to carry out "exceptional monitoring" adapted to crises. (High priority)	7. Draft guidance on fundraising to respond to crisis. (Medium priority)
6. Ensure partnership approaches to amplify messages to fully comply with human rights, rule of law and democracy standards in crises. (Medium priority)	9. Continue to make available multiple solutions for online working. (High priority)
8. Support exchange between headquarters, external offices, expert and Civil Society Organisation networks to respond to crises. (High priority)	
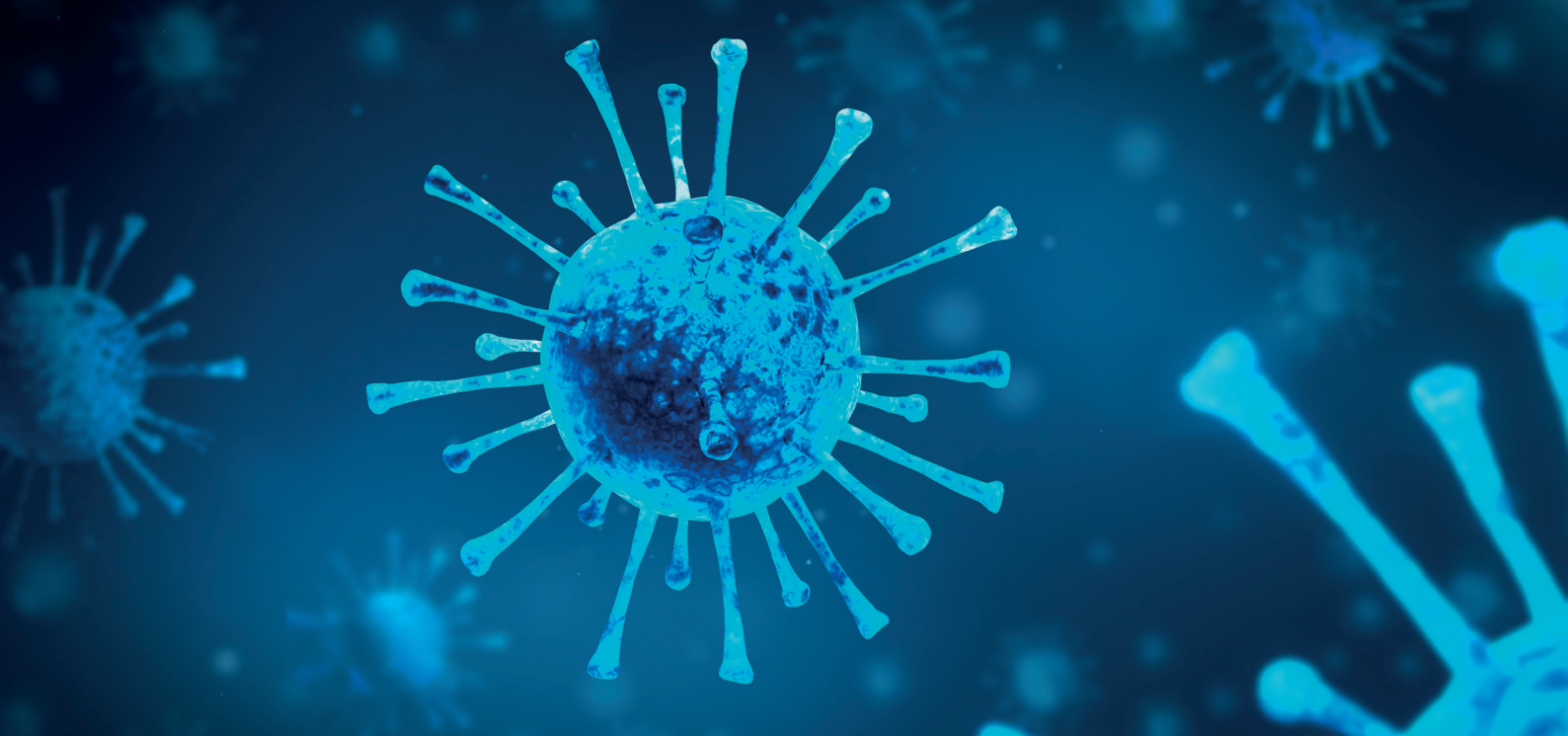
1. Introduction

1.1. Background

1. Promoting democracy and the rule of law as well as safeguarding human rights and fundamental freedoms form the core of the common values that unite the Council of Europe's 46 member states.

2. The 46 member states of the Council of Europe have undertaken to respect their obligations under the Statute of the Council of Europe, the European Convention on Human Rights (the Convention) and other conventions/treaties to which they are Parties, as well as to observe a series of principles and standards which have been elaborated since the creation of the Organisation with regard to pluralistic democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

3. In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in urgent new challenges to Europeans' rights under the the Convention, the European Social Charter (ESC), the European Cultural Convention and other instruments. In order to help its member states face these unprecedented challenges and still comply with commitments, the Council of Europe provided a response to meet their rightful expectation of support relating to all areas of the Organisation's mandate.

4. The Council of Europe's action on the effects of the pandemic included work on standards' compliance and intergovernmental co-operation, with the latter performing a legal, policy and practical research and development function in which pooled knowledge, expertise and the content of the Organisation's *acquis* contributed to solutions for ever-changing threats in what was and remains a highly dynamic environment.

5. There was also significant activity by the Committee of Ministers (CM), Commissioner for Human Rights, the Congress, the PACE, the Court and the Council of Europe Development Bank, as well as the Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law (DGI) and the Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII), including the European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines and Healthcare (EDQM), and others.

6. Several Steering Committees held specific sessions on their Covid-19 response or organised thematic sessions within their regular meetings. The work carried out for and with member states was conducted in and from Strasbourg and in the external and field offices where staff on the ground also reshaped some of their activities.

7. The Security Management Team (SMT), chaired by the Director General of DGA, was the main body of the Council of Europe for the Covid-19 crisis management. The structure of the SMT integrated a complete decision-making process, involving the preparation of decisions for the Secretary General to take on health and safety measures related to the pandemic.

1.2. Purpose and objectives

8.   The evaluation of the Council of Europe's support to member states in addressing challenges related to the Covid-19 pandemic was included in the work programme of the Directorate of Internal Oversight for 2021-2022. The evaluation was carried out due to the unprecedented nature and amplitude of the risks and demands the pandemic imposed on the Organisation in terms of adaptability and flexibility of its working methods[2] as well as contents of its work. More broadly, Covid-19 exposed both the existing and escalating challenges facing multilateral institutions and the centrality of these institutions to finding common solutions to common problems.

9.   The Council of Europe's mandate for action in this context was clear. National and other (in particular local) authorities needed to act swiftly and decisively to prevent and to mitigate the impact of Covid-19. The Council has worked and continues working with them, providing the information and support they need and expect, to ensure that the measures that states have taken are both effective and in line with their legal obligations as member states, ensuring that any restrictions on people's activities, ultimately, save lives and secure the right to health and to equitable access to health care – the human rights that the Council of Europe defends.

10.   The purpose of the evaluation was to primarily assess the extent to which the Council of Europe's programmatic response to the crisis through its support to member states assisted them in fulfilling their commitments to maintaining human rights, rule of law and democracy in the context of threats and challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, the evaluation assesses the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of key activities and actions taken place between March 2020 and August 2021 and what lessons can be learned at an institutional level. As such the evaluation is predominantly a formative one with some elements of accountability included.

11.   Its findings are to be used by member states and the senior management of the Council of Europe, line managers and interested staff members to better understand the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on the results of the Council's work, its performance under these circumstances and opportunities arising from it in view of improving the response to potential future crises. The evaluation findings are also to be used to promote general improvement and innovation in terms of working methods. National, regional and local authorities and staff members involved in the Covid-19 related activities may also be interested in the evaluation results. More widely, the evaluation shall be of interest to other international organisations working in the areas of the Council of Europe's mandate.

12.   The first objective of this evaluation is to provide these stakeholders with evidence-based information on the Council of Europe's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The second objective of the evaluation is to better understand how the Council of Europe adapted and operated during the first 18 months of the pandemic and to help determine whether the pandemic-related developments have the potential to become long-term organisational practice. The evaluation also seeks to understand the extent and effectiveness of co-ordination and strategic programming during crises.

1.3. Scope

13.   From the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in the first quarter of 2020, the Council of Europe has faced numerous and diverse challenges of an internal and external nature, whilst at the same time the organisation was presented with new opportunities. These opportunities included amongst others:

  ► Exploring alternative approaches to delivering Council of Europe outcomes,

  ► Strengthening internal co-ordination through integrated responses.

14.   The challenges faced by the Council of Europe can be grouped in two distinct clusters:

  a) internal challenges:

  ► Ensure business continuity,

  ► Adapt decision-making processes,

  ► Approach to, assessment and management of new risks,

  ► Adjustment of working methods,

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2.   Working methods are understood as actions employed to perform a task.

► Adjustment of working arrangements (telework),

► Meeting the need for additional/extraordinary equipment (such as laptop computers, remote meeting solutions).

b) external challenges – meeting needs of member states in an urgent, precise and timely manner, in terms of:

► Continuous advice to authorities on maintaining respect for human rights, rule of law and democracy,

► Support in developing new policies and practice in the different Council of Europe policy areas,

► Material support (delivery of equipment and consumables),

► Enhanced training opportunities in human rights and democracy for professionals and the public at large,

► Raising awareness of democracy and human rights,

► Ensuring pan-European, coherent response to the pandemic.

15. This evaluation focuses mainly on the Council's efforts to meet the external challenges.[3]

16. It looks at the initiatives and activities developed by the Council of Europe since the pandemic started impacting the Organisation's business, i.e. from the beginning of March 2020 until the beginning of the data collection phase in August 2021. The dynamic nature of the Covid-19 response necessitates a flexible approach to the time frame so that the evaluation team also paid close attention to the most recent developments up until the data analysis in early 2022 and took these into account to be able to provide the most comprehensive picture.

17. The evaluation was carried out from April 2021 to March 2022, by a senior evaluator, an evaluator, an evaluation assistant and a consultant who delivered the benchmarking report, see Appendix 3.

18. The evaluation did not address the work during the pandemic of the European Court of Human Rights for reasons of limited time and resources available to this evaluation.

Part II of the Secretary General's annual report 'Multilateralism 2020'[4] contains a non-exhaustive list of the Organisation's work aimed at supporting the member states in times of the pandemic, in the fields of (amongst others):

► Prevention of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment*

► Social rights*

► The independence and efficiency of justice*

► Media

► Data protection

► Artificial intelligence

► Cybercrime

► Bioethics

► Access to public documents

► Drug abuse

► Corruption*

► Crime*

► Migration and refugees

► Children's rights

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3. From the internal perspective, DIO carried out three assignments related to Covid-19 in 2020: 1) Council of Europe staff survey on lessons learned from lockdown – substantial input in the design of the survey, compilation and analysis of results (over 1600 respondents and over 7000 comments), presentation and publication of summary and full results on the Intranet; 2) survey aimed at diplomatic missions on lessons from the Covid-19 crisis: design of the survey, compilation and analysis of results, analytical report; and 3) an analytical report on DIO's main takeaways from the first lockdown with suggestions for further increasing the Organisation's resilience. Furthermore there was an internal audit of the business continuity and crisis management of the Organisation in 2019, with a series of recommendations awaiting the management response.

4. Multilateralism 2020; Annual Report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, April 2021.

▶ Equality and anti-discrimination*

▶ Education*

▶ Youth*

▶ Culture, nature and heritage

▶ Democracy and governance*

▶ Gender equality and violence against women*

▶ Trafficking in human beings*

▶ Quality standards for safe medicines and their safe use.

19.   The evaluation examined all of these activities, including in the course of the case study. The sectors of participants that agreed to interviews are indicated by the asterisks. The case study covered the three member states that held the chairmanship of the Committee of Minsters of the Council of Europe during the crisis – Georgia, Germany and Greece – and provide an in-depth understanding of the needs of national partners in those countries emerging in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council's response to those needs and its handling of the challenges and opportunities arising from the context, in relevant areas of work (see more information on case studies below). The decision was taken to only include member states that held the chairmanship because the evaluators considered this would increase the chances of more detailed assessment and focus on the Council of Europe during the pandemic.

1.4. Evaluation questions

20.   **Relevance:** To what extent were the Council of Europe's activities and initiatives developed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic addressing emerging challenges and in line with the needs of its member states, while taking into account human rights, rule of law and democracy commitments?

21.   **Effectiveness:** To what extent did these activities and initiatives help member states address problems brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic while protecting human rights, rule of law and democracy?

22.   **Efficiency:** To what extent an efficient use of available human, material and financial resources was ensured when developing these initiatives and activities to protect human rights, rule of law and democracy?

23.   The detailed evaluation matrix (Appendix 4) sets out evaluation questions, sub-questions, indicators, data sources, data collection[5] and data analysis methods. Some of these elements may be fine-tuned after discussions with the Reference group.

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5.   See also Appendix 5 for a description of data collection instruments.

2. Methodology

2.1. Data collection and data analysis

24. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the DIO's Evaluation Guidelines.[6] It included three phases: preparation, data collection, and data analysis and report drafting.

25. The evaluation process was participatory. A reference group was established to guide it and was consulted on the evaluation approach, findings, conclusions and recommendations, providing comments on draft documents to ensure their factual accuracy, relevance and feasibility and discussing the feasibility of the implementation of recommendations. The first reference group meeting was held on 28th June 2021 to comment on the draft concept note. The second reference group was held on 6th May 2022 to comment on the draft evaluation report. The reference group included representatives of the key stakeholders in the Organisation, in particular:

   ► Private Office,

   ► Secretariat of the Committee of Ministers,

   ► Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe,

   ► Secretariat of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities,

   ► Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights (CommHR),

   ► Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law,

   ► Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity,

   ► European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines,

   ► Directorate General of Administration,

   ► Directorate of Programme and Budget,

   ► Office of the Directorate General of Programmes.

26. The evaluation used a mixed methods approach to answer the evaluation questions. Priority was given to interviews as the main data collection tool, supplemented where necessary by two surveys, document reviews and other methods listed below and in Appendix 5 to substantiate the findings. The evaluation approach, including data collection and analysis, took into account 'do no harm' and conflict-sensitive principles, in particular when it came to information on the case studies.

27. The evaluators ensured gender balance through the sampling of each of the data collection tools. Furthermore, 11 of the managers interviewed were Heads of Offices in the field and 35% of respondents in the staff survey were based in field offices.

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6.   Council of Europe Evaluation Guidelines, October 2020.

Table 1: Gender balance of responses

	Women		Men		No response	Total
Staff survey	346	71%	144	29%	83	**573**
External survey	19	44%	24	56%		**43**
Permanent representations	3	27%	8	73%		**11**
Managers	32	54%	27	46%		**59**
Case study	21	40%	31	60%		**52**
Total	421	64%	234	36%	83	**738**

Mapping and document review

28. The evaluators completed a mapping of Council of Europe's initiatives and activities developed in response to the challenges faced by its member states in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic through review of Council of Europe documentation, ensuring a spread of

   ► Toolkits and guidance relating to Covid-19,

   ► Reports and progress reviews of different services,

   ► Existing internal surveys on lessons learned from the first lockdown and the working environment for the Organisation's future,

   ► Survey aimed at diplomatic missions on lessons learned from the first lockdown,

   ► Existing and new standards.

Benchmarking of international organisations

29. An external consultant conducted benchmarking with comparator organisations the European Union (EU),[7] the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in order to collect good practices on response to emerging needs of national authorities in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic with regard to devising strategies, programming and co-ordination and ideas on factors which influence its effectiveness. The benchmarking report (Appendix 3) provides an assessment tool to compare different organisations in terms of their crisis management. The assessment has been carried out for the Council of Europe using the whole range of criteria identified.

30. The benchmarking provided an assessment tool to analyse the overall response of the Council of Europe. It can be used for a simple assessment or more thorough detailed analysis of crisis response, in line with prevailing crisis management theory.[8]

Case study

31. The evaluation team conducted a case study of Georgia, Greece and Germany as holders of the Presidency of the CM during the pandemic. This provided an external perspective to the data to enable a complete view to the Council of Europe's response to the needs of national partners in those countries emerging in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, resources were too limited to carry out the in-depth study of each country originally considered. The feasibility and utility of case studies were assessed after scoping interviews and consultation with the Reference group. The findings were compared and integrated with those of the surveys, interviews and the benchmarking to strengthen the viewpoint of relevance and effectiveness, in particular.

32. 52 representatives of the case study countries were interviewed according to the following breakdown:

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7.   In particular, the European Commission, the EU's Assembly of Regional and Local Representatives and the European Parliament.
8.   The benchmarking exercise established key criteria for managing crises through consultation of crisis management literature. The benchmarking report was structured around these criteria: early response, strategic approaches, institutional responses, operational responses and responsiveness.

Table 2: Breakdown of participants in the case study by country

	Inter-governmental committee	Monitoring mechanism	PACE	Congress	Co-operation	Civil society	Women	Men
Georgia	5	3			3	7	8	10
Germany	6	1	1			3	3	8
Greece	8	4	2	1	4	4	10	13
Overall	**19**	**8**	**3**	**1**	**7**	**14**	**21**	**31**

Case study

Georgia: Georgia has a field office of the Council of Europe with projects implemented by that office. Local and general elections were held during the pandemic. PACE and Congress representatives were not particularly involved in PACE and Congress reports on Covid-19. There were many NGOs and civil servants working closely with the Council of Europe on activities specific to Georgia. A lot of the comments focused on activities in Georgia and maintaining the original planned schedule of activities in Georgia. The Commissioner for Human Rights addressed online the Interagency Human Rights Council meeting on the topic of human rights during the pandemic. (The Interagency is an Georgian government initiative to work transversally on human rights in Georgia.) The Council of Europe was perceived as being among the most active international organisations in Georgia during Covid-19.

Germany: The work with Germany during Covid-19 was almost exclusively at the intergovernmental level. Parliamentarians in PACE were actively involved in reports on Covid-19. Germany was reported to have focussed much more on what the EU suggested than the Council of Europe during the pandemic. Among other international organisations though, the Council of Europe played a prominent role.

Greece: There were some co-operation projects in Greece on Roma, on local government and on education during the pandemic. There were some NGOs and civil servants working closely with the Council of Europe on activities specific to Greece. Local government elected officials participated in the Congress and parliamentarians in PACE. Some representatives were involved in reports on Covid-19. In committees there were both independent professionals and civil servants. The Commissioner for Human Rights was acknowledged for interventions during Covid-19. ILO and UNHCR were mentioned as the most active international organisations during the pandemic, whilst the EU was also considered the main actor. The Council of Europe was, it appears,overshadowed by these organisations in Greece.

Surveys

33. With a view to obtaining quantitative and qualitative data on relevance, effectiveness and efficiency in the Council of Europe response to Covid-19, an internal staff survey of the Council of Europe staff was conducted (573 responses from a survey population of 1636[9] (PeopleSoft at 23/8/2021), i.e. 35% response rate) and an external survey was conducted of members of PACE, Congress and participants in the World Forum for Democracy (43 responses from a survey population of 1404 sent to PACE (692 members of PACE – PACE records), CLRA (690 members of Congress – Congress records) and World Forum for Democracy (82 contributors – DGII records), i.e. 3% response rate). The surveys were administered on SurveyMonkey and anonymous. The only identifying variable included was the major administrative entity (MAE) the staff member belongs to in order to follow up at service co-ordination level to try to promote a better response rate. The information thus collected was analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. Given the evaluation focus, the surveys differed from the internal staff surveys carried out in 2020 and 2021 and the external survey carried out in 2020. The focus in 2020 was on staff's experience of work, in 2021 on staff's aspirations in terms of future working environments and in 2020 for the external survey on PR's experiences, notably regarding their views on lessons learned from lockdown and the different phases of the progressive return to the premises of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg.

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9   Staff records of all staff below grade A5 working in operational services (i.e. excluding the Private Office, the Court, DGA, etc.).

Semi-structured interviews

34. To validate and confirm findings from the other data sources a series of semi-structured interviews were held, while the "snowball" principle of identifying other potential interviewees was adopted to obtain more precise information and data as the evaluation was carried out.

    ▶ 59 Council of Europe staff representing the different services

    ▶ 10 external participants representing donors and member states

35. Interviews were held with managers of the different services involved including 11 Heads of Offices in the field:

Table 3: Breakdown of participants in the senior management interviews

CM	PACE	Congress	CommHR	DPB	DLAPIL	ODGP	DGI	DGII	EDQM
4	4	4	1	2	1	16 (11 HoOs)	15	11	1

36. The relevant interview guides can be found at Appendices 6, 7 and 8.

Data analysis

37. All data were analysed according to each evaluation criteria and the evaluation questions, according to the evaluation matrix (see Appendix 4). In accordance with Council of Europe's Evaluation Guidelines and UNEG's Norms and Standards, in order to ensure credibility and validity of data, evaluation report findings are based on data triangulation: all data were cross-referenced with other data collected, either through triangulation of sources (for instance between different interviews), methods triangulation (for instance, cross-referencing interviews with survey findings) and investigator triangulation (sharing and exchanging observations and conclusions within the evaluation team).

38. Data sources combined staff, who brought their knowledge of the activities, limits, constraints and success factors in the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 and case study participants who brought the needs on the ground in relation to the crisis and the services the Council of Europe provides. All data was coded and interpreted, with review by the lead evaluator. The data were analysed according to comparisons from Staff to Managers to PRs to Case Studies and sorted in such a way that responses are disaggregated by respondent group and sector within respondent groups when relevant. This enabled differences in perspectives to be identified.

2.2. Limits and constraints

Table 4: Limits and constraints of the evaluation

Limitations	Mitigation measures
The fact that the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 involves all programmes of the Organisation means that the evaluation has to limit the scope and the level of detail for each separate part of the Organisation.	Sampling and data collection aimed to ensure as proportionate a representation as possible of each part of the Organisation. All directors of operational sectors and almost all heads of departments were interviewed.
Few stakeholders in member states, in the case study countries in this instance, have full knowledge of the overall Organisation and its different organs and services. Views and perspectives in terms of effectiveness are therefore fragmented.	The evaluation aimed to sample a diverse range of stakeholders in the case study to ensure as full a coverage as possible of Council of Europe activities. Different perspectives were then aggregated to establish as full a picture as possible.
There are no like-for-like organisations to provide equivalent comparison in the benchmarking exercise.	The organisations selected for the benchmarking exercise were carefully chosen for complementary characteristics that together provide a basis for comparison with the Council of Europe.
Resources could limit the scope of the sampling for the case study. Generalisations are necessary but will fail to capture contextual detail and differences between the three case study countries.	The analysis attempted to take into account the risk of over-generalisation. Interviews were also held with permanent representations to try to confirm the extrapolation of case study findings.
Low response rates to surveys could make the findings less reliable.	Calculate the confidence level of survey responses and treat findings qualitatively rather than quantitatively.

2.3. Difficulties encountered during the evaluation

39.   The evaluators were unable to travel and this in turn forced the cancellation of some the planned participatory processes such as the outcome harvesting[10]. This also led to an imbalance of different sources to some extent. The evaluation was not able to reach as broad a spread of political, expert and CSO representatives as if the evaluators had visited the member states. This has resulted in a more internal than external view dominating the data.

40.   Due to limited resources and the extensive scope of the evaluation the evaluators extrapolated from a small case study that only represents the other member states in general ways. The data was treated more qualitatively than quantitatively where this impacted on findings.

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10.   Outcome Harvesting: evaluation methodology to identify, describe, verify and analyse outcomes; particularly useful when there is no clear theory of change to work with and there are multiple perspectives on the effects of interventions.

3. Findings

41.   The Covid-19 pandemic revealed that the Council of Europe, like many other national and international organisations was neither prepared nor fully equipped for a global crisis of this nature and the lockdown announced in France on the 17th March 2020. The scale of the crisis was unprecedented, and it quickly became obvious that even the international organisations best suited to manage crises such as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent, UNHCR, IOM and the World Food Programme displayed similar levels of unpreparedness. What came next provided important lessons ranging from unparalleled testing of risk and crisis management systems to organisational resilience in the form of flexibility, adaptability and creativity. For international organisations and the Council of Europe this was accompanied by the massive transfer of work online and teleworking.

3.1. Relevance: strategy and focus on crisis

3.1.1. Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 in relation to the needs of its member states

Finding 1: The Council of Europe's relevance was emphasised by the Covid-19 pandemic. Council of Europe standards were universally recognised as vitally important to tackle the challenges of the Covid-19 crisis. The Secretary General's toolkit for member states published on 7th April 2020 *"Respecting democracy, rule of law and human rights in the framework of the Covid-19 sanitary crisis"*, the Venice Commission's reports on derogation from the Convention and CPT's guidelines were particularly praised for the real added value they brought to member states' responses to Covid-19.

42.   The importance of the Council of Europe's work in relation to Covid-19 was acknowledged by all respondents during the evaluation. The many different operations ranging from the Commissioner for Human Rights, to PACE, to European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), to Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), to the ESC, to the Venice Commission and to the Treaty Office were comprehensively detailed in what they brought to member states in terms of legal expertise, detailed analysis of the effects of Covid-19 restrictive measures in the interest of public health on human rights, rule of law and democracy, and early warning of the risks of human rights abuses and violations to women for example.

> "The guidance from the CPT was extremely helpful because it draws a line and says it is a problem if you cross this line."
>
> *Permanent Representation*

43.   Interviewees from all sources repeatedly commented on the high added value and legal excellence and the focus of attention they brought to human rights, rule of law and democracy as the key qualities in relation to the Council of Europe's alignment to member states' needs in the response to Covid-19. Concerning the Council of Europe's support, more than one in four interviewed specifically referred to toolkits and one in five to guidance in their responses to questions relating to the relevance of the Council of Europe's response.

44.   All data gathered on the value added of Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 and the extent it was in line with the Council of Europe's aims demonstrate that the Council of Europe was seen to be relevant. 64% of staff believe that the response was in line with the aims of the Organisation; and this is broadly supported by the other groups of respondents.

Figure 1: Percentage of respondents from all interviews on the extent the Council of Europe response to Covid-19 met needs
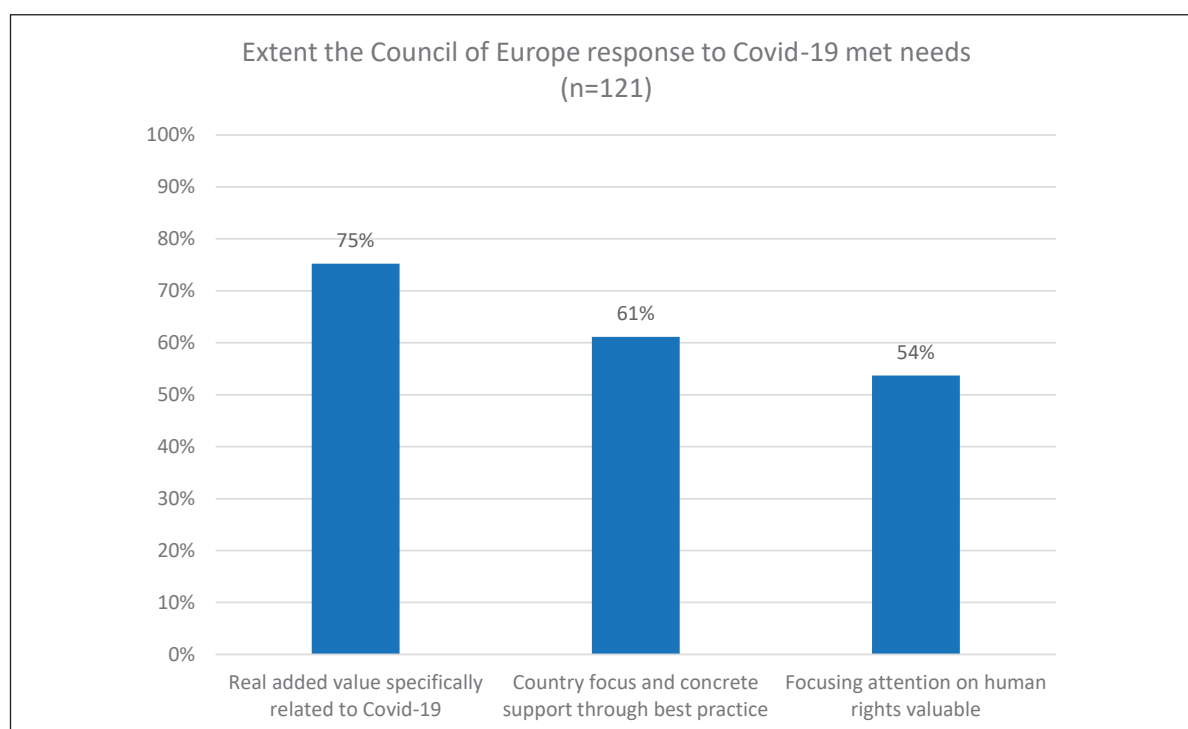
45.   Responses demonstrated the importance of the combination of political dialogue and consensus on human rights, rule of law and democracy, with intergovernmental co-operation and standard setting, monitoring and scrutiny of the protection of these standards and co-operation and technical assistance in member states.

Finding 2: The Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 focused on the Organisation's existing areas of expertise. Consequently, it benefited from the thorough quality control built into established Council of Europe mechanisms and processes. On the other hand, the response was limited to the existing operating areas of the Council of Europe within the wider, overall scope of human rights, rule of law and democracy and was not based on needs assessment through a thorough consultation of member states.

46.   The needs assessment for the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 was based on contributions from the operational entities. Directors and senior managers were responsible for determining the impact of the pandemic on the specific aspects of human rights, rules of law and democracy they deal with through their respective conventions and committees. This was then synthesised into the Secretary General's Toolkit. Initially, there was neither time nor possibility to consult stakeholders on these needs, given the urgency created by the pandemic and the adjustments required to decision-making processes and the convoking of meetings.

47.	Humanitarian needs related to the Council of Europe's area of work were only addressed in exceptional circumstances according to general agreement across the Organisation that they were neither part of the Council of Europe's mandate nor added value.

> "There was a big debate about humanitarian support, but it was decided this was not our added value."
>
> *Staff member*

48.	The question arises how to distinguish the general needs of member states and citizens during the Covid-19 pandemic from their needs relating to the Organisation's mandate and human rights, rule of law and democracy.

> "One of first things done was to rapidly draft a paragraph for the Secretary General's toolkit."
>
> *Staff member*

49.	The answer is not so straightforward, and neither are the respective roles and responsibilities of the Council of Europe and its member states in a crisis situation. The data show a range of views that challenge any specific answers being given as one interviewee stated: "our action in response to the pandemic is accompanied and supported and made credible and authoritative by our consistency with regards to conduct and the respect of values"; which can be compared with another interviewee's remark: "We don't claim to govern and if they (member states) follow advice it is their decision." It would be helpful for the distinctions between direct support to implement standards and to tackle a health crisis, and between providing a framework and helping to implement that framework to be clarified if the Council of Europe wishes to design a strategic response, determine specific procedures and manage resources in response to crises.

> "We met needs, but I don't know about expectations. Some countries are disappointed that there was not more material aid."
>
> *Staff member*

50.	There is broad agreement on what the Council of Europe should have focused on in its response to Covid-19 and this matches in broad terms what it did focus on. The different groups of respondents confirm the order of importance indicated by staff of supporting member states' respect of human rights, rule of law and democracy, scrutiny of human rights and business continuity.[11]

Figure 2: Staff survey response on expected priority areas of the Council of Europe's response and the extent they were achieved

'Expected', 'Achieved' by 'Focus of Council of Europe's response' (n=573)
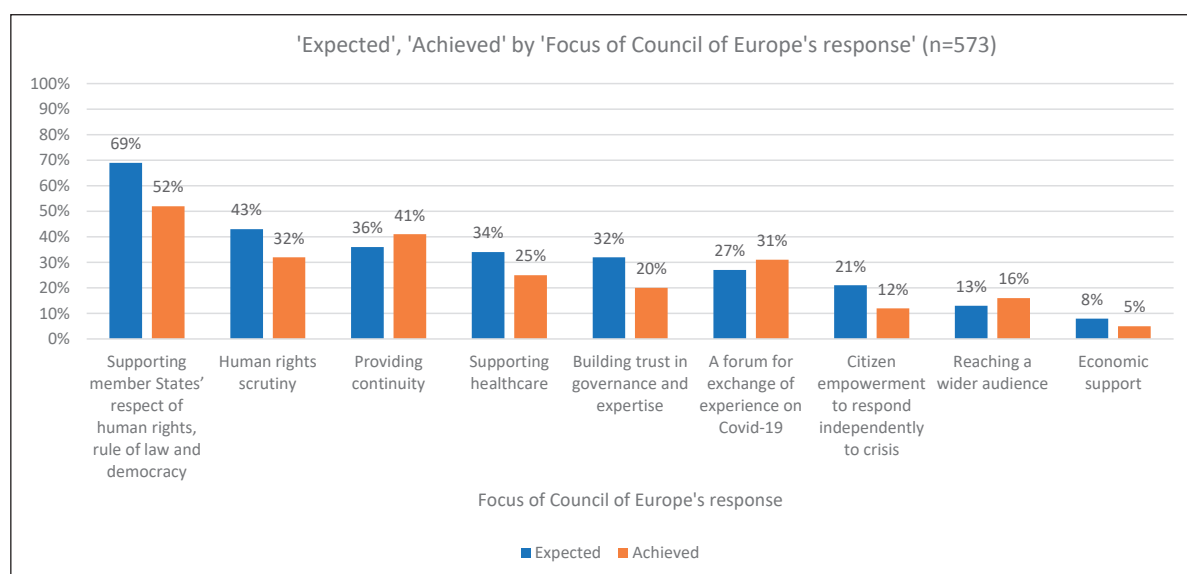
11.	These areas were identified through reiterative testing of the draft survey and confirmed by the open-ended comments related to these questions in the staff survey.

51. Members of PACE and the Congress ranked the providing of a forum for multilateral political dialogue much more prominently. The external survey also suggests that more could have been done in terms of providing technical assistance to public authorities to implement the Covid-19 guidance nor supporting vulnerable groups.[12]

Figure 3: External survey response on the extent that the Council of Europe's response met Covid-19 needs

Extent Council of Europe met Covid-19 needs in operational areas (n=43)

	Very or mostly	Not or only somewhat	Don't know
Providing a forum for multilateral political dialogue		18%	13%
Monitoring of human rights, rule of law and democracy standards		33%	8%
Acting as a watchdog against human rights abuses		37%	13%
Setting standards for human rights, rule of law and democracy		42%	8%
Supporting vulnerable groups		45%	13%
Empowering diverse social groups		53%	11%
Providing technical assistance to public sector		55%	18%

52. The alignment of the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 to needs is considered more positively within the Council of Europe and the Permanent Representations than in the case study countries. Respondents in the case study countries were less positive towards the meeting of needs, and less positive towards the Covid-19 specific nature of the response. This was sometimes expressed as a perception of the actions of the Council of Europe being more business as usual rather than tailored to specific Covid-19 needs.

Figure 4: Percentage of respondents from all interviews on the relevance of the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19

Perceived weaknesses in addressing Covid-19 specific problems at country level (n=121)

- Headquarters/Permanent representations: 17%
- Case study: 44%
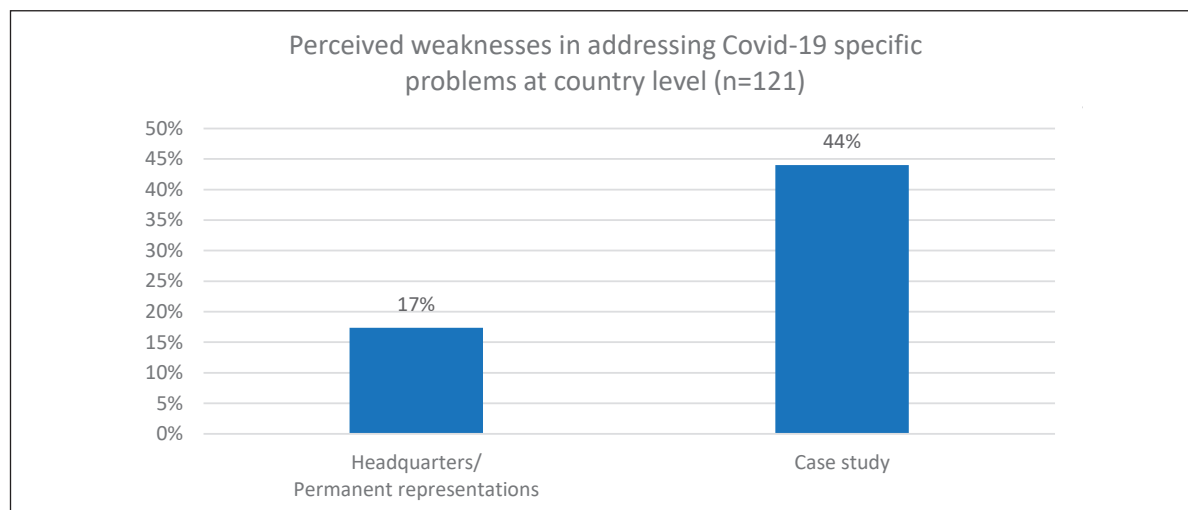
53. The variation in responses reveal how the pandemic has exposed a conceptual challenge for the Council of Europe. Ultimately the Council of Europe works at both the foundational level of human rights standards and in the encouragement of the execution and implementation of these standards. With the broadness of these principles in societies the extent of the Organisation's work is inherently relevant. Expectations for support in crisis can make this work appear abstract when it is not directly linked to immediate needs, but rather provides a basis for the protection of human rights, rule of law and democracy.

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12. The areas selected for the staff survey were adapted to the target groups of the external survey and the respective weights of response were compared in the analysis.

Finding 3: Many changes were adopted throughout the Organisation, leading to services that were active and working hard almost immediately from the beginning of the crisis. Covid-19 was integrated into the thematic work of all entities.

54. The Council of Europe's reaction to the pandemic was considered timely by nearly all respondents. The Council of Europe was able to sustain approximately 70% of its programme of activities based on the Progress review reports 2020 and 2021[13]. Due to the length of the crisis, some delays were mitigated and the Organisation was partially successful in catching up with work that was initially prevented. The main delays and re-scheduling related to monitoring.

Figure 5: Staff survey response on timeliness of the Council of Europe's advice to member states in accordance with the development of the pandemic

Timeliness of the Council of Europe's advice to member states in accordance with the development of the pandemic (n=573)

	Very timely	Mostly timely	Somewhat timely	Not timely	Don't know
	10%	42%	28%	4%	15%
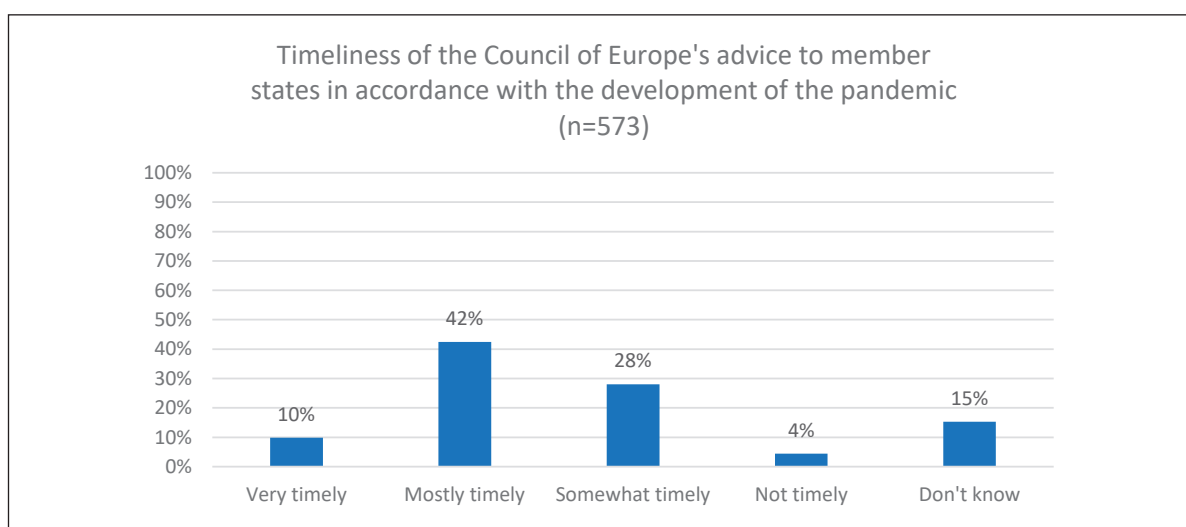
55. Adjustments were made to the Programme and Budget (P&B) after the initial period of the pandemic, according to the interim progress review in 2020. The adjustments comprised of changes to the dates and targets of indicators rather than changes in objectives and expected results. This was mostly the case also for projects where outputs and delivery modes were changed rather than the outcomes originally agreed in project proposals.

> "Every project adapted very well to Covid-19. It varied from project to project because some were less impacted than others. It was mostly a question of the nature of the types of activities the projects were doing."
>
> *Staff member*

56. From the beginning of the pandemic intergovernmental and monitoring mechanisms' committees' representatives from member states were consulted and engaged in the analysis of the Covid-19 situation. There were many questionnaires completed with diligence by representatives and returned to different secretariats. The response rates were praised and appreciated by interviewees. The surveys resulted in valuable collections of good practice that were made available to member states on specially designed websites of the Organisation.

> "The responsiveness of countries was very positive. They rarely enjoy responding to questionnaires, but they made an extra effort to respond to really get an idea about what was being tried in Europe."
>
> *Staff member*

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13. Progress review report 2020 and Interim progress review report 2021.

57. The data gathered was used to develop the P&B 2022-2025 for the Organisation, which means all sub-programmes took into consideration the post-Covid impact on their areas within the existing P&B structure.

> "All this work got institutionalised and the contents of the Covid-19 statements and declarations are now integrated into the P&B."
> *Staff member*

58. In terms of adjusting the Covid-19 response over time, PACE and the Congress produced reports at different times of the pandemic that reflected well the development of the effects of the pandemic. This was also the case with the Venice Commission examining the state of emergency first in theory and later according to member state actions. The pandemic evolved and had changing impact on health provision, vaccination, education, domestic violence, child exploitation among many. Rapid exchanges of information and data collection were constantly required throughout the crisis.

Finding 4: The Secretary General's toolkit represented an emergency strategic framework established early on, but it was used more as guidance rather than an operational framework and it was not used to reshape the overall Programme and Budget response.

59. There was early, hands-on leadership at the Council of Europe. The Secretary General reacted quickly by co-ordinating with senior management across the Organisation to analyse in detail the appropriate priorities in the response to Covid-19. This was then detailed in an often-cited toolkit that was disseminated within a month of the lockdown on 7th April 2020. This good leadership was observed by respondents and major decisions on the Council of Europe's programme were appreciated. This was predominantly among the Permanent Representations which suggests that it comprised a mostly political vision.

> "The toolkit was a real opportunity that the organisation proved its added value to some if not all member states. It did well collecting good practice and the Secretary General collected components and made them accessible to all member States faced with the crisis at the same time."
> *Permanent Representation*

60. There was strong recognition among senior managers that this guided the Council of Europe's work, but also regret amongst a significant number of others that it failed to strategically orient their work. Staff, Permanent Representations and interlocutors in member states felt this shortcoming in much higher numbers.

61. The Council of Europe's interventions were not perceived as very different either by staff or the members of PACE and the Congress. This is because the difference was mostly in format and in the association of existing content to Covid-19 rather than Covid-19 specific content. Upon questioning about the mandate of the Organisation this was felt to be broad enough to allow for different approaches. There was not enough strategic drive to adopt more responsive interventions.

Figure 6: Staff survey response on how different the Council of Europe's Covid-19 interventions were to those before the pandemic

How different the Council of Europe's Covid-19 interventions were from conventional ones before the pandemic (n=573)

Very different	Mostly different	Somewhat different	Not different	Don't know
4%	20%	42%	18%	16%
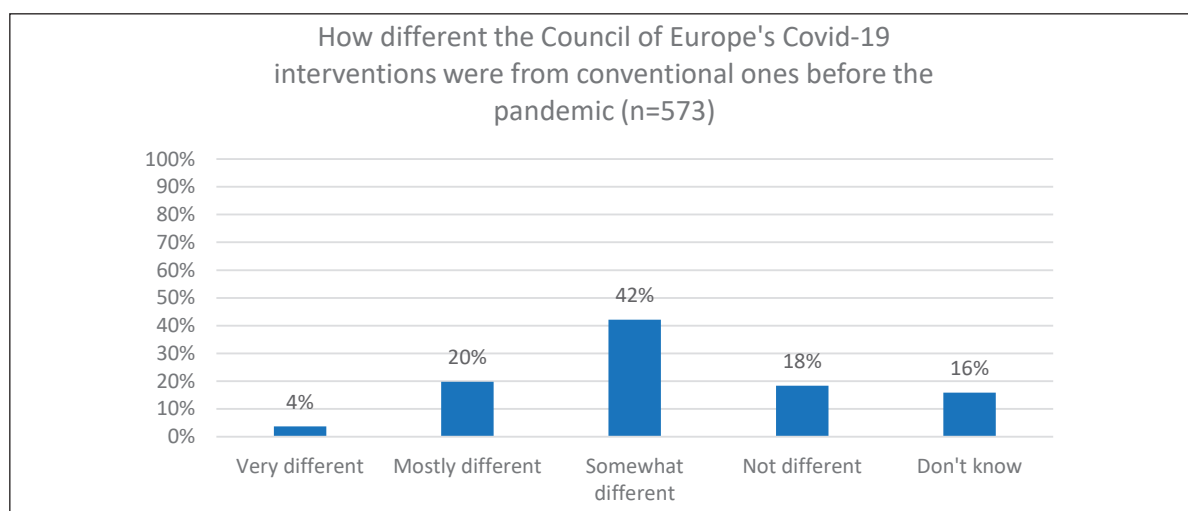
62. Early response and strategic approach are identified in the benchmarking exercise as the first two of the five key components of good crisis response (see Appendix 3, Benchmarking report). The Council of Europe's good leadership and early strategic response provided a solid foundation for the strategic approach to be built on. The basis of the strategic approach is both in establishing a clear role for the organisation and framing co-ordinated, multi-sectorial action, even though in this case it was not taken further to these stages. The benchmarking exercise highlighted the importance of Covid-19 specific response strategies such as the Global Education Coalition set up by UNESCO's Education Sector[14]. It is a consortium funded by a US$25m grant. Among its strategic objectives it aims to deliver results early, in the first six months, and to monitor these results every six months.

Finding 5: The adjustments made during the Covid-19 pandemic were predominantly changes in details within existing programmes rather than major strategic adjustments. The Council of Europe's overall focus of work in relation to Covid-19 was on observing the situation and analysing the effects of the pandemic on human rights, rule of law and democracy. Good initiatives were delivered but not always pursued actively nor at country level. The Organisation did not have the capacity to provide a multi-dimensional, needs-focused, national-level operational response.

63. The Council of Europe's work in relation to Covid-19 was on the whole more reactive than proactive, in line with the nature of the Organisation as recognised by a respondent in the case study: "In terms of substance I think the Council of Europe made an effort to give some kind of guidance with regards to measures relating to the pandemic. This is what the Council of Europe can do. It cannot give very prescriptive measures because each state chooses the measures they feel most appropriate." (National representative) Examples are the gathering and sharing of practice to tackle Covid-19 in many of the committees, especially where it concerned vulnerable groups as was the case for GREVIO, the Lanzarote Committee and the youth department. The Congress created a local hub for measures and practices gathered and also shared its recommendations on response measures with institutional partners outside the Organisation, in particular the European Committee of the Regions of the EU, for its Local and Regional Eurobarometer. Statements highlighted the risks Covid-19 posed member states to meet their obligations. Work plans were adjusted to convert activities into online ones, research was carried out and tools developed that would become useful once the lockdown ended, and some activities were simply delayed.

> "We set up on the website this collection of examples of good practice on how to work with young people during pandemic; how member States tried to find young people that disappeared at the time and get them digital means when they didn't have them and digital youth work. This was a major topic."
>
> *Staff member*

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14. Global Education Coalition, UNESCO, available at https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374364.

64.   In contrast, there were notable exceptions as the Commissioner for Human Rights focused more on her thematic work at the very beginning of the pandemic for instance, enabling the specific focus on Covid-19 and PACE committees undertook a series of reports on the impact of Covid-19 to stimulate debate in national parliaments.

> "The Commissioner's mandate is approximately 50/50 monitoring and awareness raising. Covid-19 called for more monitoring at thematic level. Therefore, that work was rapidly intensified in place of the country visits, which (at the beginning of the pandemic) couldn't happen as extensively"
>
> *Staff member*

65.   Changes were made in co-operation programmes, where work plans were revised to address the challenges of Covid-19 (e.g. in South-East Europe: Creation of digital democracy classrooms (procurement of IT equipment) to support online education; food vouchers were distributed under the ROMACTED programme, specific support was provided to some Roma; and psychosocial support was provided to LGBTI persons, who were in a particularly vulnerable situation in light of Covid-19 and lockdown.

66.   The approach of keeping within the original programme enabled the Organisation to highlight Council of Europe standards and connect to citizens, according to the external survey. But it was perceived to be weaker at prompting action that could strengthen multilateralism or a stronger rules-based international order, through first emphasising an international response by encouraging member states to underline the importance of countries working together and second underlining human rights, rule of law and democracy principles at the international level, by communicating more the guidance and reports on Covid-19. It could be the case that a more Covid-19 specific response may have improved these aspects.

Figure 7: External survey response on how well the Council of Europe took advantage of opportunities in its response to Covid-19
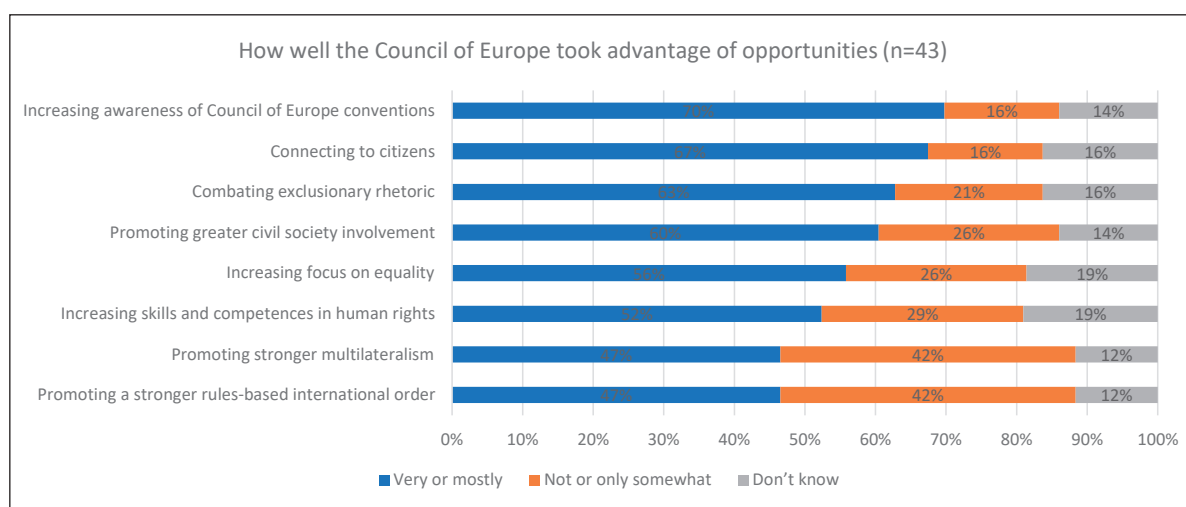
67.   As a consequence of focusing on business continuity, the Council of Europe's response was technical and specialist. In this sense, business continuity was considered important by stakeholders, whilst it prevailed over an emergency response confronted with the immediate needs arising from Covid-19. In terms of supporting member states to face the challenge of Covid-19, the Council of Europe's response was not as insistent as it could be and it was distant from the immediate challenges the member states were facing at different stages of the crisis. This also had the effect that the Council of Europe's response was sometimes isolated because it did not link up between sectors and oriented towards the Organisation itself rather than the situation.

> "Council of Europe input being technical in nature is quite valuable. Because as long as it remains technical it cannot be abused."
>
> *Permanent Representation*

Figure 8: Percentage of respondents considering Council of Europe's response not specific enough to Covid-19

Not addressing the specific problems, especially when at a country/local level (n=121)

	Managers	PRs	Georgia	Greece	Germany	Overall
	20%	0%	67%	26%	45%	29%
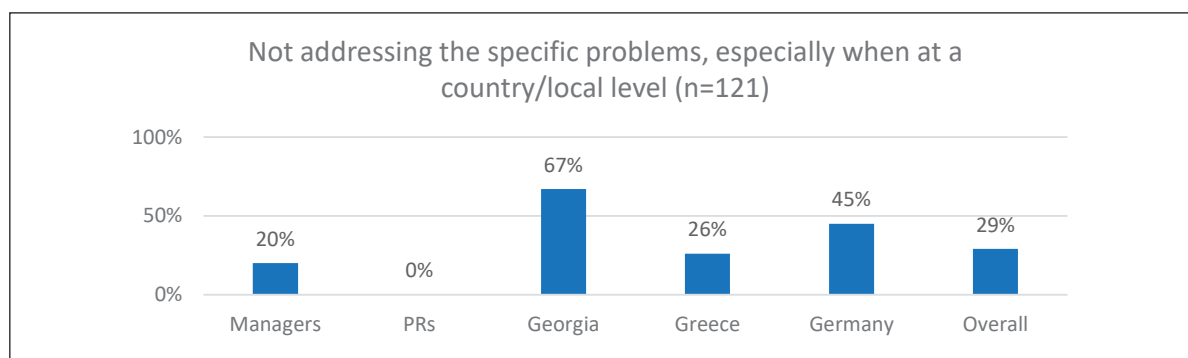
68. In terms of the situation in member states, consultants and CSOs interviewed in the case study were able to act and monitor the situation in their specific areas of expertise. They perceived a contrast in their flexibility and availability to be able to react to circumstances on the ground compared to services operating out of the Council of Europe headquarters because they were ready and able to intervene before the response was issued from headquarters. The reactivity of the field office in Georgia was recognised at the same time. The Council of Europe has a wealth of access points to critical information related to human rights, rule of law and democracy in its member states through its fully operation-alised connections with governments and ministries, but also through its networks of consultants and CSOs. In an emergency it would be useful to make use of these extended networks more, recognising the exceptional circumstances. In order to do so crisis management levels could be triggered to justify adjustments in programme approaches that perhaps have less rigour but are more responsive.

> "As an institution, in relation to consultants working for the Council of Europe, that was much slower. That had to do with the Council of Europe closing down physically. Everybody working from home and that took much more time and still I don't know if the Council of Europe has adapted."
>
> *National representative*

69. The crisis was permanently changing and the pandemic impacted on different aspects of the Council of Europe mandate at different times. For an effective response, organisations are required to con-stantly take the pulse and readjust not only at activity-level but also at programme level, for which there is little evidence at the Council of Europe. Although, changes are not entirely dependent on the Council of Europe but also on the needs expressed by beneficiaries and donors the Organisation has examples of practice indicated above that provide greater flexibility and could examine how to adopt these practices more widely.

3.2. Effectiveness: championing human rights, rule of law and democracy in crisis

3.2.1. Stakeholders perception of usefulness of the Council of Europe's activities in response to Covid-19

Finding 6: The Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 was perceived as useful, concrete and practical, including providing material support to member states to protect human rights, rule of law and democracy faced with the pandemic.

70. In this question, the focus is narrowed down directly to Covid-19 specific effectiveness, not the effective-ness overall of the Organisation during the pandemic. In this respect, the quality of the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 was maintained and recognised by stakeholders. The Covid-19 specific outputs were in the form of guidance, toolkits, advice, and assistance, which all examined the Covid-19 context in order for member states to maintain compliance with the relative standards of the Organisation to the fullest extent possible (for more detail see also Appendix 9: Mapping of Council of Europe outputs in response to Covid-19 examined by the evaluators).

Figure 9: Percentage of respondents consulting outputs, finding them of material benefit and finding them useful

Usefulness of Council of Europe Covid-19 specific outputs (n=121)

- Guidance, toolkits, documents were consulted
- Outputs were found practical and of material benefit
- Usefulness was appreciated

	Managers	PRs	Georgia	Greece	Germany	Overall
Consulted	36%	50%	56%	22%	27%	36%
Material benefit	46%	40%	61%	35%	0%	41%
Useful	36%	70%	56%	26%	45%	40%
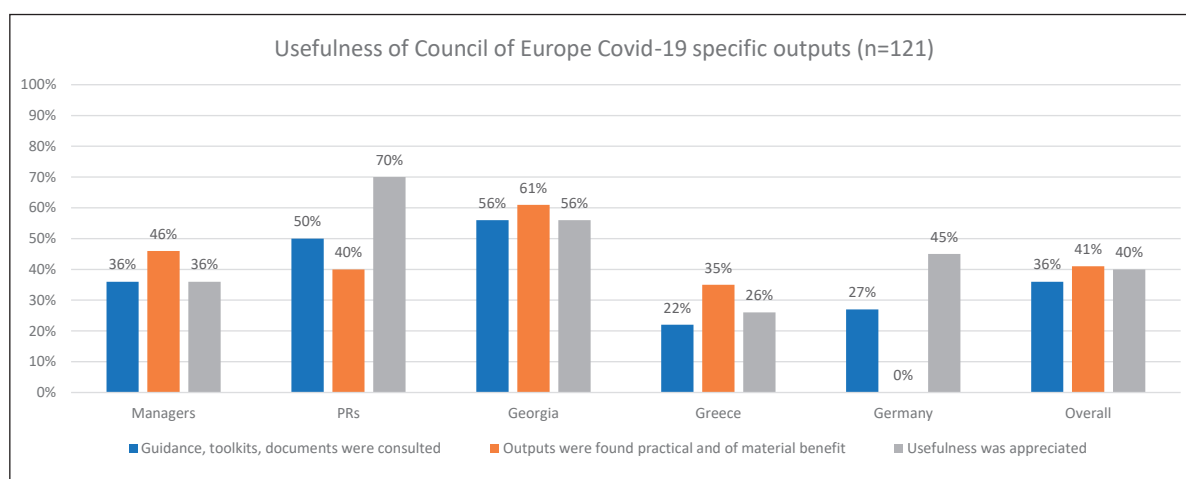
71. The difference between Georgia, Greece and Germany can be explained by the fact that co-operation projects are implemented through a field office in Georgia. Respondents in Georgia reported more specific work directly targeting their country than respondents in Greece did. In turn respondents in Greece reported more specific work directly targeting their country Greece than respondents in Germany did.

72. Comments on the usefulness of the Council of Europe's work were much more positive than negative. This was the case across all data sources.

Figure 10: Ratio of positive comments on usefulness of Council of Europe's response to Covid-19

Positive to negative ratio of comments on usefulness of Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 (n=121)

	Managers	PRs	Georgia	Greece	Germany	Overall
Negative	4%	2%	2%	9%	22%	5%
Positive	96%	98%	98%	91%	78%	95%
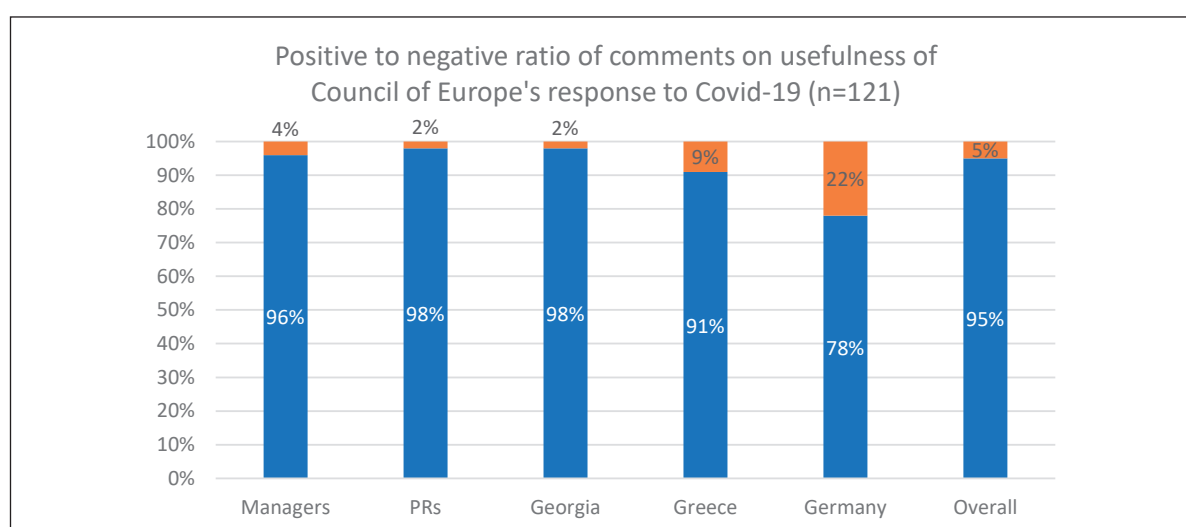
73. As far as reported there were no standards set specific to Covid-19, nor was there such a need. Moreover, the length of the pandemic, although continuing, was too short to warrant any specific standard setting. At the same time there would not have been enough time to carry out the Council of Europe model of standard setting, although some comments indicated standard setting could be accelerated under certain circumstances.

74. In general, monitoring procedures sought to maintain the agreed cycle rather than carry out exceptional monitoring related to Covid-19 in particular. As with standard setting, fully compliant procedures were not possible for most mechanisms during full restrictions on travel and even otherwise, when country officials were unavailable for meetings due to teleworking regimes in place. The only way to achieve some form of monitoring would be to accept a temporary derogation from the fully compliant procedures. Possibly this could have been considered to address very targeted Covid-19 related risks such as domestic violence, child exploitation, cybercrime, human trafficking, disinformation and

freedom of expression etc. as identified in guidance issued by different committees of the Council of Europe, through monitoring that would never aspire to the rigour, credibility and legitimacy of fully compliant monitoring.

> "We felt that one of the unique features of monitoring is that it is not a paper exercise, we go and speak to stakeholders concerned, and fact finding means something. That acquis is very precious…"
>
> *Staff member*

75. The Council of Europe prompted political debate on the challenges of complying with human rights, rule of law and democracy standards whilst tackling the health crisis, covering legal, social, economic, and political perspectives in particular (also see Appendix 9: Mapping of Council of Europe outputs in response to Covid-19 examined by the evaluators).

> "PACE managed to deliver what was expected by members. 10 reports were adopted covering different aspects of Covid-19: health, migrants, etc. The focus on different issues was very timely. The reports provided an extensive coverage of Council of Europe expertise, serving to remind parliamentarians, who do use it in their legislation,"
>
> *Staff member*

76. A slight shortcoming of the Council of Europe's set of advice, guidance, statements, reports was that they were seen as theoretical due to their technical and specialist nature, in line with the high-quality expertise of each specific area in the Organisation. This meant that, whilst high quality and highly relevant in terms of Council of Europe standards, they sometimes appeared disconnected and not easily associated with the overall response to Covid-19. This shortcoming was raised in the comments of approximately 10% of respondents both internally and externally.

77. All elements of the Council of Europe's strategic triangle provide useful instruments to tackle crisis. They are most useful when they are adapted according to strict prioritisation and targeting in order to respond to concrete needs relating to the crisis.

3.2.2. Effectiveness of Council of Europe actions in member states' responses to Covid-19

Level of yield of outcomes from Council of Europe outputs and actions

Finding 7: There was only a small number of outcomes from the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19. The concrete tangible support given only reached small numbers, or the messages and guidance only reached small and specific audiences that did not have the capacity to use them given other priorities related to the pandemic.

78. The overall number of specific examples of outcomes of the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 was not high, averaging one example per positive comment regarding the results stemming from Covid-19 outputs. These examples tended to be small steps taken, such as some consideration of guidelines, whilst there were exceptions that reveal the potential of the Organisation's response, as one interviewee indicated: "Another group of countries found the feedback very helpful and useful, one member state reported that they were making real use of the guidance in their capital." (National representative).

> "We did have quite a limited programmatic response if you put it that way."
>
> *Staff member*

79. Evidence of the scale of results in member states was very scarce, which may be a consequence of the limited overall resources of the Council of Europe being shared across a very broad range of sectors and bodies.

> "I understand that the Council of Europe has limited resources, but still the funds received in Georgia were for around seven organisations, each for a very good cause and they did a great job, but seven projects is a very low number among hundreds needing support to continue their work in the community during Covid-19: much more support is needed."
>
> *National representative*

80. At the same time, member states and their permanent representations recognise the effects of the Council of Europe's Covid-19 response more than staff and Council of Europe managers. This is especially the case in Georgia and Greece, where Georgia finds the effects more direct than Greece. Heads of offices shared this tendency in comparison to Strasbourg. Such effects represent the yield of the Council of Europe Covid-19 specific outputs, demonstrated by the direct and indirect outcomes of these outputs.

Figure 11: Percentage of respondents recognising direct and indirect implementation of Council of Europe outputs related to Covid-19

Yield of Council of Europe outputs related to Covid-19 (n=121)

Direct implementation of Council of Europe outputs — Indirect effects of Council of Europe outputs, contributing to actions in member states
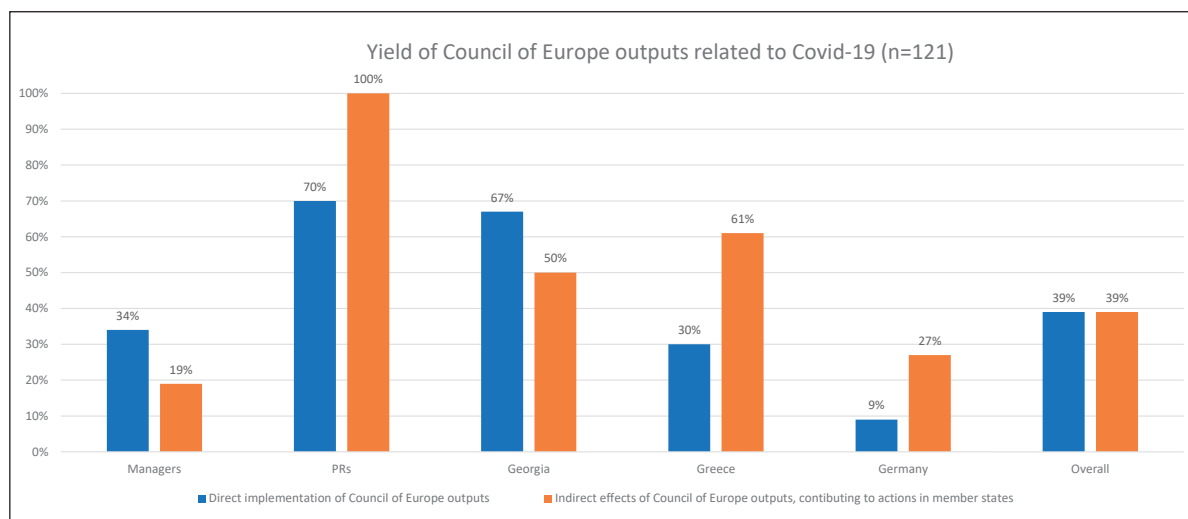
81. Georgia stands out from the other case study countries in the appreciation of the Council of Europe's influence in general and more specifically at the technical and ministerial level. This can be attributed to the presence of a field office in Georgia that acts as a conduit for the Council of Europe in general and through co-operation work in particular. Similar comments from other field offices supported this evidence, as one interviewee stated: "On some of these issues the Council of Europe's profile was raised. In the social charter people normally think of EU and UNDP, and rights of children and protection of children on net. Police are looking at and quite interested in learning about the standards. People are looking for tools and the Council of Europe is able and ready to assist." (Staff member)

82. There was little evidence of information presented internally at headquarters about the extent of measures taken drawing on Council of Europe work on Covid-19 aspects of human rights, rule of law and democracy, with little information proposed or provided on these aspects by managers, staff or Permanent Representations. little attention seems to have been paid to obtaining evidence, particularly from the perspective of crisis management and responding to the crisis. All the same, there are exceptions, as some comments reveal close monitoring of direct contributions to outcomes, particularly of co-operation work.

> "The Roma and Traveller unit was working intensively with the access to health services thematics right before the Covid-19 crisis began (thematic meeting between Latvia, Spain, North Macedonia, IMO and Finland) in November 2019) and I know this thematic report helped national contact points to advocate for better Covid-19 mitigation efforts in the communities in question."
> *Staff member*

83. Clearer links are needed between the Council of Europe's actions in crisis and how they take effect in member states. These links can be established through a stronger results framework specific to a given crisis based on results-based management that tracks the evolution of outcomes from actions and outputs. Rapid strategic development needs to be adapted to crises situations to target and prioritise the crisis response. Progress on responding to previous evaluations on results-based management[15] and strategy development and reporting provides the basis for this adaptation.

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15. Evaluation of results-based management management response and action plan; Evaluation of strategy development and reporting management response and action plan.

Level of intergovernmental co-operation throughout the Covid-19 crisis

Finding 8: There was co-operation and partnership both between the Council of Europe and governments and with other international organisations. At the same time existing relationships built into the Organisation's working methods were relied upon more for business continuity than a specific crisis response. International organisations' co-operation and partnership efforts contributed to the effectiveness of all of their responses.

84. The benchmarking report, see Appendix 3, demonstrated how co-operation and partnerships are an important element of a good crisis response.

> "Establishing and maintaining co-operation and partnership with a range of stakeholders was crucial in ensuring coherence, effectiveness and complementarity. Organisations strengthened and leveraged existing partnerships, and fostered new relationships, including with other organisations, governments, and the private sector. Organisations demonstrated great generosity, sharing their tools, expertise and lessons learnt."

85. Such partnerships exist at several levels, whilst in parallel, the functioning of the presidency of the CM at the Council of Europe, has similar aspects leading to extensive partnership work with different sectors of the Organisation during each six-month period of the presidency.

86. Domestic violence was a particular case in point at the supranational level where the combined effort of the Council of Europe and the UN served to emphasise the obligation to protect women.

> "I think that the opportunity that the Council of Europe has is that it can very quickly react to contraventions of conventions. One of our colleagues reported a contravention of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) during the period and there was a very quick response from CEDAW and by GREVIO. While the responses didn't stop the law from being voted it did make an impression in Greek society about the violation of human rights and the role of bodies of the Council of Europe."
>
> *National representative*

87. The Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 included more attention to international co-operation than normal according to all the data sources, although in terms of details this was not as marked as the co-operation and partnership identified in the benchmarking report.

Figure 12: Staff survey response on the extent the Council of Europe encouraged more international co-operation among member states during Covid-19

Extent the Council of Europe encouraged more international co-operation among member states during Covid-19 (n=573)

Much more than usual	5%	
More than usual	33%	
Neither more nor less	32%	
Less than usual	5%	
Much less than usual	1%	
Don't know	25%	
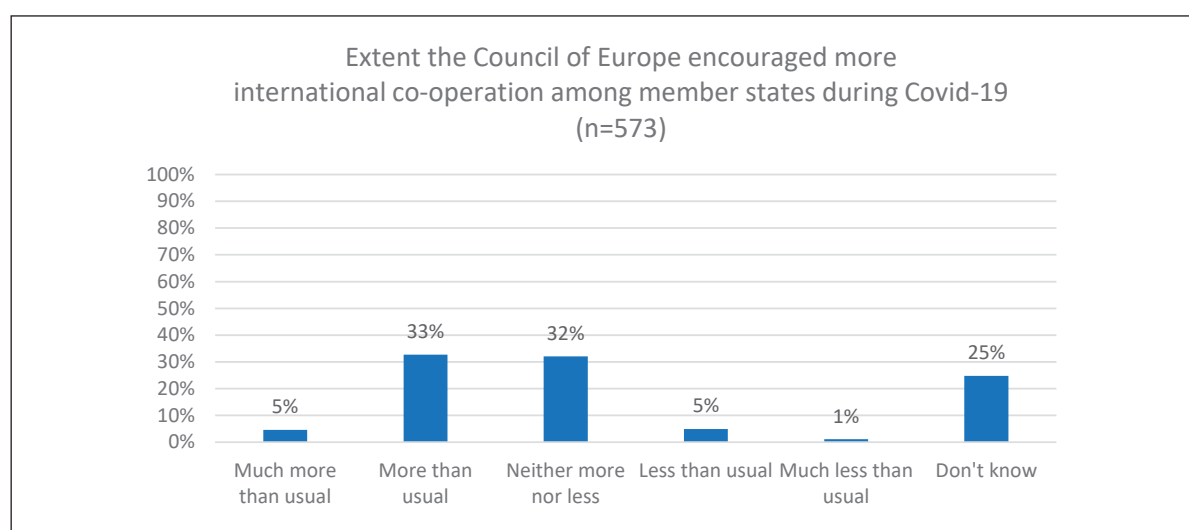
88. The specific enquiry into the focus on international co-operation led to some comments confirming this aspect of the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19. This was less seen as a call for multilateral responses as specific attention drawn to multilateral issues, mostly reflected in intergovernmental exchange at the political and technical administrative levels.

Figure 13: Percentage of respondents recognising Council of Europe efforts for more international co-operation during Covid-19

Co-operation and partnership (n=121)
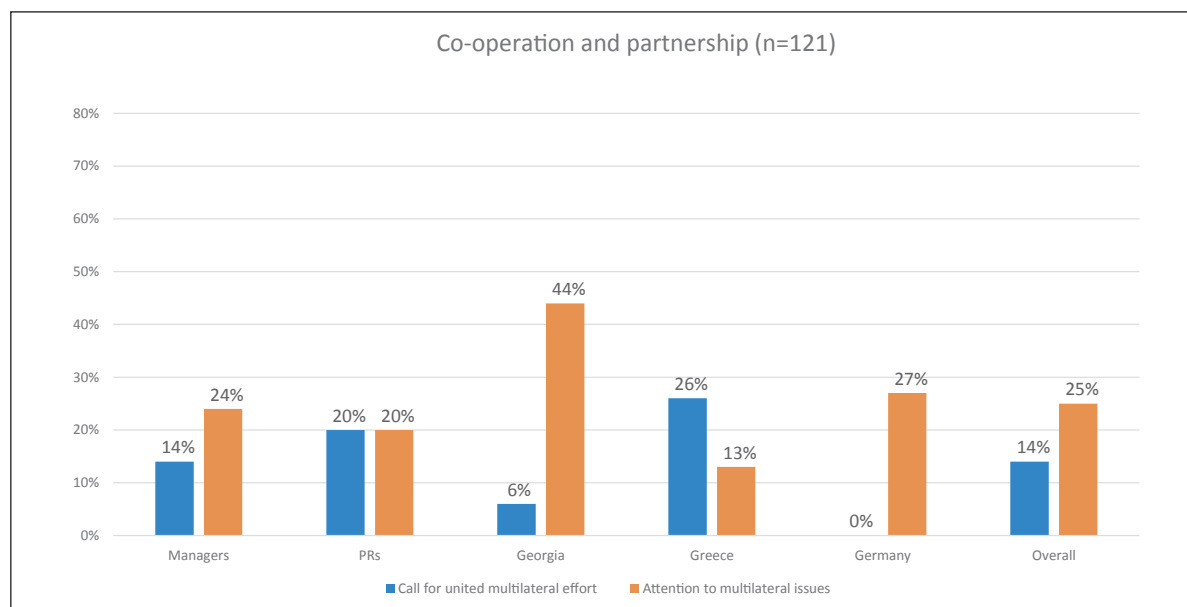
89. In particular, the mapping exercise, see Appendix 9, provides evidence of international organisations working together to issue joint statements and to promote joint campaigns. The effectiveness of co-operation was highlighted in many interviews.

> "The statement issued urging states not to neglect child abuse and child exploitation during the pandemic was taken up by various organisations. UNICEF, WHO, alliances of international NGOs so it became mainstreamed. We can be a little proud that this early response by Council of Europe contributed to creating a momentum in the wide acceptance that exists and leads to the additional strengthening of child protection."
>
> *National representative*

90. There was also a high profile for Council of Europe's work from the perspective of EDQM and the international co-operation focused on maintaining the effectiveness of the pharmaceutical and vaccination programmes to tackle Covid-19, extending beyond the Organisation's member states.

> "It highlighted the need for international collaboration and working together on these issues. This was high on EDQM agenda in any case. Much more looking beyond Europe than other services do."
>
> *Staff member*

91. There are many examples of the Council of Europe contributing to other organisations' work, where Council of Europe standards are used as a basis, a tool to strengthen lobbying for human rights, rule of law and democracy, or an impetus to develop mechanisms. At the same time the Council of Europe tends to make the standards and tools available rather than to actively engage in partnerships to support implementation beyond technical assistance through co-operation development. The majority of evidence of the most tangible contributions to respond to Covid-19 from a human-rights, rule of law and democracy perspective reveals that partnerships like those mobilised for co-operation development are the most effective in responding to crisis.

> "The Council of Europe guidelines and interventions were a useful tool in order to circulate and influence the state authorities that they had obligations to take measures for the protection of these persons."
>
> *National representative*

92. To sum up, there are important benefits to partnership and international co-operation in responding to crisis. Engaged in more extensively and tactically according to a crisis response strategy, they could strengthen the Council of Europe's main messages, amplify its results and reinforce resources responding to the crisis.

> "One activity that we conducted jointly as the government because of Covid-19 within the part of communication campaign on domestic violence during Covid-19 was because we realised that not enough people might have information based on how the government approach has changed, if at all, during Covid-19. So, with the Council of Europe we organised talks on women's rights – and held conversations. We brought key stakeholders from the government and NGOs to cover different aspects of the changed reality, be it psychological aspects or social, or literally just how to reach out to shelters. It was successful: we received feedback from random citizens that they did listen through the sessions and valued the information received. And we could see from the questions we received live the interest was quite high and that showed that we need to do more communication."
>
> *National representative*

3.2.3. How were member states' own efforts supported by the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19?

Degree of contribution of Council of Europe's response to member states efforts

Finding 9: The Council of Europe's response was considered to have had both a direct and indirect influence on some of the member states' measures to tackle Covid-19, in the sense of strengthening the human rights, rule of law and democracy standards of these responses. Stakeholders reported some institutions and policies basing parts of their Covid-19 responses on thematic areas and work of the Council of Europe during the pandemic.

93. There were noticeable outcomes resulting from the Council of Europe's influence in supporting member states' efforts to respond to Covid-19 in line with human rights, rule of law and democracy standards. This was considered generally the case in Georgia and Greece, with most emphasis on this effectiveness in administrative practices. This suggests that the Council of Europe was able to influence its primary target groups of line ministries. This was supported by the Permanent Representations' prevalent appreciation of the direct contribution of the Council of Europe's response to such measures.

94. There were notable improvements in certain areas such as the situation of detained persons. Health measures were adopted to better protect detained persons against Covid-19 infection. In a small number of cases, personal protective equipment was directly supplied to prisons. Attempts were made to reduce prison populations to reduce the risks of contracting the virus, leading to less crowded prisons. This is an example where the basis for human rights is stated by the Council of Europe and member states act in response. The combined effect is a tangible improvement in human rights.

> "It was quite different from before and Europe probably suffered less from the pandemic through these results in prisons. USA, Latin America saw much worse fatality rates from Covid-19 in prisons. The CPT statement really helped."
>
> *Staff member*

95. Parliamentary working methods adopted by PACE were observed and considered in national parliaments, though not always adopted due to specific limitations in the national contexts.

> "I tried to persuade our [national] parliament to adopt the electronic vote even when the vote is confidential, not technical problem but more political decision, because we have a different pattern in our parliamentary practice, not best in my opinion to adapt to Covid-19."
>
> *Staff member*

96.　Small numbers of youth non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were able to continue operations due to grants issued by the youth department.

> "One thing I'd say it was one of the first responses of the Council of Europe:
> the very early decision of European Youth Foundation to issue specific grants
> April/May to youth organisations to address Covid-19."
>
> *Staff member*

97.　Measures were adopted in many areas the Council of Europe works on, with respondents making the association to Council of Europe interventions. For example, measures were collected to prevent domestic violence during lockdown, and there were instances reported of such measures presented in the Council of Europe being examined elsewhere as a result. There was no evidence found that increased rates of violence or abuse due to the pandemic were reduced due to Council of Europe guidelines, but guidelines were used as a sort of quality control, as indicated by one interviewee: "But mostly for their better understanding of the measures taken in Europe to see if our situation was good enough and if measures were appropriate in Greece. More a kind of comparison of what happened in other countries and Greece."

98.　Courts were keen to adopt online proceedings based on Council of Europe guidance from European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ).

> "Online court management relies on expertise from each other. Very
> concrete tools. At end 2020, CEPEJ was late/delayed on their targets and
> indicators and now during first 6 months of 2021 they got many requests to
> use their tools because they are particularly relevant."
>
> *Staff member*

99.　In the case study there was a higher ratio of positive to negative assessments of the extent the Council of Europe contributed to a better response among member states in Georgia and Greece, than in Germany. Staff also perceived this slightly more positively than members of PACE and the Congress. Nonetheless, as stated before, this was only to a small extent.

Figure 14: Staff survey response on the extent human rights aspects of Covid-19 measures improved due to the Council of Europe's interventions
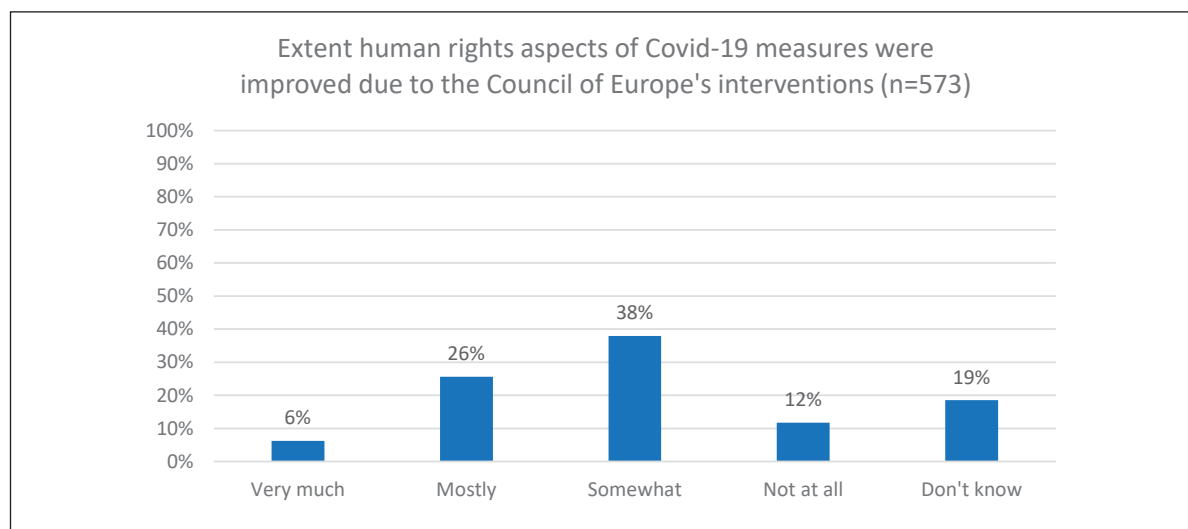
100.　The members of PACE and Congress also reflected the staff and general interview responses regarding the amount of influence the Council of Europe had in promoting a better response among member states to Covid-19. In all cases there is room for improvement, although the amount of resources available and the impact of the pandemic itself should be borne in mind.

Figure 15: External survey response on the amount of influence the Council of Europe had in promoting a better response among member states to Covid-19 from the human rights perspective

Amount of influence the Council of Europe had in promoting a better response among member states to Covid-19 from the human rights perspective (n=43)
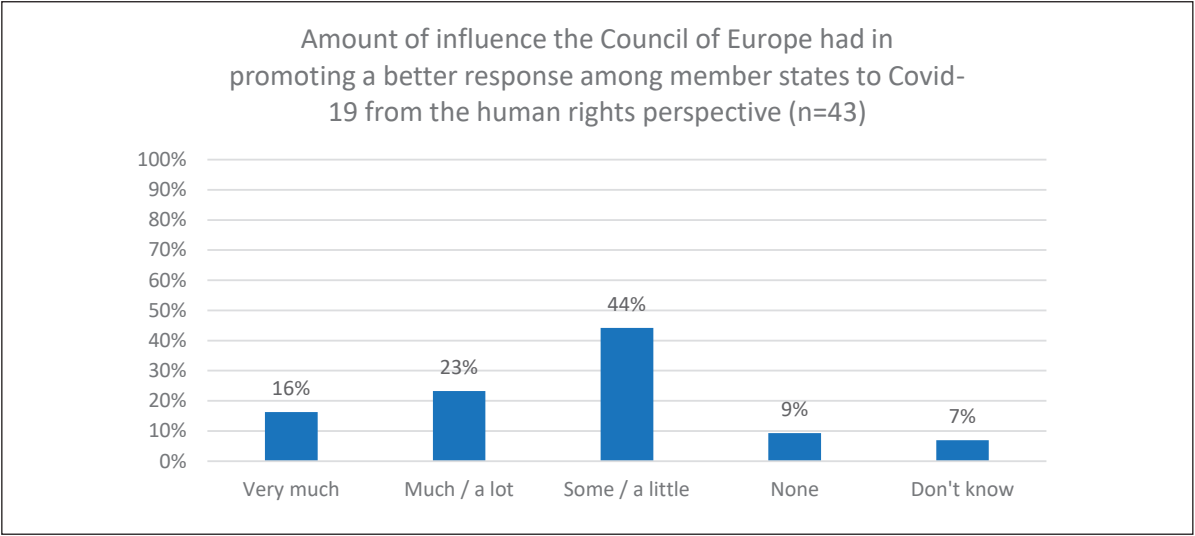
101. It was generally reported that the Council of Europe needs to push for initiatives to be taken up more by being more vocal. There was a role to play for communication, which needed to be instrumentalised to strengthen the Organisation in times of emergency. Part of the emergency response required was to bring attention to the importance of human rights, rule of law and democracy. The messages from different parts of the Organisation were given, but they tended to remain with direct contacts. The Secretary General's toolkit was reported on by government officials, and respective committees' statements were mentioned by their interlocutors. A corporate communication campaign would have been needed however to push these messages beyond their immediate target groups. These views were particularly prevalent in the case study.

> "I cannot recall any direct measures from the Council of Europe's side. Many efforts were done in Strasbourg but I didn't see it had voice or echo in Georgia."
>
> *National representative*

102. Influence needs to be enhanced in crisis because it is overcrowded by emergency responses and different actors raising a whole range of concerns. Some respondents described the difficulties to prioritise in these circumstances, for example: "The question of priority, these studies might have influence on our work and political decision, but other issues might be higher on the ranking list of influencing factors. One challenge might be to get these studies, the results, the work of the Council of Europe into the focus of national administration to achieve a higher rank on the list of priority." (National representative).

103. All aspects of the Council of Europe's strategic triangle were effective in influencing member states' responses to Covid-19. Approaches need to be explored to intensify these outcomes through targeted communication and awareness raising of Council of Europe's instruments and how they can support member states and citizens in crisis.

Level and quality of monitoring by the Council of Europe of member states' human rights obligations

Finding 10: Stakeholders in member states occasionally stated that there was not enough scrutiny of the human rights, rule of law and democracy situation during the pandemic. This was mostly linked to not covering all the aspects of human rights, rule of law and democracy and not having enough authority to properly scrutinise human rights.

104. According to some respondents in the case study, there was not enough monitoring of the situation on the ground. More than half the comments from respondents in Greece and Germany in particular,

were negative on this point. This was most linked to a lack of coverage of human rights, rule of law and democracy issues and sometimes a lack of power to properly scrutinise human rights.

> "The Council of Europe does not have coercive means, thus these mechanisms cannot impose decisions or determine policies introduced by member states."
>
> *National representative*

Figure 16: Percentage of respondents that considered the level of scrutiny of human rights during the pandemic

Level of scrutiny of human rights specific to Covid-19 (n=121)

- Not enough scrutiny of human rights
- Specific human rights focus appreciated
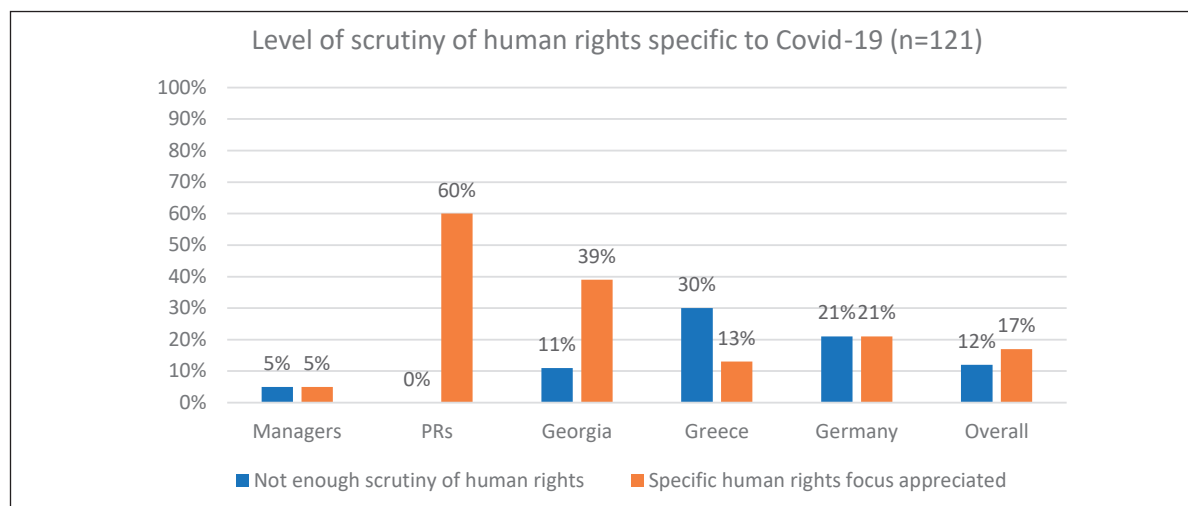
105.   At the same time, there were generally similar levels of appreciation of the focus on human rights during Covid-19. This point was remarked upon by more than half of the interviewees from Permanent Representations, and also a significant number in Georgia.

106.   On some occasions, the Council of Europe was perceived not to be urging its guidance to be taken into consideration, nor covering enough of the aspects of human rights, rule of law and democracy that member states' responses needed to consider.

> "I think much more was expected from the Council of Europe role as a watchdog against human rights abuses which have been taking place due to emergency decrees that often didn't respect the values set out in the Convention. Especially, as they were taking place in both new and old democracies."
>
> *Staff member*

107.   A sizable group of respondents indicated the need to increase scrutiny because of the crisis, in the sense that exceptional circumstances call for exceptional response. One interviewee stated: "But Covid-19 was not business as usual and would lead to further human rights and democracy violations, nowhere near as equitably represented. In terms of using position to address member state violations it was not enough, except the Commissioner for Human Rights who has been notable and good" (Permanent representation); and another commented: "In this kind of crisis situation, human rights organisations and instruments, especially monitoring ones should be even more mobilised and scrutinising than usual." (National representative).

108.   It was felt that there was the possibility for the Council of Europe to have increased its monitoring, not least because the Organisation has extensive networks in member states. Respondents suggested that the Council of Europe could have closely documented what happened in member states as a consequence of the pandemic, by using the contacts the Organisation has on the ground as observers.

> "The Council of Europe could have done much more effective monitoring work, since there are programmes that have been implemented on the ground and there are people in the country as part of their job or because they do in practice monitor the human rights situation and barriers, police violence, violations and things like that. Since we are on the ground and monitor this. The Council of Europe could have more effectively monitored these types of issues."
>
> *National representative*

109. There are many expectations of Council of Europe monitoring and scrutiny of human rights, rule of law and democracy and these are even more heightened at times of crisis. If the Council of Europe could present the role it plays in scrutinising its standards in an easily understandable way, telling the story of how it does it and what that achieves during crisis especially, it would be more appreciated in member states.

3.3. Efficiency: use of resources in responding to crisis

3.3.1. Maximisation and optimum co-ordination of resources in the Council of Europe responses to Covid-19

Level of productivity during Covid-19

Finding 11: The Council of Europe was productive during the pandemic period proving its capacity to continue to operate through teleworking and being limited by restrictive travel regimes.

110. The mapping exercise, see Appendix 9, shows that there was intensive work on the Covid-19 impact on the different programme areas of the Organisation in the first six months. This gradually reduced over the next two half-years as the Covid-19 impact was integrated into mainstream work. This means that the Organisation will be able to tackle the effects of the pandemic in the coming years. The proportion of work in each MAE corresponded with the different sizes of each MAE. The greatest focus was on analysis of the impact of the pandemic on member state obligations with 82 reports on respecting standards when faced by the Covid-19 crisis and 45 outputs of guidance, declarations and statements.

Figure 17: Mapping chart of Covid-19 specific outputs

Covid-19 specific outputs from the mapping exercise

Legend: CM, PACE, PO, CommHR, Congress, DGI, DGII
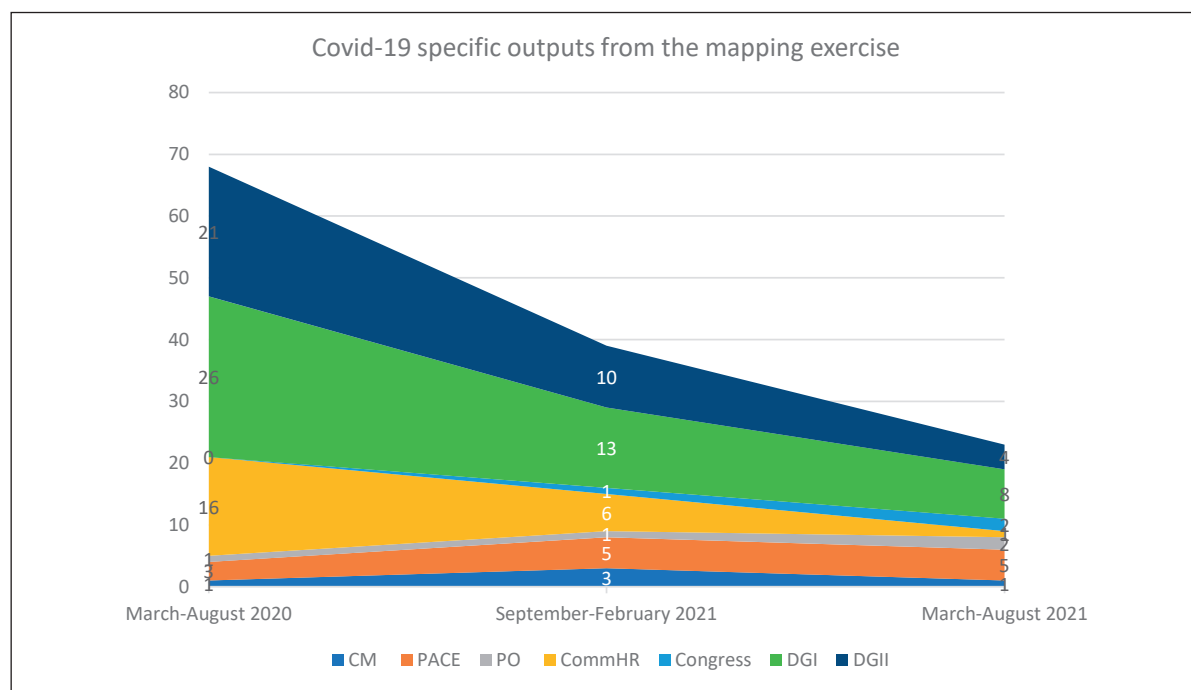
111. At the very beginning of the pandemic, meetings were cancelled due to the initial completely debilitating effects of lockdowns. Certain aspects of the Council of Europe's operations, such as monitoring, were brought to a complete standstill at first, and then only partially implemented either virtually or during windows of opportunity to visit physically. The staff continued to work partially in expectation of the pandemic ending sooner than it did and responding to the immediate prompt to adjust work plans in accordance with the lockdown.

Figure 18: Percentage of respondents' most frequently stated types of Covid-19 outputs

Most frequent types of outputs mentioned (n=121)

Legend: Toolkits / Guidance ■ Political advice / Recommendations / Influence ■ Surveys / Analysis ■ Campaigns / Visibility
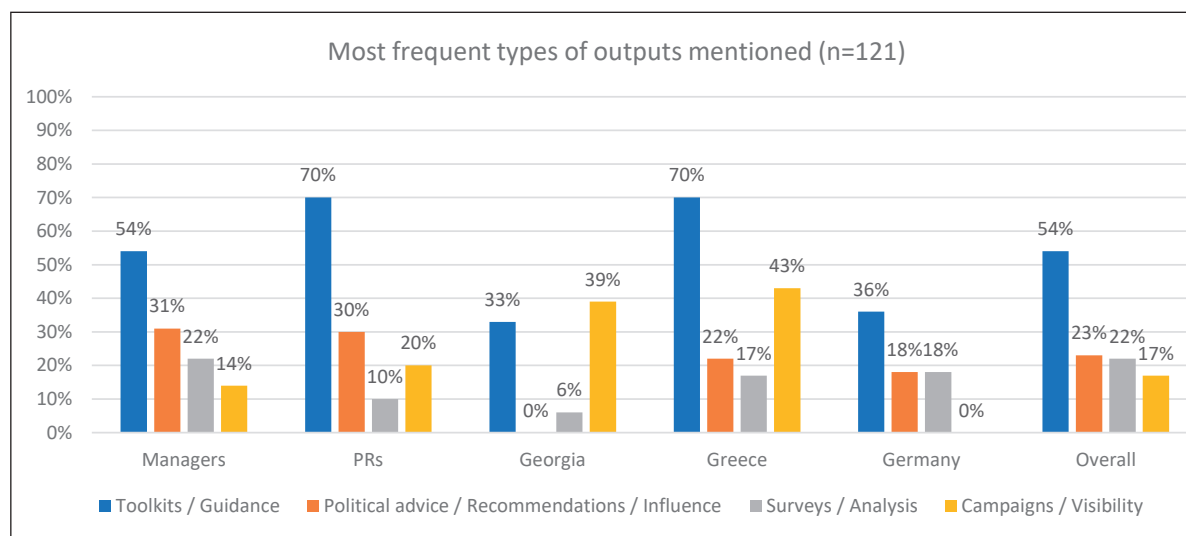
112. There were few occasions when ad hoc mechanisms were adopted to enable visits, the exception being CPT. Monitoring was rescheduled after the worst stages of lockdown in different parts of Europe, whilst in some cases election observation and monitoring by the Congress and Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights were carried out online.

113. There were very good response rates to surveys and questionnaires by member states and their respective ministries and representatives specifically on Covid-19. These enabled detailed analysis and identification of good practices by monitoring bodies and intergovernmental committees. As a result the Organisation further broadened its knowledge base on important human rights standards in the context of Covid-19 and crises in general. The sharing of practices was repeatedly stated as an excellent product of the Council of Europe's response in nearly all the sectors consulted and explicitly so by the Georgian and Greek members of intergovernmental and monitoring committees.

114. PACE and the Congress produced detailed research and recommendations co-ordinating very well with the specialist services in DGI and DGII. The political weight and emphasis were widely understood and appreciated.

115. Covid-19 specific work was additional to the routine work of the Organisation, for which the work programme was achieved by approximately 70% during the period of the evaluation, according to targets met in the Progress Review Reports. This involved significant variations between cost lines, but not significant variations between programmes of the Programme and Budget. A large part of the underspend of approximately 9% was transferred to later budget periods, both during and beyond the time frame of this evaluation, to invest in new technology to support online work, and to attempt to catch up with delayed work and maintain the overall programme at the same time within the next four-year budgetary cycle.

116. There was a cost of maintaining operations to continue delivering the Council of Europe's mandate throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and a small part of the Organisation's budget had to be devoted to upgrading equipment and adapting working spaces. The combination of business continuity and the Covid-19 specific response over the period, revealed an impressive level of productivity, with a focus on producing meaningful outputs as listed in the mapping exercise in Appendix 9. This supports the general comments captured neatly in one particular response that "There wasn't any spending of money for spending money's sake." (Staff member).

117. All the same, there was underspend and results in the regular programme could not be achieved. At the same time the progress reporting was on an exceptions basis of what was not achieved rather than what was achieved. As the original programme and budget, prepared prior to the pandemic, was not oriented towards Covid-19, this meant there was no performance reporting that was specific to the programmatic response to the pandemic.

> "Colleagues have been amazing, extraordinary, and have reached so many results. But the fact is they haven't spent as much money. We would have reached much more results in other circumstances."
> *Staff member*

118. The Council of Europe has not specifically monitored performance nor reported on it in respect of the Covid-19 work overall but rather through reporting on individual programmes. Donor reporting was carried out for the extrabudgetary sector. It is not possible to directly measure therefore the overall productivity. Evidence gathered for the evaluation suggests good use of resources and good value for money, whilst appreciating that in some cases costs were incurred simply to maintain operations by adapting working spaces, IT equipment and online software, as reported in the support costs expenditure in the progress review reports.

> **Finding 12:** The Council of Europe worked entirely within its existing budget, both from the Organisation's regular resource (Ordinary Budget) and donor funding (Extra-budgetary resources). In the current set up and with the constraints of the pandemic situation, the Organisation would not have had sufficient capacity to absorb additional resources. The pandemic demonstrated that there is a possibility to mobilise significantly increased resources to respond to crisis, in turn strengthening and expanding the donor base, should that be called for in a more strategic response. Doing so would be reliant on the implementation of recommendations made in this report.

119. The analysis of the budgetary management accounts during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic revealed variations in expenditure by cost type and underspending in nearly all programmes. There were no significant budgetary transfers from operational programme lines. Covid-19 directly contributed to this overall underspending.

120. The reporting structure of the organisation followed the regular compliance reporting of achievement of the programme and budget through progress review reports mid-year and at year end. These included some narrative on Covid-19 and descriptions of the impact of Covid-19 when it affected original targets and caused delays. There was no specific official reporting on the results of the overall Covid-19 response.

121. The comments made suggest that more could have been done in terms of communication. However, the staff worked at their maximum capacity, based on the outputs observed there was no wasted efforts or resources. Similarly, based on the administrative task of managing the crisis, the administrative work output also suggests there was resources were put to good use. In terms of performance, the common services and general administration delivered 80% of their programme, with the remaining 20% delivered but with Covid-19 mitigation applied.

> "There was lots of creativity employed to find ways to do it. It's a pity we were unable to provide more. We were once again able to demonstrate that we can be very responsive."
> *Staff member*

> "It stretched the team and the budget, there are limits to what we can do."
> *Staff member*

122. In order to better manage the response-specific work, results-based management to capture targets and performance related to Covid-19 at outcome level was needed. In addition, the assessment of the impact on workload cannot be accurately done because the results relating to Covid-19 are not measured and combined with the regular P&B. This could potentially have a negative impact on wellbeing since the amount of work involved is not fully captured. The quote demonstrates the difficulty to measure the balance between duty of care and work delivery.

> "But for us, what is the extent of the duty of care and the balance between operations: very little balance."
> *Staff member*

123. ODGP carried out extensive Covid-19 specific monitoring in order to report to donors. Covid-19 results were incorporated into logframes to link Covid-specific outputs with the project objectives. This served as a good model for adopting a strategic crisis response in project work.

124. In addition to these considerations on managing performance, the benchmarking report, (see Appendix 3), highlighted how humanitarian organisations significantly developed fundraising to respond to Covid-19. Putting aside the difference in mandates to purely consider fundraising during a crisis, the Council of Europe would need to first fully rethink its existing P&B resources through greater adjustments to

different programme lines. Then a more responsive approach could be considered through additional fundraising. A simple direct benefit of this approach could be the potential to broaden the donor base.

125. The Council of Europe was not able to fully use its budgetary resources during the pandemic. This is partly explained by the impact Covid-19 had on operations, reducing travel, preventing the holding of major events including plenary sessions face-to-face. It is also explained by the fact that there was no real attempt to adopt a crisis-specific response beyond the regular programming of the Organisation. Flexibility in practice and protocols to budgeting and programming would need to be considered in order to respond more directly to future crises.

> **Finding 13:** There was good communication and internal co-ordination in terms of health considerations and working arrangements, but this was somewhat limited in relation to the programmatic response to Covid-19. Good practice in other organisations highlighted the importance of strengthened internal co-ordination that enabled multi-sectorial approaches and contributed to the effectiveness of responses. In the case of the Council of Europe crucial links and connections between different stakeholders were missing in terms of a programmatic response. A programme crisis response team modelled on good practice in other organisations would be able to make these links and connections.

Degree of co-ordination between Council of Europe actions

126. There are mixed messages about the internal co-ordination and communication during the pandemic. The Senior Management Team was quickly tasked with co-ordinating and communicating about the health consequences on the working arrangements in the Council of Europe. Covid-19 focal points were designated for each MAE who met on a monthly basis and shared the key information throughout the pandemic. Together good communication was ensured on the procedures teams should follow to work, to arrange meetings, to consider missions and approve them when viable, and to enable external participants to attend events.

127. In addition, the goals and objectives of the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 were well understood by the majority of staff according to the survey.

Figure 19: Staff survey response on how clear the goals and objectives were for the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19

How clear the goals and objectives were for the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 (n=573)
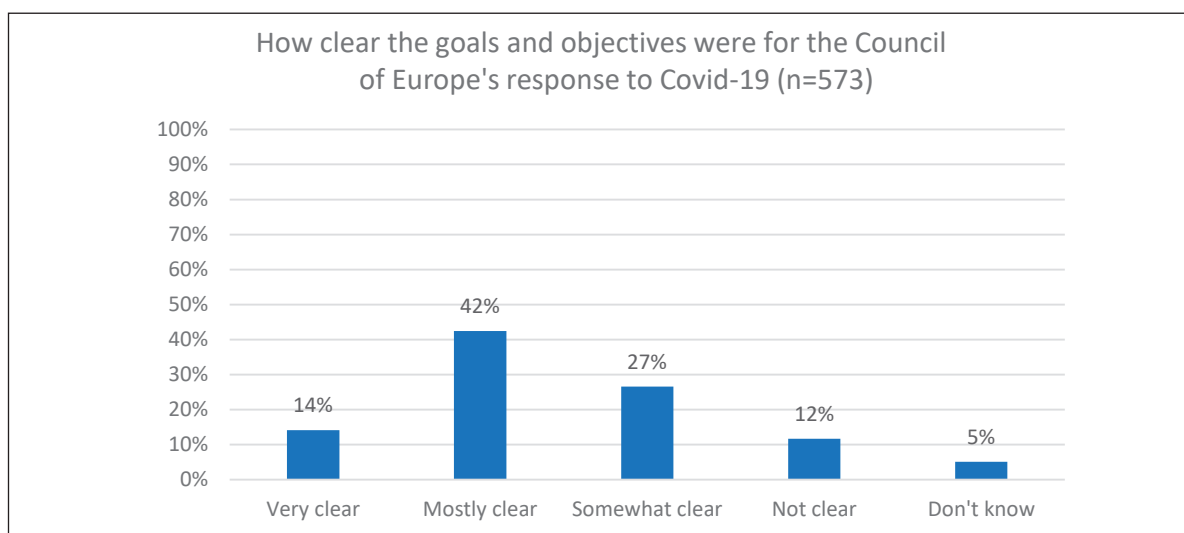
128. However, the majority of comments by staff assessed the communication and co-ordination of the programmatic response to Covid-19 as poor. A typical example was stated in the optional comments of the survey: "Our weak point is again communication (internally for clarity of deployed strategy and externally for not being able to make the tools / toolkits more visible to citizens of the member states)."
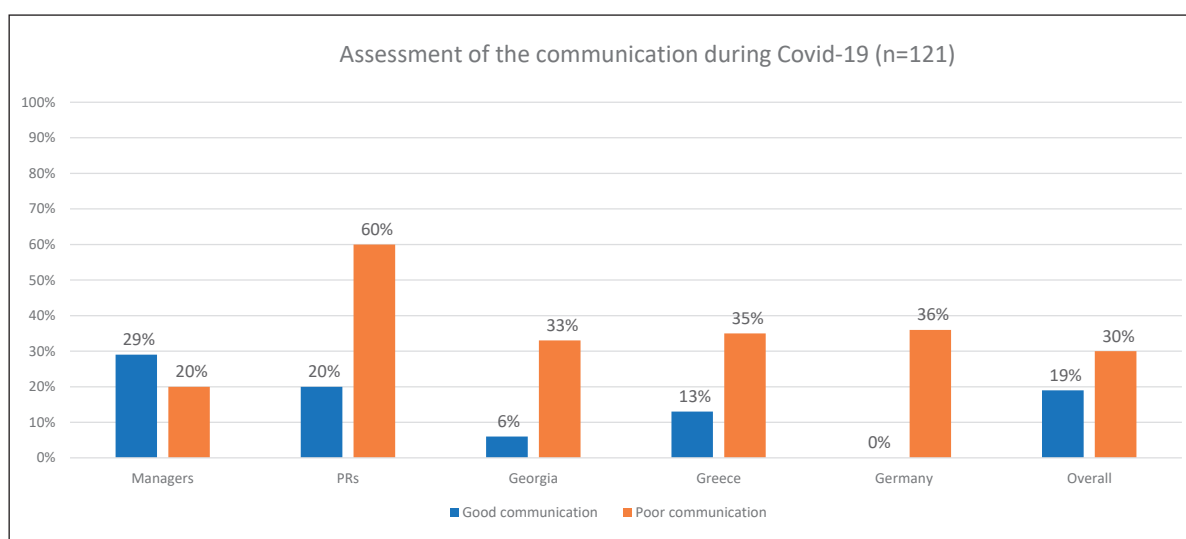
129. It was felt that communication between teams and divisions was good, but at higher organisational levels it became weaker. As a result, time was not spent in the most efficient way.

> "It is a matter of communication and co-ordination. We were forced into silos because everything broke down. We needed to substitute communications, co-operation, but could only do that within the directorate and directorate general. Many approaches developed in the directorate were then also at the Directorate General (DG)-level. But they didn't exist for a long time in the entire organisation."
>
> *Staff member*

130. There are examples of good co-ordination and communication. PACE and Congress committees used good contacts with counterparts in DGI and DGII with a wealth of references to the operational DGs' work in their reports. Similarly, co-ordination at the very highest level was presented as positive during the pandemic, as one interviewee stated: "The leaders agreed common statements e.g. on Belarus there were 2 or 3 joint statements by the leaders of the two statutory bodies and the Secretariat *(PACE, CM, SG)*." (Staff member).

131. As indicated in the quote above regarding visibility, the overall impression of the communication by managers was better than among permanent representations and in the case study. The higher numbers of managers relate to logistical aspects rather than the programmatic ones though, since when it is broken down between categories the majority positive opinion is based on administrative measures. When it comes to communication on human rights, rule of law and democracy and the quality of communication the assessment is 50/50 among managers. Comments in the staff survey were 2:5 ratio positive to negative, reinforcing the external view.

Figure 20: Percentage of respondents assessing the Council of Europe's communication during Covid-19 as good or poor

Assessment of the communication during Covid-19 (n=121)

	Good communication	Poor communication
Managers	29%	20%
PRs	20%	60%
Georgia	6%	33%
Greece	13%	35%
Germany	0%	36%
Overall	19%	30%

132. It was a very similar picture for co-ordination although the disparity between managers and staff is even starker (staff ratio of positive to negative comments was 1:3). The high percentage of managers considering the co-ordination good brought the overall view almost to parity.

Figure 21: Percentage of respondents assessing the Council of Europe's co-ordination during Covid-19 as good or poor

Assessment of the co-ordination during Covid-19 (n=121)

Managers: Good co-ordination 75%, Poor co-ordination 49%
PRs: Good co-ordination 0%, Poor co-ordination 40%
Georgia: Good co-ordination 0%, Poor co-ordination 6%
Greece: Good co-ordination 22%, Poor co-ordination 30%
Germany: Good co-ordination 0%, Poor co-ordination 64%
Overall: Good co-ordination 41%, Poor co-ordination 40%

■ Good co-ordination ■ Poor co-ordination
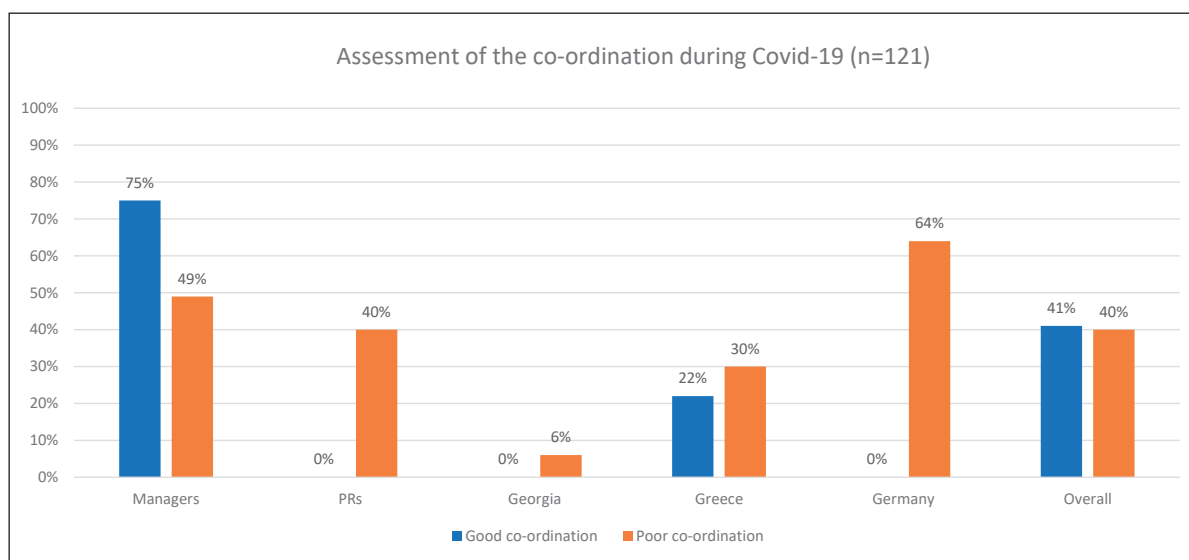
133. The case study revealed a difference between member states which can perhaps be explained by the existence of a field office. The comments from Greece (30% of respondents) and Germany (45% of respondents) almost entirely focused on the lack of connection and influence of the Council of Europe in these member states. There were fewer negative comments about the co-ordination in Georgia, whilst the communication reflected the desire for more influence on human rights, rule of law and democracy issues in the country similar to those heard throughout the case study. The direct support of the field office was commented on positively when it comes to co-ordination.

> "The biggest part for the Council of Europe, there is always this problem to explain what this organisation means. It's not active enough in communication, self-representation."
> *National representative*

> "With the involvement of the Council of Europe office representatives we amended these documents and adapted to the new rules. And the office helped us a lot in different projects with new methods."
> *National representative*

134. There was a challenge to co-ordinate field offices during the pandemic that was mostly down to the nature of the pandemic, with different situations at different times in different parts of the continent. Direct support to field offices was appreciated, but there was sometimes a view that the functioning of the offices was compromised due to heavier restrictions that related to the situation in France at the time. In fact, the crisis tested the Council of Europe model as a hybrid of a centralised system based at the headquarters in Strasbourg, with a number of decentralised operations relating to external offices devoted to implementing projects in the main, but also for running programmes and partial agreements and liaising with other international organisations.

> "The fact that the crisis was mostly managed at national level seemed to help the adjusted response at least for HQ. But this was not properly or timely co-ordinated for external offices acting in different national contexts. Differences and nuances were a source of confusion and mostly of inaction."
> *Staff member*

135. As a consequence, the opportunity to get closer to member states and to provide more concrete support specifically in relation to the pandemic was missed. This is reflected in the comments made about the effectiveness of the Covid-19 response.

136. There was not enough internal communication and co-ordination at the programmatic level. The efforts to increase transversality and enable more work between entities are important and need to be stepped up. There need to be ways to strengthen this in times of crisis.

Finding 14: The external communication flow and feedback was not adequate in terms of the programmatic response. There were excellent instances of significant amounts of information being collected, in the form of good practices by institutions and authorities provided to intergovernmental and monitoring committees for instance. The Council of Europe did not have the systematic processes of communication and feedback flows that are essential to ensure greater effectiveness.

137. The Secretary General's toolkit served as a needs assessment at the universal level, but it was not suited to capture the individual needs of member states. A more responsive approach would need to take advantage of the hybrid model of the Organisation, appreciating the value of the knowledge and data available from external offices. This could enable a crisis response to target relative needs more at different times and in different contexts. There is a wealth of such experience from the co-operation development work of the Organisation that could be called upon.

138. Once more, the good communication on the health impact, restrictions and impact on work procedures was recognised, but this cannot replace a strategic process to focus on results.

> "This crisis task force was a logistics task force, not a programmatic one. It was steered by the need of how many computers, how many glass divides, and how many people could be physically present (rather than what should be targeted in the response to Covid-19)."
>
> *Staff member*

139. There were no feedback loops to adjust content in terms of the emergency. Existing monitoring of the Organisation's strategy focused on business continuity in the sense of what delays there were to original programme and budget expected results and what mitigating actions were being taken to continue to deliver the programme and budget. Stability and resilience are equally important and require both catching up and adjusting formats, which were communicated well and successfully achieved through the hard work of DPB. Little evidence was found of assessment of the effectiveness of Covid-19 specific toolkits, reports, guidance. The exception was a follow-up report by the Venice Commission on states of emergency, which enabled a vital assessment of the situation.

> "The Council of Europe response to Covid appeared very insular, speaking to itself without taking into account the changed global context, with the result that its recommendations were effectively ignored by member states"
>
> *Staff member*

140. Certain bodies and instruments allow for requests and ad hoc monitoring, including the Venice Commission and this enabled a direct form of needs assessment that was missing and preventing the direct connection with stakeholders, highlighted by the case study and overall respondents' comments.

> "The Council of Europe was not there in reaction to all this. The link even in the areas that are the traditional domain – antidiscrimination, racism, detention and torture. In the response side this is not there. We realise this even more during the Covid period."
>
> *National representative*

141. The Council of Europe would improve its external communication and feedback flows if existing tools such as request mechanisms could be put into wider practice. There also needs to be systematic follow up and transfer of information back to member states with emphasis. This would further enhance the data collection of practices and avoid the impression that the Organisation hoards information.

Finding 15: The Council of Europe demonstrated a natural resilience to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This was attributed to the commitment and flexibility of staff and the level of autonomy and independence of different services. It would be important to maintain this strength while seeking to improve more systematic resilience.

142. Two aspects of the Organisation were revealed time and again faced with the Covid-19 crisis. In spite of the many challenges to work under difficult conditions, staff were resourceful, motivated and committed. This was spontaneous, without any particular systematic or structured management response. Managers praised this engagement in describing staff performance during the crisis. They also assessed their own support and management positively thanks to frequent contact and close observation of staff's situations. The crisis and resultant motivation of staff also resulted in a stronger sense of solidarity in the work force.

> "The management had to trust in staff and let the staff make decisions at their level. This even improved the quality of our responses in our team."
>
> *Staff member*

> "Staff lost limits of the day which is more dangerous. My role was more to stop them. It was absolutely clear that commitment and engagement in their work during the crisis went above and beyond reasonable expectations. This served as proof of their values and the commitment of staff to the Organisation."
>
> *Staff member*

Figure 22: Staff survey response on extent of change in staff solidarity during the pandemic
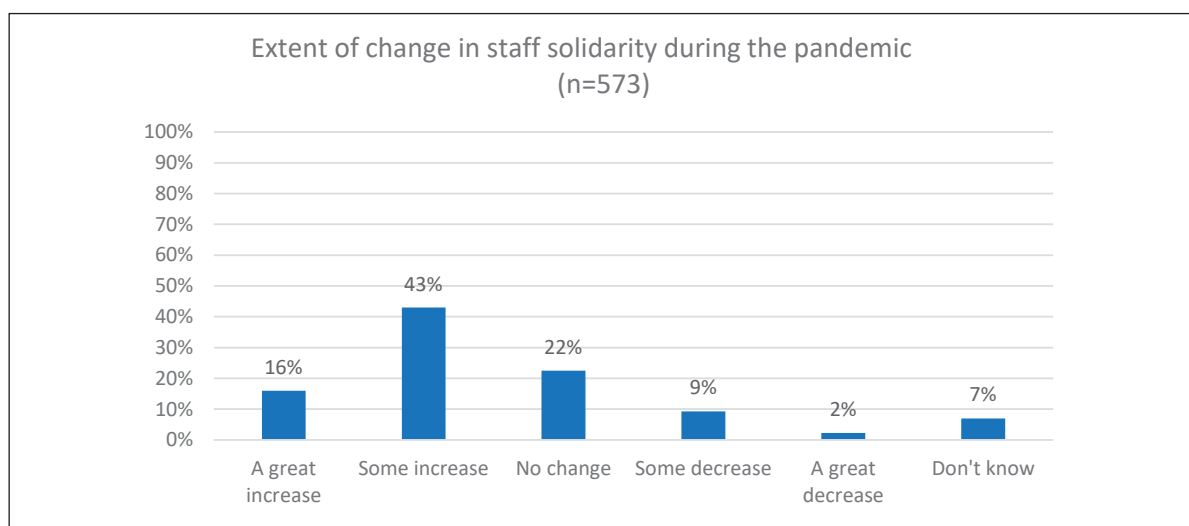
143. Actions were taken with autonomy, within the organisational structure and its corresponding hierarchies. This did not necessarily align with an organisational-level Covid-19 specific response. This had two effects, first, initiatives were taken that were very tailored and specialised, and highly appreciated for their quality, and second, initiatives were somewhat fragmented and failed to become pieces in a greater whole. Even though this fragmentation resulted in the perception of limited effectiveness mentioned previously, staff dedication and the loose co-ordination with significant degrees of autonomy in each sector enabled business continuity and prompt, though unco-ordinated responses. This compensated for the lack of organisation-wide crisis preparedness.

> "I think we were slow to respond and very scattered. All units, divisions, and departments had their own things depending on the time and willingness of staff to do it."
>
> *Staff member*

144. Mandates are broad and provided this flexibility to work independently within different committees. This enabled an organic reaction, that was often suited to the developments of the crisis and evolving situations. Consequently, it contributed to a natural resilience that ensured the quality and relevance of work carried out during Covid-19.

> "We departed from the programme that was prepared and adopted before anyone ever knew that might happen. but we did not depart from the mandate of the organisation, or even directorate or respective programmes' mandates. We had to adapt, accelerate, select, reorganise, reprioritise. Going back to it, I don't know in what ways we could do many things more differently. As an organisation we had a little bit of difficulty in actually recognising the amount of work and response that happened even very early on."
>
> *Staff member*

145. It is important to find ways to maintain the natural resilience and introduce systematic, corporate resilience at the same time through clearly defined strategy and stronger communication and co-ordination. The flexibility that enables this natural resilience is essential and additional procedures or authorisation would also hamper the natural resilience. A strategic framework that maintains the autonomy in the crisis situation could achieve this by co-ordinating actions better whilst avoiding reducing the flexibility.

Finding 16: There were examples in the co-operation field of consultants working for the Council of Europe who were able to provide direct support to vulnerable groups in difficult to access areas. These examples demonstrated the potential for networks of experts, consultants and civil society to engage in more country-specific responses.

146. In co-operation projects there were several examples of grants to civil society organisations. For example, assistance was provided to vulnerable groups in the context of Covid-19, through a small grant scheme with a Georgian NGO. This was also the case for the European Youth Foundation, making grants available specifically to support youth organisations tackling the impact of Covid-19, which was signalled, moreover, in the case study. A consultant in the case study described how they were able to monitor the impact of Covid-19 on vulnerable groups through the adaptation of the project they worked on.

147. These cases represented opportunities to have more access on the ground and ultimately provide even more tangible support to citizens.

> "We, the national teams and consultants of the Council of Europe adapted fairly fast, given our capability and the challenges. Especially facilitators adapted pretty fast, we found ways to maintain contact with the community."
>
> *National representative*

148. The clear advantage of project and field office work in member states in response to Covid-19 was that it provided additional flexibility to quickly adapt to emerging emergencies. At a more systematic level this would mean a stronger focus on external consultants and civil society organisations. At the same time managers expressed concern at the damage to quality and credibility of the activities of the Council of Europe if there is extensive outsourcing, and indeed this is a risk for the Organisation in terms of the quality and legitimacy of its expertise. Once again this underlines the importance of establishing exceptional procedures and clear stages with objective criteria for determining when these procedures should come to an end.

> "So other CSOs feeling breaches in access to human rights for communities were reporting these to me and I was reporting this to the Council of Europe: monitoring the human rights situation."
>
> *National representative*

> "We did an important number of different things (additional guidance instruments, horizontal review of monitoring findings, visit preparations etc.) in place of what we couldn't do, or outsource, and we did not spend all the money on monitoring visits. This allowed us to profit from this time and it was welcomed by member States. It will be difficult to show that we need to go back, since we have created expectations that we can do things, which we cannot do normally."
>
> *Staff member*

149. There is a rich potential of expertise in the field in external offices, among consultants and CSOs, to make more direct contact with stakeholders and target groups. This was not taken advantage of in any systematic way during Covid-19. It would provide the essential link to the direct needs of target groups threatened by crisis and challenges to human rights, rule of law and democracy standards.

3.3.2. New working methods in the response to Covid-19

Evidence of new working methods and tools used

> **Finding 17:** There were real benefits and real limits to the tools and mechanisms provided to deliver the Council of Europe response to Covid-19 online. The benefits were not fully exploited due to the lack of adjusted strategy, whilst the limits resulted from poor tailoring to different needs and single options of software.

150. The Council of Europe, like many international organisations, experienced a major change in working methods due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Performance reports reveal an explosion in usage of remote working, online meetings and distance participation. The Organisation's Progress Review Reports 2019, 2020 and 2021 reveal that the total numbers of videoconferences and participants grew exponentially.

Figure 23: Pandemic impact on number of events and number of conferences 2019-2021
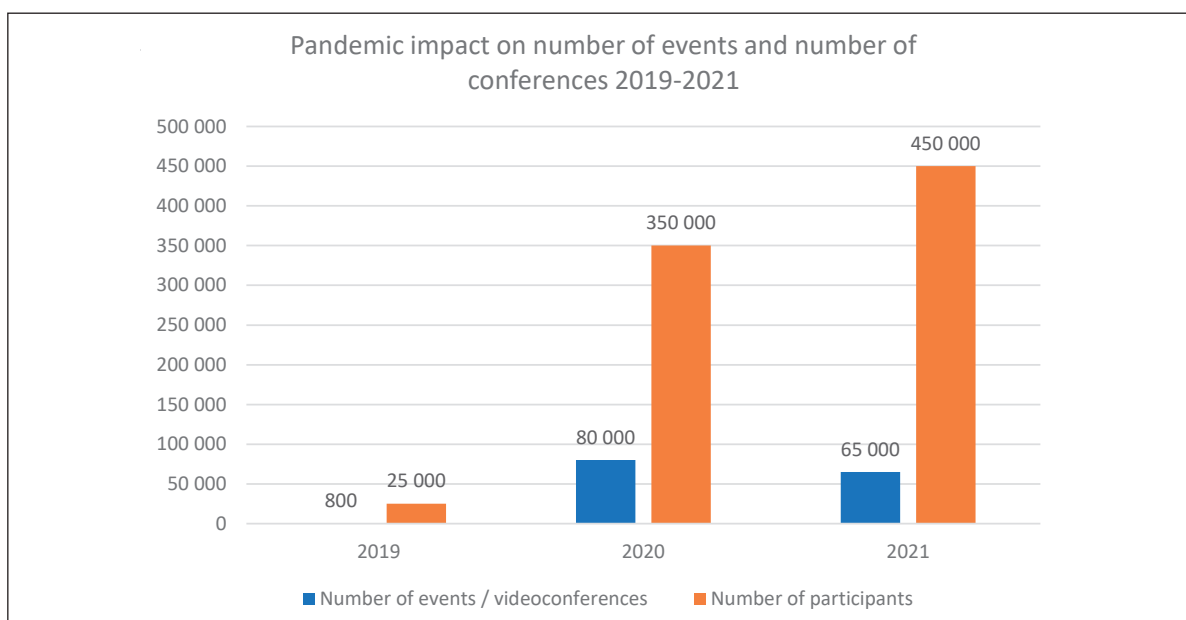
151. This was accompanied by the increase in IT equipment and services during the Covid-19 period.

Figure 24: IT equipment for remote working during Covid-19
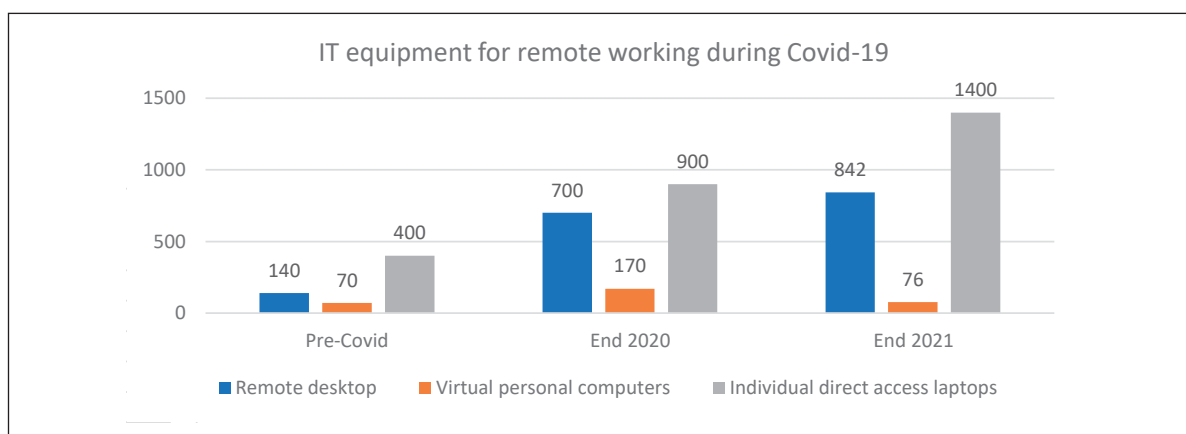
152. Overall the ratio of positive comments to negative ones on the new working methods and tools used was 4:3. The methods and tools were more positively viewed in the case study, suggesting the benefits were felt more in member states than at headquarters. Although this was not the case for Germany in the case study, where the key difference is that stakeholders work on the intergovernmental and monitoring committees rather than project work, for which the alternative working arrangements were the least successful, as discussed below. The ratio for staff was 1:1, with the most common categories of comments being teleworking, electronic procedures, online meetings and events, physical visits and interaction, and electronic voting.

Figure 25: Ratio of positive to negative comments on new working tools and methods

153. There were frequent comments about the online environment in terms of benefits it brought. These comprised mostly of categories such as efficient working procedures, including voting and decision-making processes that were easier to follow, access to much wider audiences, more frequent and higher-level participation of ministers, secretaries, under-secretaries etc. Specifically on the electronic voting, for instance, voting online brought benefits to the actual process. In the case study, in Georgia, as another example, greater inclusiveness was reported: "More opportunit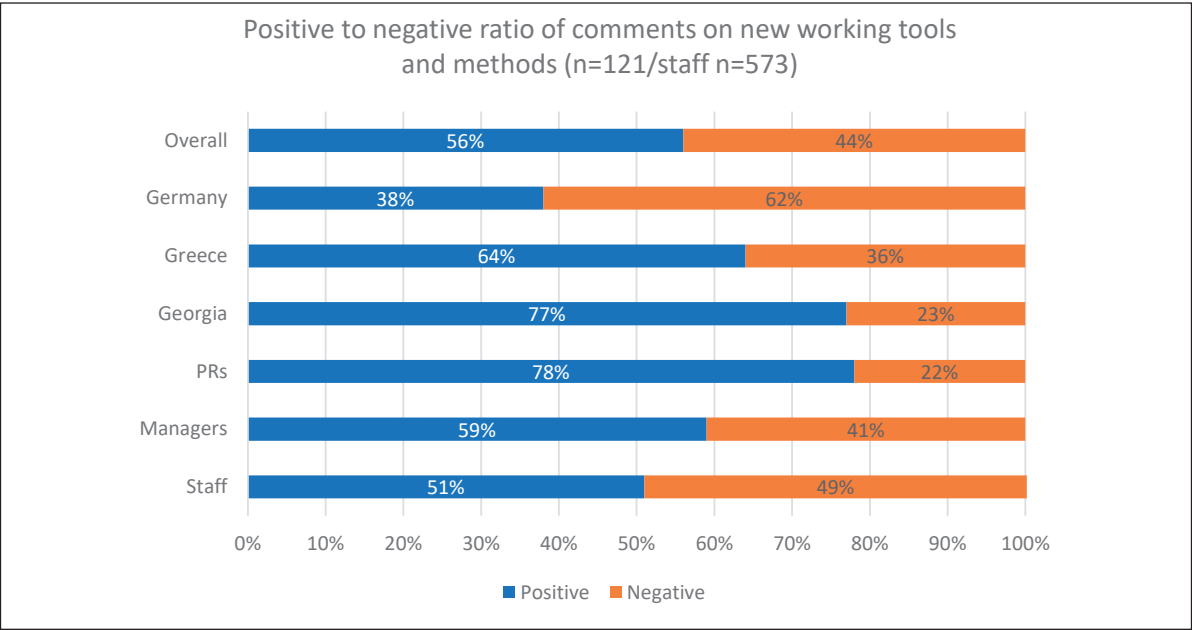y because in face-to-face there is low participation but online we allow the participation of all interested organisations and young people. Because online everything was more quickly organised than face-to-face." (National representative). There were many benefits to the online format of activities, in particular, more access, wider audiences and higher-level participation.

> "There were improvements holding meetings electronically and voting electronically. We seized the opportunity to make a couple of small adaptations to inform about the results of votes. When they vote and are in the room we used to make them stand up and can then count the votes; it is open and one can see how other people vote. The open vote online is now shared in real-time, which requires the electronic system."
>
> *Staff member*

> "Opening part of the policy dialogue to the public is an excellent way of taking the conversation beyond the meeting room, showing the relevance of the Council of Europe for citizens and giving them the chance to contribute."
>
> *Staff member*

Figure 26: Percentage of respondents reporting real benefits of the online working method

Real benefits to participation and access (n=121)

- Managers: 49%
- PRs: 10%
- Georgia: 44%
- Greece: 30%
- Germany: 9%
- Overall: 38%
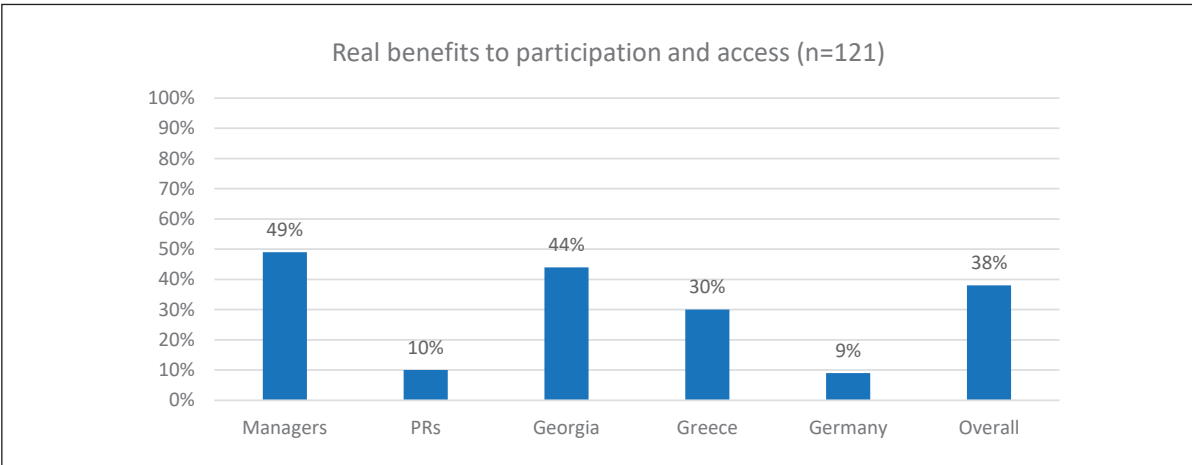
154. These advantages were witnessed in all formats of Council of Europe work, equally in Strasbourg and in member states. Particularly prominent among achievements were the digital hearings in parliaments, enabling greater access for PACE in the member states than normal.

155. Another of the lessons of the crisis came from the thorough examination of the functioning of the Council of Europe. The decision-making processes that lead to the strategic direction of the Organisation are both relied upon and proved to be unsuited to the speed the crisis developed at. There was a long period of time before the decision-making process in the CM was operational once again due to the lockdown. At the same time, the PACE and CLRA swiftly adjusted rules such as quorum, voting procedures and meeting arrangements.

> "To bring the Council of Europe into national parliaments, we had remote hearings, most in May, with Parliaments operating online with experts going into Parliaments. This put the Council of Europe on the map and focused on best practice."
>
> *Staff member*

156. There are risks identified with slackening controls that guarantee the legitimacy of decision making. Emergency procedures that are timebound in nature could be used to significantly divert from the careful methodical processes of monitoring, standard procedures and democratic checks and balances.

> "Members were sceptical about dropping the mandatory 1/3 quorum it was tough, but with the hybrid version managed to get the quorum down to 25% and managed to give tools."
>
> *Staff member*

157. As mentioned earlier the limitations of the working methods and tools were also frequently reported. This applied mostly to procedures and regulations, to the restrictions on travel and face-to-face interactions and to IT equipment and software.

Figure 27: Percentage of respondents expressing the limits of IT equipment and software

Limits of IT equipment and software (n=121)

- Managers: 59% / 51%
- PRs: 50% / 20%
- Georgia: 39% / 6%
- Greece: 30% / 9%
- Germany: 0% / 0%
- Overall: 45% / 29%

■ Severe limits to possibilities to tackle sensitive issues and negotiating standards
■ Lack of availabiility of modern, quality equipment and software
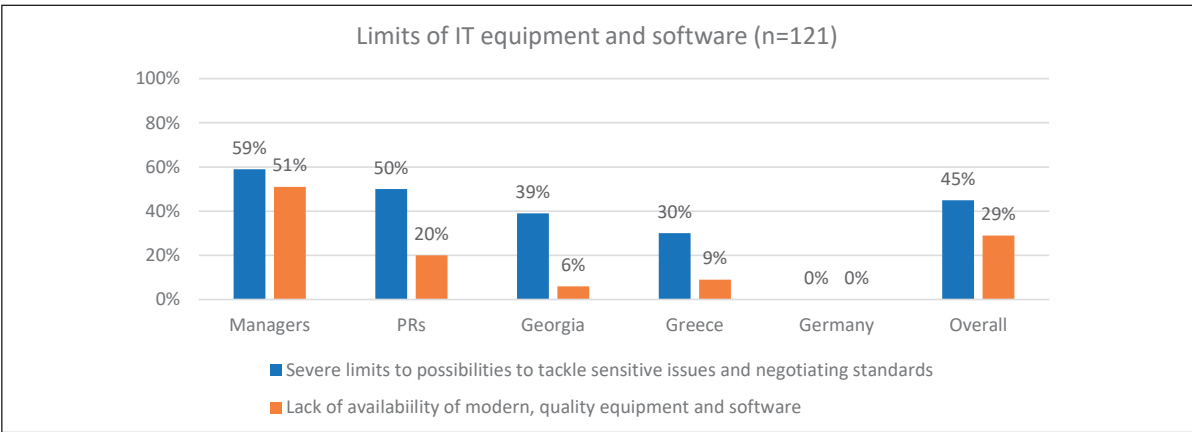
158. On the technical level, teams were restricted to single options of online functioning, despite the availability of more suitable tools outside the Organisation. First this incurred significantly increased costs and rendered some activities ineffective. IT tools must be fit for purpose and the different user cases need to be fully taken into account. This was not always the case according to different users. More flexible and varied service provision was needed. The extent this was achievable was limited to the resources available.

159. At the start of the pandemic the Organisation could not provide sufficient, adequate hardware and software solutions to work effectively. There was a tremendous effort by the support services to enable staff to continue working and that was largely successful. However, the quality of IT equipment, software and services needed more investment and resources to optimise operations. As the pandemic developed this was remedied but often without staff being sufficiently aware of the solutions available. MiCollab[16] was made available early on during the pandemic, for example, but it was reported that telephone calls were not connecting during teleworking. At the same time, the rollout of Document Management System (DMS), along with high levels of support from ITEM for Kudo was successful. Staff was able to work remotely and given appropriate tools thanks to essential work on Cloud, network reinforcement and security and many others. Unfortunately, the levels of demand exceeded the possible supply in several cases.

> "But we need to be quicker and more responsive and delegate quicker to offices and entities to run these things and not have the centralised model that is just slow and expensive."
> *Staff member*

160. The adaptation of the response was hampered by few effective solutions to deal with sensitive issues, drafting, building relationships and negotiation in an exclusively online environment. There was furthermore a lack of strategy, operational protocols or co-ordination of services, operating units and consultants also reported in the survey and interviews. There was clear concern that distance working could harm negotiations both for standard setting and for monitoring. Physical contact is vital to build the required trust and to engage sufficiently in monitoring to build ownership of the issues so that member states will make efforts to address findings comprehensively. "But it (online tools) doesn't work for education or sensitive political discussions. Because there is never the same level of commitment, togetherness and belonging that face-to-face produces. It is not a solution for the work we are doing. Create encounters between people and nations then we have to limit the online to a support system and it cannot be the main tool to reach our aims." (Staff member).

161. The length of procedures and bureaucracy was not suited for quick response and adaptation of work programmes and this was keenly felt in crisis when there is urgency to maintain relevance. Many comments were made on this point, such as "We need to fit a quick response into rules and procedures which are not designed to be quick nor adaptable. Sometimes it takes too long;" (Staff member) and "the lack of agility and flexibility in working method hindered the Covid-19 response." (Staff member) The Organisation adapted a lot in a variety of ways with a significant degree of success, but not in a systematic co-ordinated way. This had a cost on staff and was impeded by inflexibility and lack of support in the form of financial resources.

162. The Organisation needs to know what do to if it cannot implement tools in the normal way. In different crisis situations these limitations could impede the crisis response. Such cases should be planned for and mitigated against to the extent possible. The UN uses a three-level crisis management system, see Appendix 2, which would provide the basis for different emergency measures to automatically take effect.

163. Finally, the evaluation has not examined closely the health and safety measures related to the Organisation during the pandemic. There was nonetheless concern raised about the consistency of duty of care principles in relation to the field offices specifically, and occasionally regarding the approach in the headquarters too. A system of determining the extent of disruption for such measures would be supported by the crisis level assessment, which would enable greater accountability and transparency for the decision making. That said, such an assessment would very likely have justified the approach taken by the Organisation in this regard.

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16. Mitel MiCollab is software that converts telephone lines into an online system accessible on computers.

164.   The crisis highlighted the small extent alternative working methods and tools were available to the Council of Europe. The range of these methods and tools enabled the Organisation to continue functioning, but they were not adaptable enough to enable the full functioning of all the services the Council of Europe provides. Different crises would raise further questions and challenges. A certain level of preparedness would be possible through established protocols to be put in place according to the level of the crisis.

Finding 18: On the one hand there was strong enthusiasm for innovation and change in general, whilst on the other hand there was low uptake of the set of virtual office tools such as MiCollab on offer. Staff were not sufficiently aware nor adequately trained to work with new technologies and this created additional pressure both on support and the delivery of activities.

165.   Many comments were made about the opportunity the pandemic brought to innovate and to try out new things, "I think it was a chance to develop innovative approaches;" (Staff member) and the success this brought in terms of digitalisation and teleworking, "For the Council of Europe as an Organisation and for us as staff - we seemed to have embraced more the digitalisation, teleworking, etc." (Staff member). The majority of comments saw these possibilities as positive, "Teleworking enabled this. I felt myself much more free and ready to try out new things when I was alone at home and all these initiatives proved to be successful for my position." (Staff member). Staff responded positively in the survey with 55% feeling very much or mostly enabled to innovate and try out new things.

Figure 28: Staff survey response on extent staff felt enabled to innovate and try out new things during Covid-19
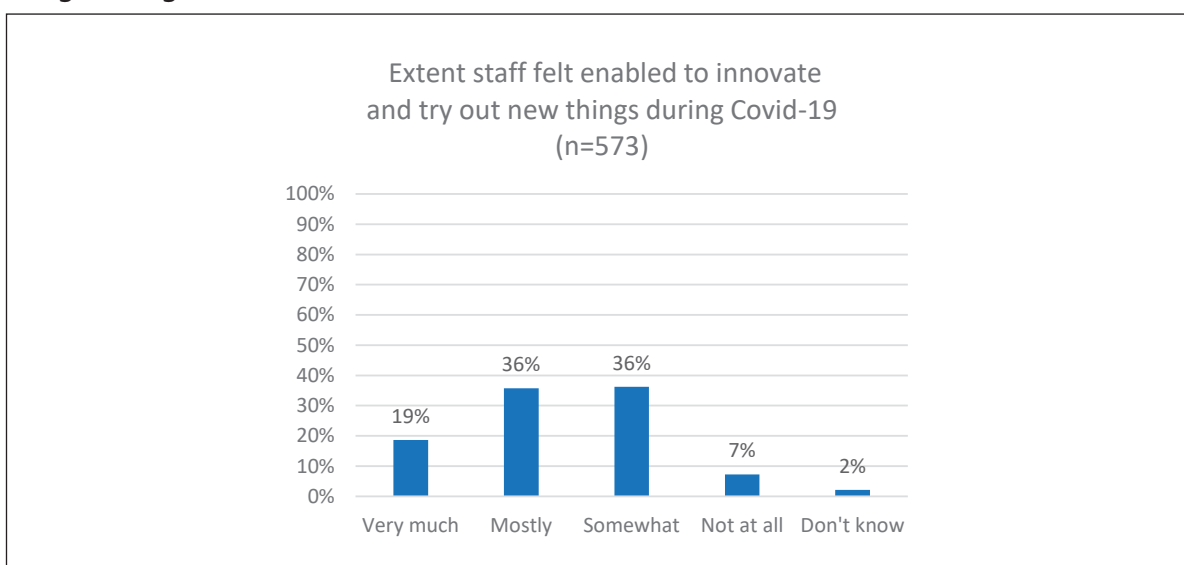
166.   The process of introducing new technology, new ways of working and innovation was not always smooth, however, "Our Director did encourage us to innovate but most times innovative solutions were blocked up in the hierarchy." (Staff member). This view was echoed and nuanced by the constraining practices of the Organisation, "While ideas abounded, and when not so much dependent on internal services, they materialised, this is one of the aspects of the pandemic that I have most frustrations towards. I found many internal services being very inflexible, very slow and not responding to the particular needs/nature of our work: trying to impose a one size fit all despite the chaos and upheaval we were all in (from the responses to emails, to the content of the messages/support, to the expertise provided)." (Staff member).

167.   Furthermore, the use of new technology to deliver Council of Europe activities was overwhelming and resulted in immense pressures. This was partly down to the simple fact there was a lot to adjust to, but also comments indicated difficulties in IT skill levels, "Lack of staff skills to meet the work methodology requirements imposed by the pandemic." (Staff member).

168.   Timing was unfortunate in terms of IT skills and support because the Organisation's migration to a document management system took place at the same time as this need to use online meeting and online conferencing tools arising from the pandemic. The DMS training and support had to be delivered online in a mode that many found novel and challenging. This digital transformation had been foreseen, but

it had to be done very differently and it was much more difficult during the pandemic. So many people needed training which was delivered in very different ways from normal.

169. The other difficulty to adapt to the pandemic and new working methods was also expressed frequently. It lies in the risk averse and conservative nature of the Council of Europe. The perception of management resistance to change came across strongly in the evaluation staff survey, indicating that this was a factor that hindered the Councill of Europe's response to Covid-19, "For some aspects of the emergency and urgent response, the bureaucracy associated to procurement/grants/payments and the rhythms of the organisation are just not compatible." (Staff member).

170. The top three areas that most need to improve reinforced these comments.

Figure 29: Staff survey optional comments on areas of improvement in the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19
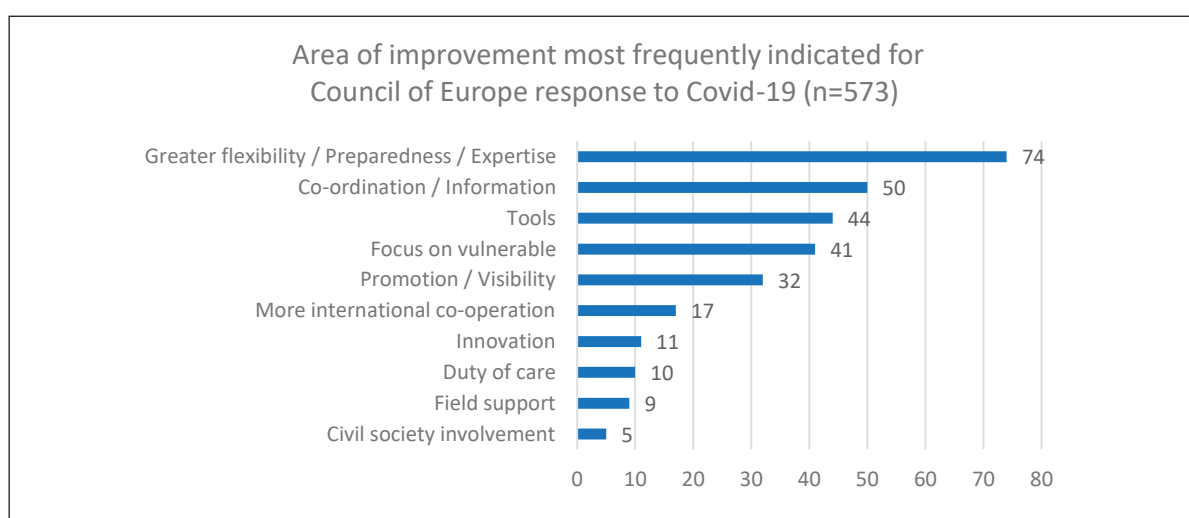
171. Covid-19 shone a light on these constraints and could prompt a higher prioritisation to improve. It certainly provided opportunities to pilot different procedures and to experiment with different options. This was a priority for staff in their response to which areas require improvement in responding to crisis.

Perception of the potential use of new working methods beyond the context of the pandemic

Finding 19: The resilience shown by the Council of Europe to the Covid-19 pandemic appears to be more attributable to the nature of the Organisation and the nature of the crisis than to the design of the response. More overall modernisation is needed with the aim of providing swift, lightweight processes that provide resilience by design. There is demand for deeper reflection beyond tools and working methods.

172. The pandemic has emphasised the importance of modernisation, recognised by all respondents and directly linked to the administrative reform in progress at the Council of Europe, which aim to streamline business processes and introduce common working methods. This was mostly viewed in terms of wider reforms to the whole Council of Europe, involving a reassessment at how the Organisation functions, making work more targeted, providing opportunities to strengthen flexibility and creativity, and establishing stronger partnerships. This also involves the ability to respond to uncertainty in the complex world of human rights, as another interviewee stated: "There is awareness that the Organisation needs to be prepared to address threats from unexpected corners. The challenge is when this comes to fundamental rights." (Staff member).

> "Colleagues responsible need to review with the different donors, if we face another crisis… our capacity to adjust quickly is essential. We need capacity to influence partners and donors."
>
> *Staff member*

Figure 30: Percentage of respondents calling for more modernisation in general and wider reform

More modernisation called for (n=121)

	Managers	PRs	Georgia	Greece	Germany	Overall
More modernisation in general needed	34%	40%	11%	22%	18%	27%
Wider reform beyond crisis management	19%	20%	6%	22%	18%	17%
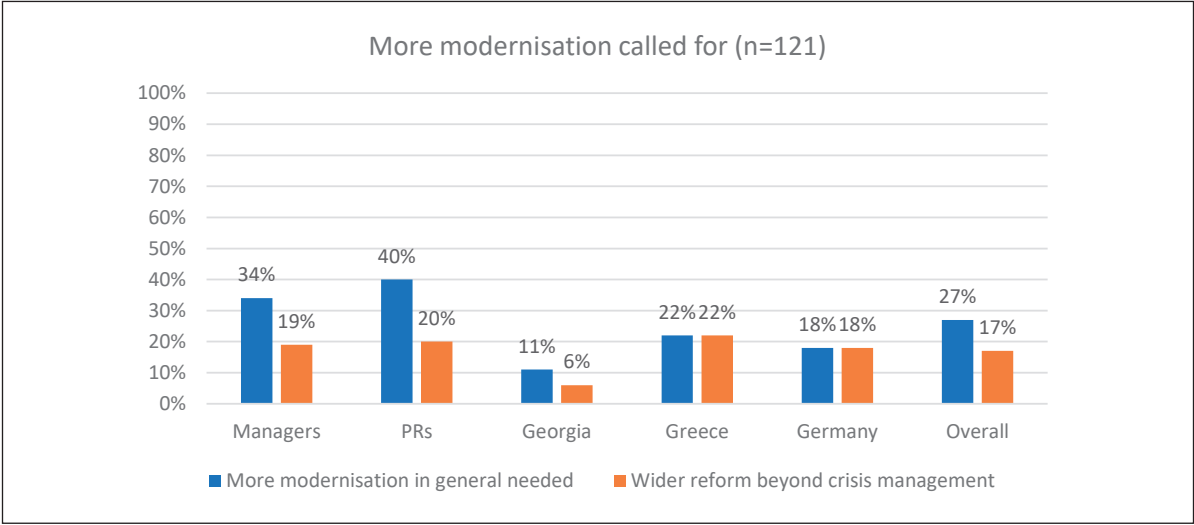
173. This is opposed by views sometimes expressed of the inward-looking nature of the Organisation. It is also revealing that of all the innovation considered in terms of the pandemic and its response the first categories relating to outcomes and target groups are sixth and seventh on the list with less than 5% of the comments respectively.

> *"Lack of experience and partly expertise; a conservative administration and decision making; need to justify continuation (too many inward measures and communication)."*
>
> *Staff member*

Figure 31: Staff survey optional comments on most important innovations

Frequency of most important innovation mentioned in Council of Europe's reponse to Covid-19 (n=573)

Online activities	190
Teleworking	168
Electronic processes	67
Alternative, simpler, flexible procedures	41
Wider access / comms	39
Impact focus / targeting	24
Human rights guidelines /Exchange	22
Transversality / Co-ordination / Solidarity	11
Faster processes	8
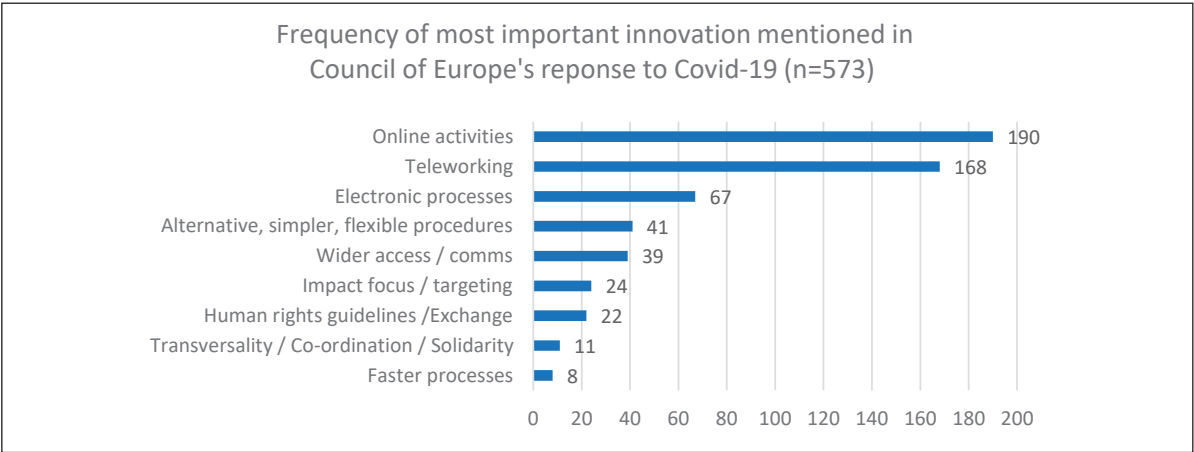
174. There were opportunities to channel some of the specific aspects of the Organisation such as field presence, strong connections to experts throughout the Council of Europe member states and the strong commitment of civil society.

> *"We need to be able to adapt our workspace; not only in our texts and activities, but also in work organisation, not only what you say and preach, but also what you do."*
>
> *Staff member*

175. From the technological perspective, there was considerable development of online working methods for electronic voting, paperless working procedures, hybrid political sessions and webinars. All of this development was widely recognised as useful and with real potential for integration into future work in nearly all aspects of Council of Europe operations. This is currently being studied closely by DGA following the survey on the topics to all staff.

Figure 32: Percentage of respondents expressing enthusiasm for the online environment and further development

Enthusiasm for online environment (n=121)

	Managers	PRs	Georgia	Greece	Germany	Overall
General enthusiasm for online environment	80%	50%	22%	17%	27%	52%
Specifically for teleworking	42%	20%	0%	0%	0%	22%
Specifically for online events and training	66%	40%	17%	13%	27%	43%
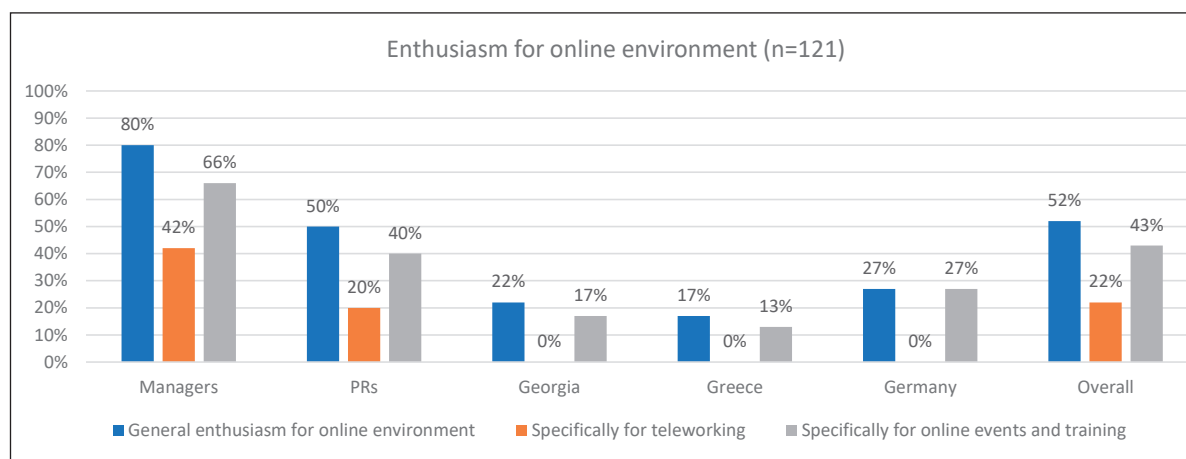
176. There is strong enthusiasm for working with the online environment both in terms of teleworking and in holding activities and events online. This is especially the case for staff and permanent representations. It is only natural that the case study did not reveal any particular view on teleworking, but the lower enthusiasm for the online environment was more pronounced in Georgia and Greece, where there are typically more activities held than in Germany. That said there was a much stronger focus on the effects of the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 than the digital environment in the interviews which also reflects fewer comments on online working.

177. Strong momentum developed throughout the pandemic as opportunities were presented to deliver work with more creativity and flexibility. The momentum should be used to further develop the culture of adaptive management in order for the resilience the Organisation showed during the crisis can be systematised. This will rely on more extensive modernisation than online tools and working methods.

Finding 20: There are examples of lessons learned and innovation being used to adapt the response to Covid-19. Such adaptive management was not systematic, nor built into the Council of Europe response. In future crises, there needs to be stronger emphasis on strategic adjustment, strengthening responsiveness and overcoming isolation and distance from member states.

178. Covid-19 was an emergency on an unprecedented scale for which no administration or Organisation was adequately prepared. The Council of Europe could have benefitted more from early warning. Nonetheless lessons were learned quickly once the pandemic had taken hold. There have been several internal surveys by DGA and DIO. Risk management and DPB integrated the Covid-19 impact into their analysis and procedures.

179. Adaptive management requires rapid assessment through real-time audit and evaluation. Lessons learnt need to be fed back into responses that are then adjusted accordingly. Data was collected but it was not processed. Systems need to be in place to allow for business intelligence that could lead to rapid, evidence-based decision-making. Information was gathered successfully and well adopted into medium and long-term planning, but short-term assessments leading to adjustments did not happen.
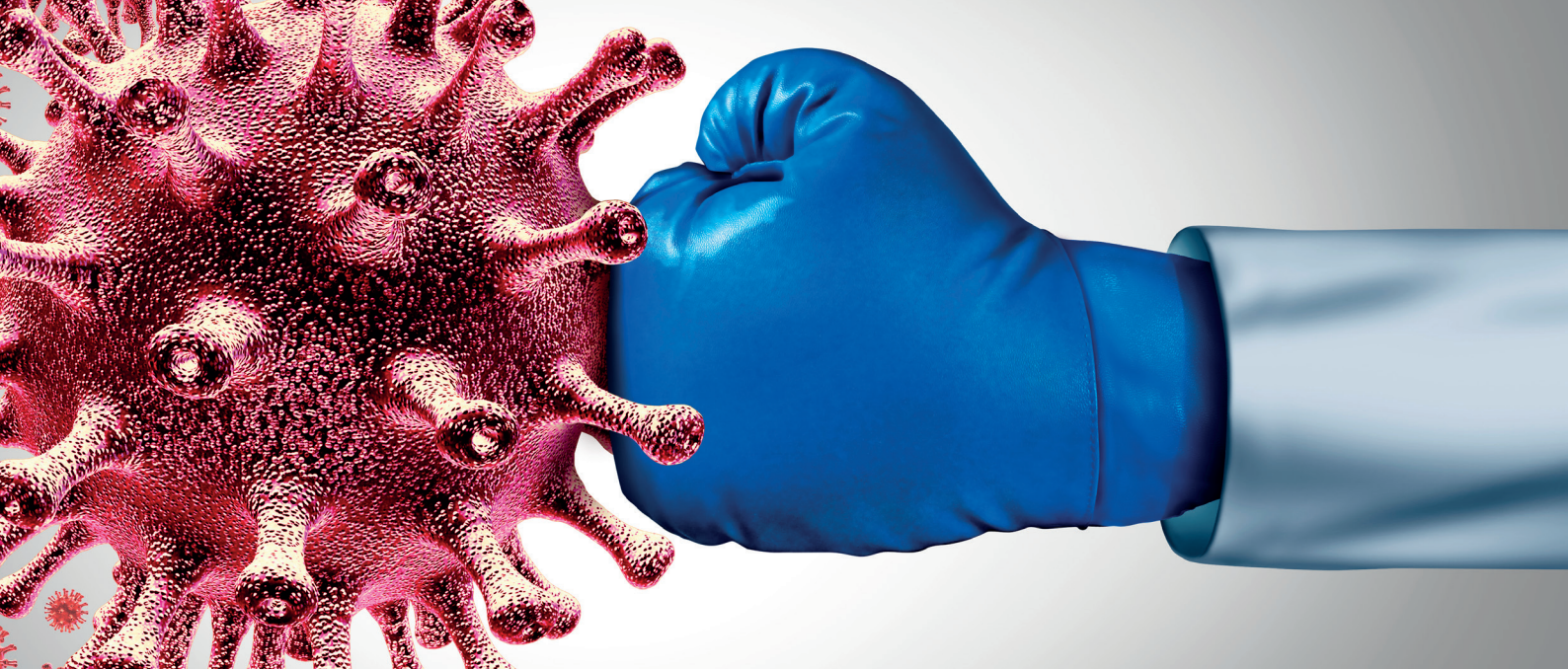
4. Benchmarking assessment

180.   An assessment of the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 against the benchmarking framework was carried out. It reveals some strong points and some points requiring attention. The benchmarking good practices could serve well to address the areas of improvement. See Appendix 14, Benchmarking assessment for the detailed assessment.

Figure 33: Overall benchmarking assessment of the Council of Europe's programmatic response to Covid-19 (1-5, None, Minimal, Satisfactory, Good, Excellent)
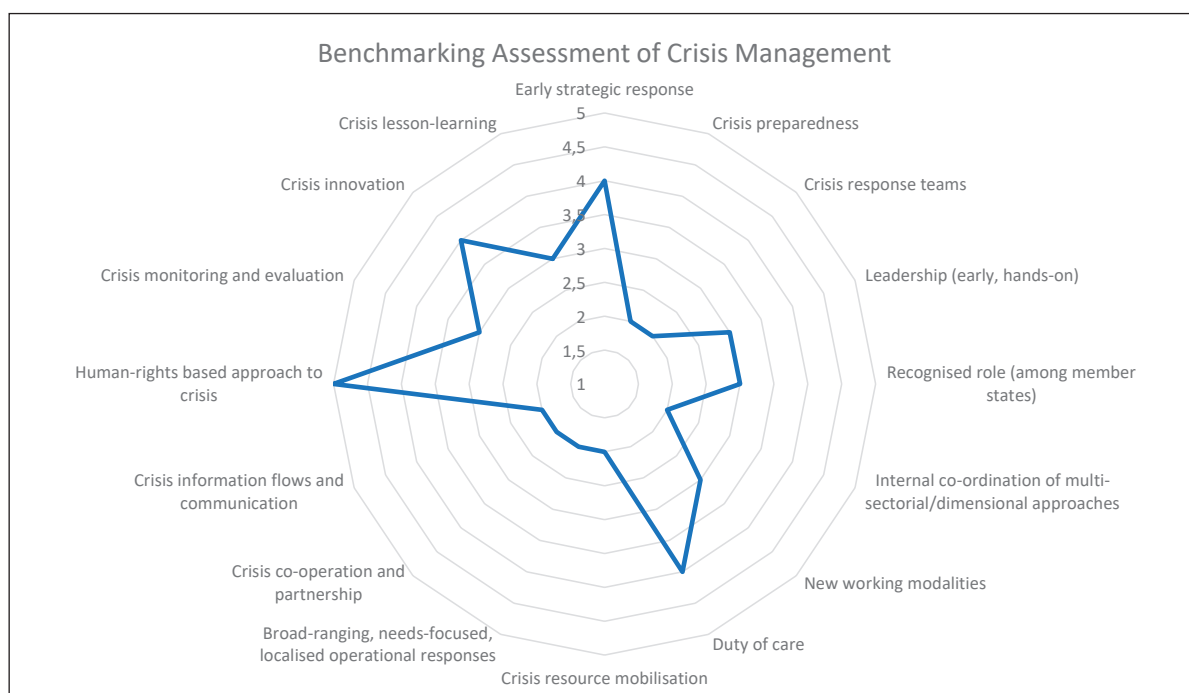
4.1. Early response

181.   The Council of Europe's good leadership and early strategic response provided a foundation for the strategic approach to be built on. Like so many organisations the Council of Europe was not prepared for a crisis of the nature and magnitude of Covid-19. A pandemic was not on the risk register and business continuity protocols were not developed across the organisation despite long standing internal audit recommendations highlighting risks in this area. The Organisation did not establish a structured crisis response team from a programmatic point of view.

Figure 34: Early response benchmarking assessment of the Council of Europe's programmatic response to Covid-19 (1-5, None, Minimal, Satisfactory, Good, Excellent)

4.2. Strategic approaches

182. The inherent meaningfulness of the Council of Europe's standards provided a basis for a strategic approach simply by establishing business continuity. There was only informal co-ordination of multi-sectorial approaches and there is room for improvement through crisis strategy development and agile results-based management to re-orient programmes and objectives.

Figure 35: Strategic approaches benchmarking assessment of the Council of Europe's programmatic response to Covid-19 (1-5, None, Minimal, Satisfactory, Good, Excellent)

4.3. Institutional responses

183. The Council of Europe performed averagely on institutional responses compared to findings in the benchmarking report. Business continuity was maintained throughout the pandemic through the progressive adaptation of working methods and tools. Measures were adopted and evolved continually to ensure a low health risk to staff, partners and other stakeholders involved in Council of Europe activities.
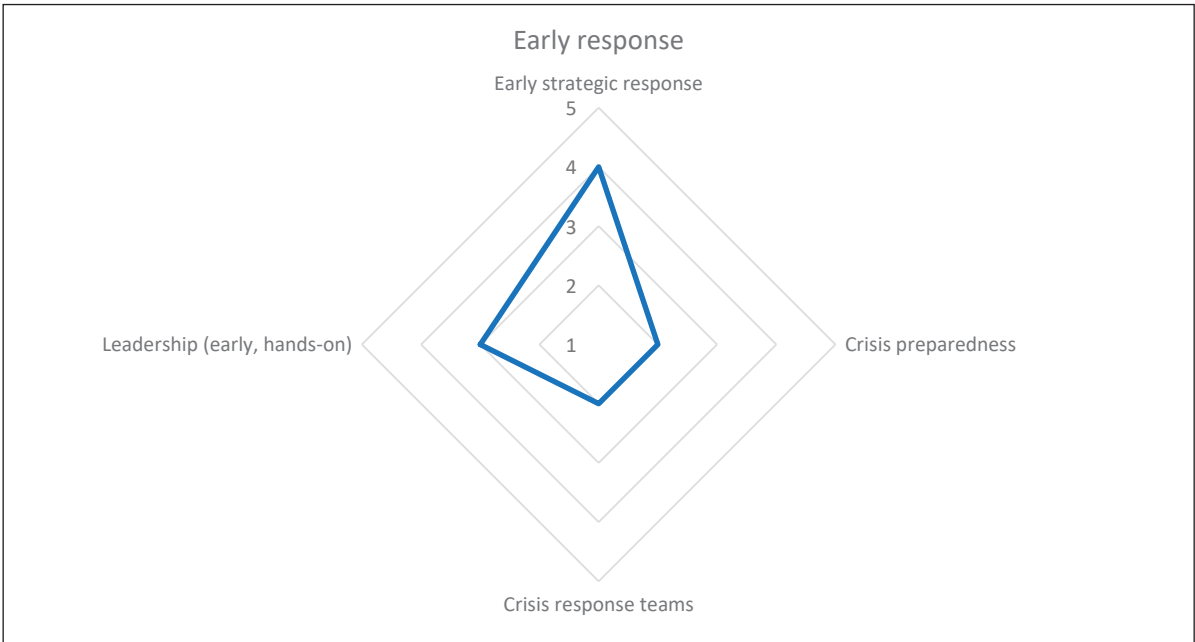
Figure 36: Institutional responses benchmarking assessment of the Council of Europe's programmatic response to Covid-19 (1-5, None, Minimal, Satisfactory, Good, Excellent)

Institutional responses
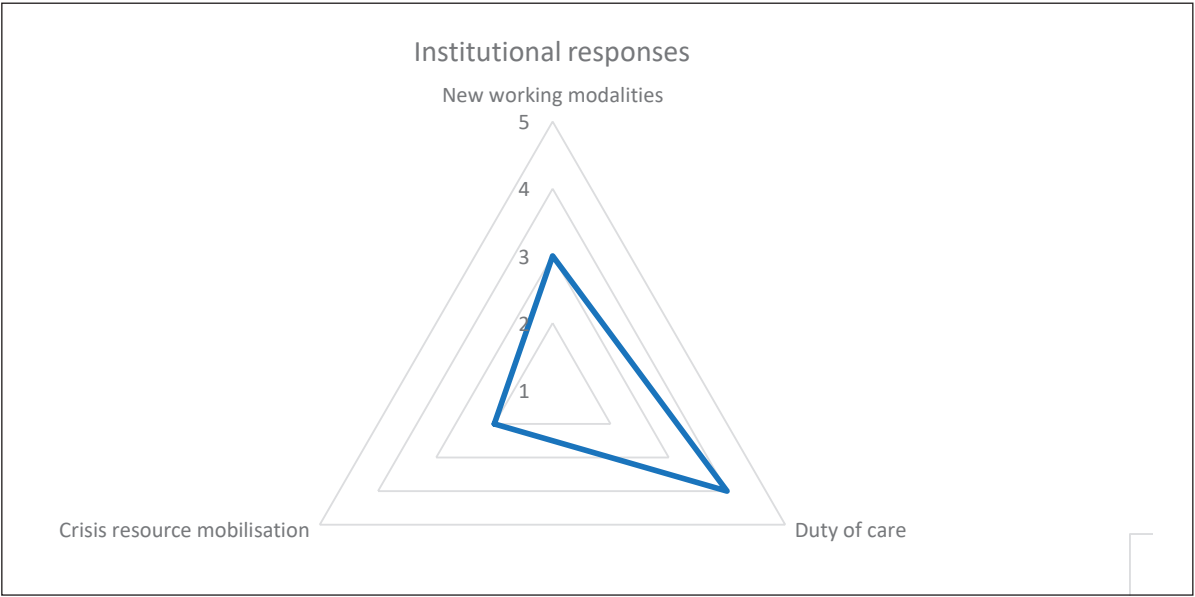
4.4. Operational responses

184.   The somewhat low rating against operational responses reflects the focus on business continuity over a crisis-specific response. As a result there were sufficient resources already available to cover the costs of the Covid-19 response, making fundraising unnecessary for the Council of Europe. There was not enough local needs assessment to achieve broad-ranging and needs-focused responses specific to local contexts because this was not a priority in the Organisation's response. There were some meaningful partnerships and co-operation with other organisations, but not many. Communication and co-ordination remained oriented around the regular programme of the Organisation and the working arrangements required to ensure the health of staff and partners. The Council of Europe standards ensure human rights, gender, vulnerability and inclusiveness issues are integrated into the Organisation's work. Three surveys were conducted over the period of the pandemic in relation to crisis monitoring.
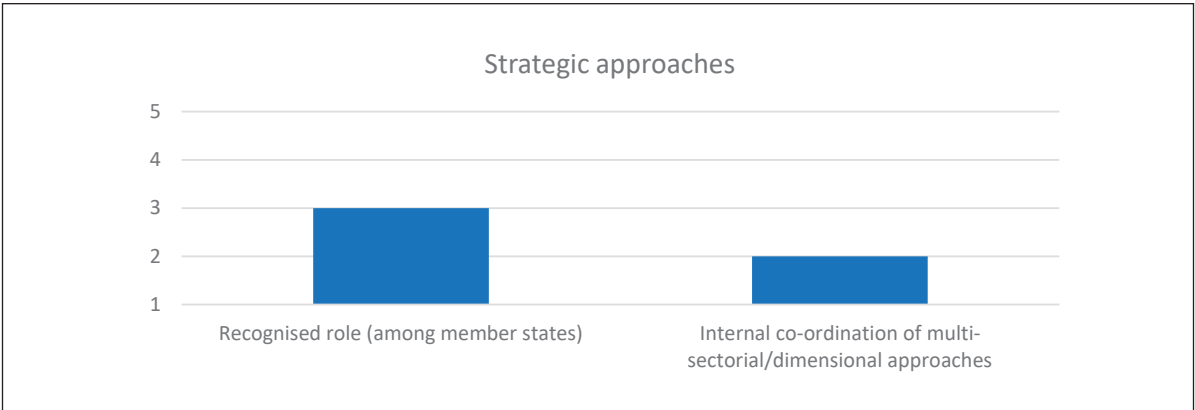
Figure 37: Operational responses benchmarking assessment of the Council of Europe's programmatic response to Covid-19 (1-5, None, Minimal, Satisfactory, Good, Excellent)

Operational responses

4.5. Responsiveness

185.   There is positive feedback for continuing innovation and learning from the crisis. The Council of Europe could build on this momentum to strengthen both its resilience, adaptive management and crisis management capability.

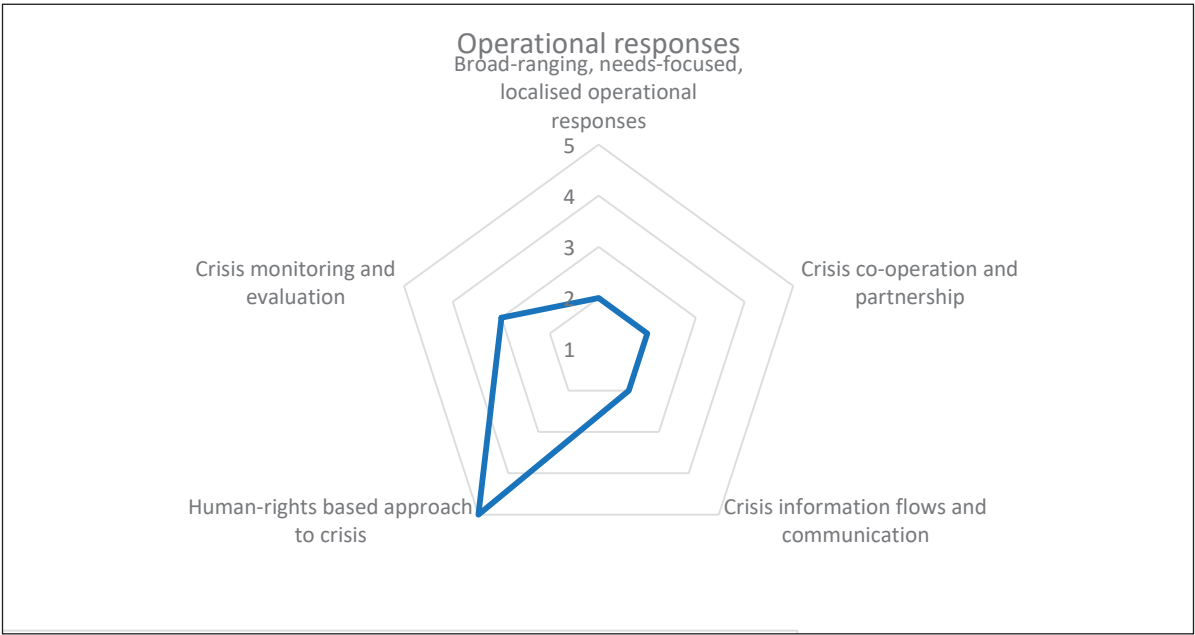**Figure 38: Responsiveness benchmarking assessment of the Council of Europe's programmatic response to Covid-19 (1-5, None, Minimal, Satisfactory, Good, Excellent)**
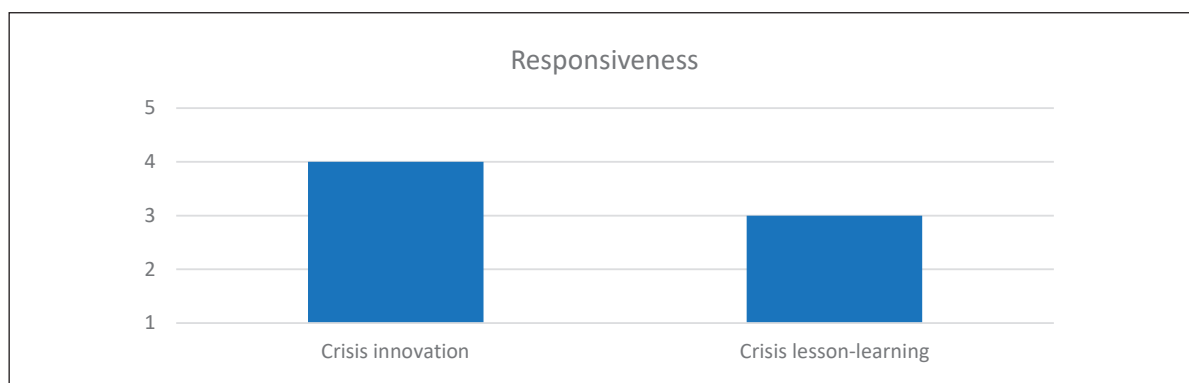
5. Conclusions, lessons learnt and recommendations

186.   Overall, the findings reveal that the Council of Europe was able to respond to the crisis despite very little preparedness for a crisis of such global scale. Over the course of the pandemic, the institutional capacity to manage crisis increased. Nonetheless the Organisation can and should further improve its preparedness for a future crisis. With this in mind, recommendations have been made to further strengthen institutional capacity to manage crisis, to optimise the Organisation's crisis preparedness and to reinforce the strong resilience the Organisation demonstrated to the Covid-19 pandemic. It is noted that, following an internal audit report on crisis management and business continuity (issued in June 2020), at an organisational level a task force on crisis management and business continuity was set up and held its first meeting in November 2021 with its first deliverables prepared for a subsequent meeting in March 2022. Many of the conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations below should be considered by and feed into the ongoing work of this group.

Evaluation criteria	Conclusions	Lessons learned	Recommendations
Relevance – findings 1 and 2	Covid-19 underlined the relevance and importance of all aspects of the Council of Europe's work. It served as a reminder of the real need of political dialogue and consensus on human rights, rule of law and democracy, of continuous intergovernmental co-operation and standard setting, on monitoring and scrutiny of the protection of these standards and of co-operation and technical assistance to member states. The pandemic further exposed the conceptual challenge of connecting the Council of Europe's mandate to actual implementation in member states, in such a way that theoretical needs are met in practical terms. See recommendation 1.	I. The Council of Europe needed to have a common understanding of its scope of action and the extent of its implementation in responses to crises, because it was problematic that its mandate can be extended to all aspects of crises due to its inherent relevance in social organisation. II. When the Council of Europe's universal basis for implementation of standards in member states, by member states, is not explained, its response may appear abstract in juxtaposition to the concrete and tangible needs arising from the pandemic.	1. [PO] in consultation with [all operational entities] Crisis preparedness and checklist: further adapt Level 3[17] crisis procedures as recommended in the crisis management and business continuity audit (see Appendix 1, Audit: Crisis management and business continuity) to the Council of Europe context to address the unprecedented -level of global crisis that Covid-19 caused, (see Appendix 2, UN level-3 crisis management system). This should include a checklist of actions to be taken at each level of crisis that integrates both the audit and this evaluation's recommendations, linked to task force roles and responsibilities and working methods for specific scenarios. (High priority).
Relevance – findings 3, 4 and 5	There were timely and comprehensive adjustments, excellent data collection with a good response from member states and valuable information analysed and integrated into the Council of Europe's work. This was combined with early, hands-on leadership and the Secretary General's toolkit. At the same time, there was no significant strategic adjustment at the Organisational level to respond to Covid-19. This is needed to make crisis response meaningful. The Council of Europe's response needed to be strategised with clear goals and objectives, and targets set, to enable major programmatic adjustment according to the evolution of the crisis. The Council of Europe did not focus and pool resources in response to Covid-19. Different sectors had more relevance than others at different stages of the pandemic but continued to work with the same priority and weighting in accordance with the regular programme defined by the P&B. In several cases related to extra-budgetary funding, projects were re-oriented and different activities were implemented, in consultation with national authorities. The Organisation put the emphasis on business continuity rather than specific crisis response. No matter the crisis this will always be highly relevant because society relies on norms as essential social architecture. See recommendations 2, 3 and 4.	III. Intergovernmental and monitoring committees proved to be very efficient mechanisms for rapid exchanges of information and data collection in relation to the crisis. IV. A theoretical overview of the relationship between Council of Europe standards and the threat posed to them by Covid-19 was only the beginning of a strategy. A fuller strategy would be needed to bring together dispersed actions across the Organisation. V. There are two approaches that run in parallel in the Council of Europe, which affects the extent the Organisation responds to crisis. Some sectors focus on providing the basis and framework for human rights, rule of law and democracy without getting involved in the implementation. Other sectors target a more interventionist approach with implementation at multiple levels of human rights, rule of law and democracy. Covid-19 may have justified a stronger interventionist approach.	2. [DPB] Institutional capacity to manage crisis: develop and provide advice to programme and sub-programme co-ordinators on fast reaction adjustments to programming to adapt to major shifts provoked by any crisis. (High priority). 3. [DPB] Institutional capacity to manage crisis: add sections to existing RBM and strategic management guidance on a process for a RBM and strategic response to crisis where relevant (based on the Covid-19 experience) to increase crisis strategy development capacity including focus on results that are reactive, targeted, fast and measurable. (Medium priority). 4. [PO, DPB] Crisis preparedness and checklist: prepare a set of steps to be taken/considered to facilitate rapid decision making in a crisis, including requests for new resources and rapid re-deployment of them. Such an approach should distinguish between regular programming and crisis response programmes, take into account existing possibilities such as Article 28 of the Financial Regulations, and reflect governance roles and responsibilities of stakeholders. (High priority).

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17   Council of Europe level crisis requiring an exceptional organisational-level response.

Evaluation criteria	Conclusions	Lessons learned	Recommendations
Effectiveness – Findings 6 and 7	Covid-19 forced prioritisation because it affected different segments of the societal structure in different ways. The resources of the Council of Europe were spread thinly and the P&B does not capture this prioritisation. The lack of clear focus meant that it was impossible to ensure the optimal use of the Council of Europe's instruments. As a result the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 only had limited effect and connections were not frequently made between the theoretical basis provided and social consequences. This led to a failure to amplify results and to have mass effect. See recommendations 1, 2 and 5.	VI. The Council of Europe's work is perceived as essentially theoretical and the link to people's realities is not clearly communicated. The connection between the two needs to be more obvious in crisis in order to contribute most effectively to the response, by emphasising more the importance of Council of Europe standards. VII. If the Council of Europe is to fulfil a role in crises responses then it needs to have wider and stronger effect according to the specific nature of each crisis. VIII. The small scale of Council of Europe outcomes in a crisis response could become a threat to the Organisation since it may lead to a wider dismissal of the utility of its work and mandate.	5. [PO] Crisis preparedness and checklist: Include the possibility to carry out "exceptional monitoring" that deviates from the strict procedure of monitoring bodies to overcome obstacles exclusively posed by crises so that crises responses can be adapted in an agile and flexible way as the crises evolve, see recommendation 1. (High priority).
Effectiveness – Finding 8	The Council of Europe did not exploit partnerships and international co-operation very much to enhance results. It is noticed, however when the Organisation does. Often the external coherence is clear as Council of Europe Standards are used, but not through formal partnership or co-operation and this compromises the Organisation's visibility as its work is more behind the scenes. There are many benefits demonstrated in the benchmarking to working in partnerships as it enables more learning and greater access to information. Organisations look outwards and gain in strength and resources in crisis. See recommendations 1 and 6.	IX. Combined international effort was striking and had strong visibility among stakeholders. This was demonstrated by the complementarity of CEDAW and GREVIO in combating domestic violence during the pandemic. X. Partnerships were more accessible through co-operation development, leading to more concrete results as the partnership generated stronger influence and enabled the joining of forces.	6. [PO] Crisis preparedness and checklist: Ensure that consideration is given on how to use partnerships to raise visibility, amplify the messages to fully comply with human rights, rule of law and democracy standards. (Medium priority).
Effectiveness – Finding 9	Intergovernmental, monitoring and co-operation in the Council of Europe dynamic triangle have been effective in delivering outcomes from targeted, concrete actions aligned to specific needs that are urgent due to crisis. Influence can be achieved on this basis, which can then be reinforced by targeted communication explaining the focus and priority of the crisis response. See recommendation 6.	XI. The work of CPT demonstrated good practice in a monitoring mechanism by highlighting a specific target area of its mandate. This gave clarity and priority to reducing risks of contracting the virus in places of detention which member states were quick to implement. XII. PACE had influence on national parliamentary procedures by leading by example at its supranational level. Adopted parliamentary procedures at PACE encouraged innovation in national parliaments contributing to better functioning during the pandemic.	

Evaluation criteria	Conclusions	Lessons learned	Recommendations
Effectiveness – Finding 10	The Council of Europe's distance was felt during the pandemic in spite of the Organisation's primary objectives to monitor and scrutinise human rights, rule of law and democracy. This must be countered and explained to populations in order for the Council of Europe to be considered useful and capable to fulfil its role. The Organisation needs to find ways to demonstrate its presence in the protection and fulfilment of human rights, rule of law and democracy within member states. This needs to be publicised in such ways that make the links and associations between the enjoyment of human rights and the prevention of violations. See recommendations 4, 5 and 8.	XIII. When the work of the Council of Europe was intangible and inconspicuous in relation to the pandemic its presence in member states was questioned and this was amplified by crisis.	
Efficiency – Findings 11 and 12	Covid-19 specific outputs were delivered across the entire spectrum of the Council of Europe's programme. The Organisation's performance reporting does not allow for the monitoring of this exceptional response. This resulted in the work being carried out in a grey zone, where objective, evidence-based assessment within the Organisation was not possible. The budget was not absorbed across both ordinary and extrabudgetary sources. This is in contrast to humanitarian organisations that considerably increased their budgets and simultaneously expanded their donor bases. This evaluation has identified many needs for deeper, more extensive Council of Europe actions, which would require additional resources. See recommendations 2, 3, 4, 5 and 8.	XIV. The Council of Europe combined its regular programme with Covid-19 specific activities across the entire programme. This was quite an achievement and indicated good use of resources for exceptional work in place of prevented actions. XV. ODGP put Covid-19 specific monitoring in place to fulfil donor reporting requirements. There was a similar need internally across the whole Organisation.	See recommendations 2, 3 and 4 7. [ODGP] Institutional capacity to manage crisis: Draft specific resource mobilisation guidance based on donor funding patterns to identify potential additional funding for support to Council of Europe crisis responses. (Medium priority).
Efficiency – Findings 13 and 14	Communication and co-ordination at the programmatic level relating to a specific Covid-19 response could have been more evident. PACE and Congress committees' staff, consultants in the field and CSOs provide potential models for better communication and co-ordination. Communication was also enabled by responsive mechanisms such as request processes that exist in the Venice Commission for example. The task force model around priority thematic areas under way as part of the crisis management and business continuity response should provide a more structured approach to communication and co-ordination. See recommendation 1.	XVI. Good practice in co-ordination was evident in the co-ordination and referencing of counterpart committees and services in PACE and Congress reports on Covid-19. This was based on thematic, priority-based exchange such as may be constituted by task forces. XVII. Field offices and external presence can strongly contribute to solutions to crises situations, but they need to be enabled to do so by greater flexibility and autonomy with respect to rules and restrictions designed for the headquarters.	

Evaluation criteria	Conclusions	Lessons learned	Recommendations
Efficiency – Findings 15 and 16	There was a natural resilience demonstrated by the Council of Europe during the pandemic. This can be attributed to the dedication and expertise of the staff and the autonomy of different organs, committees, bodies and services. Together they enabled an organic response which has both pros and cons. This natural resilience should be maintained to the extent possible whilst framing the Organisation's work better through stronger communication and co-ordination. See recommendations 1 and 8.	XVIII. The Venice Commission carried out a very good follow-up assessment of its statement and guidance on announcing states of emergency in response to the pandemic. XIX. Request mechanisms such as the one used by the Venice Commission enabled immediate needs assessment tools which could be useful in crisis situations where resources are thin. XX. Facilitators in the field can provide a direct link between citizens and the Council of Europe as was the case in a specific co-operation project during the pandemic. A consultant collected reports on human rights violations in communities and shared these with the Council of Europe.	8. [PO] Crisis preparedness and checklist: Support exchange of good practice amongst headquarters, external offices, expert and CSO networks to support monitoring of human rights, rule of law and democracy during crises and contribute to greater resilience, see recommendation 1. (High priority).
Efficiency – Findings 17 and 18	There are both benefits and limits to all the aspects of the new working methods and tools used during the crisis. Ideally a perfect blend would be achieved that maximises the benefits and avoids the limitation. Choice and flexible option are crucial to an optimised response in crisis. Preparedness would involve a plan and protocol to immediately put into action different series of tools and working methods, such as emergency decision-making processes by reduced groups of key stakeholders when prevented from carrying out regular processes that need to be more extensive. See recommendations 1 and 9. There is demand for innovation and beyond that wider reform. It would be strongly supported by staff and managers. The new tools and working methods are widely appreciated and greeted with enthusiasm. The main focus of innovation should be on creating agility and flexibility; in essence, adaptive management capacity to make direct contact with the external world. The process of administrative reform needs to continue, advancing further by building on this high level of support.	XXI. Remote hearings enabled access for PACE into national parliaments, allowing for more direct connections and contact with stakeholders at the parliamentary level. XXII. The pandemic gave a unique opportunity for broad testing and experimenting of different working methods and online tools. This has developed a much better understanding of the benefits and challenges each method and tool brings. The spirit of testing and experimenting could serve the Organisation well for reform and innovation. XXIII. Surveys carried out by the administration DIO and DGA, as well as decentralised evaluations, gave essential information to confirm and adjust the crisis response tools and working methods.	9. [DGA, DIT] Institutional capacity to manage crisis: Prioritise the work to make available multiple solutions for online working, including training, based on the ongoing analyses by DGA. Continue to apply rigorous testing and consultation to ensure that all user groups' business requirements are met to the maximum extent possible. (High priority).

Appendix 1 – Audit: Crisis management and business continuity at the Council of Europe

Audit Objectives	Audit Opinion, Strengths, Recommendations
▶ To assess the adequacy of policies, procedures and decision-making processes at the Council of Europe to ensure critical business functions continue to operate and that there is an appropriate, co-ordinated response should the Organisation be faced with serious events, which could have a major and/or immediate effect on its functioning; ▶ To make recommendations on how crisis management and business continuity can be improved.	**Audit Opinion:** There are gaps in risk assurance at the Council of Europe, which suggest a vulnerability to risk. General management skills of risk and resilience management need to be developed. There is insufficient cross-organisational perspective on reputation management. Business continuity needs systematic support across all MAEs. **Strengths:** ▶ The Council of Europe has dealt with a number of different crises over the course of recent years. ▶ The Council of Europe has the potential to become more resilient thanks to its competent and committed staff. ▶ There is a common and constructive approach among senior management to learn lessons from recent crises. **Main Recommendations:** *At Level 1 - operational incident level*: ▶ Develop a single coherent policy document covering incident management. ▶ Stress-test the current IT and security/facilities procedures. ▶ Stress-test of major incident preparedness and response. At *Level 2 – DG-level crisis and business continuity level*: ▶ Develop a document specifying business continuity policy and strategic direction. ▶ Improve and harmonise standard business continuity planning and crisis management. ▶ Develop response arrangements. *At Level 3 - Council of Europe crisis level,* more substantial progress is needed and the following need to be developed: ▶ A policy document and shared understanding of crisis exposure, mechanisms for crisis warning identification, definition of roles and responsibilities, arrangements for crisis co-ordination and decision-making. ▶ A strategy to address the risk of miscommunication. ▶ Mandates for senior managers to act in crisis response in support of the Secretary General. ▶ A system for co-ordination focusing on presentation of consolidated information to key decision-makers. ▶ A methodology for crisis alerting and crisis management. ▶ More testing of crisis management processes. To implement the recommendations, resources need to be identified for competency enhancement and IT.

Appendix 2 – UN level-3 crisis management system

The United Nations model of crisis management approach[18]

Crisis management is the process by which an organization deals with a disruptive and unexpected event that threatens to harm the organization, its stakeholders, or the general public. The three elements common to a crisis – a) the threat, b) the element of surprise and c) a short decision time – taken together stipulate the need for the organisation to change. Therefore, when responding to crises, organisations can no longer operate under a 'business as usual' model; moreover, they should aim at ensuring a rapid and adequate response by putting in place in advance a system that includes clear roles and responsibilities and process related organisational requirements organisation-wide.

Of particular interest is the UN system of crisis management, which focuses on humanitarian crises and defines these as 'an event (or series thereof) that represents a critical threat to the health, safety, security, or well-being of a community or a larger group of people' on a wider area.

As regards the UNDP, when designing its crisis response the organisation focuses on the following goals:[19]

1. Providing effective coordination and leadership to its Country Offices, national governments and other partners.

2. Engaging in needs assessments at different stages of the response (including post-disaster needs, recovery and peace building, gender and other assessments).

3. Implementing timely, sequenced and appropriate, safe and sustainable response activities.

4. Developing suitable resource mobilisation plans, including communication and advocacy.

The UNDP uses three levels of crisis response that correspond to the amount and scale of support from the Headquarters to its Country Offices (CO). These levels are established on the basis of the magnitude of the event that has led to a crisis, as well as its scale, urgency, capacity to respond,[20] complexity and reputational risk; they are exclusive of one another.

Level 1 – the CO and the national government have adequate capacity to respond to the crisis but require a one-time injection of additional support without any need for temporary measures at regional or corporate levels.

Level 2 – the capacity of the CO and/or affected national government is inadequate without a significant scale-up of capacity to respond to the crisis. (Any crisis that severely affects UNDP personnel or facilities is automatically be designated at least a Level 2 crisis.)

Level 3 – the crisis significantly outstrips the capacity of the CO and/or the national government, requiring an exceptional level of corporate support, given the scale, complexity or urgency that may pose a serious reputational risk to the organisation.

Level 2 and 3 crises and, exceptionally, Level 1 crises entail the setting up of a Crisis Board (CB) – a temporary senior-level decision-making body that provides strategic direction to UNDP support for crisis response and recovery programming and executes temporary authority in all aspects of crisis response, including defining objectives and key messages, funding allocation, deployments, recovery programme endorsement etc. The UNDP's Crisis Response Unit may provide services as the CB Secretariat. The decisions of the CB are implemented by the Crisis Management Support Team – a temporary, working-level forum that comprises personnel from the headquarters and regional bureaux and hubs.

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18. This section presents the UN crisis management system in an outline only and deliberately focuses on its features that appear to be most relevant in the Council of Europe context.
19. For further information see UNDP Standard Operating Procedure for Immediate Crisis Response.
20. Of both the Country Office(s) and of the national government(s) concerned.

Scale-up criteria are used to determine levels:

The Scale-Up activation shall be issued by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), in consultation with the concerned RC/HC and IASC Principals, on the basis of an analysis of the following criteria: scale, complexity, urgency, capacity, and risk of failure to deliver at scale to affected populations.

These are defined as follows:

1. Scale (number of affected/potentially affected people, including in proportion to total country population; size of affected areas);

2. Urgency (number of people displaced; crude mortality rates; minimal or no access to life-saving support; critical protection risks);

3. Complexity (multi-layered emergency; presence of a multitude of actors; high risks of politicization; lack of humanitarian access; high security risks to humanitarian actors);

4. Capacity (low levels of local or international response capacities, including lack of required specialized or technical expertise; needs outweigh the capacity to respond; inadequate humanitarian leadership);

5. Risk of failure to deliver effectively and at scale to affected populations vis-à-vis assessed need and severity (violations of human rights and international humanitarian law; exacerbation of food insecurity; deterioration of civil unrest).

Appendix 3 – Benchmarking report

Link to the benchmarking report

Appendix 4 – Evaluation Matrix[21]

Evaluation questions & sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection methods	Data sources	Data analysis methods
1. Evaluation Question - Relevance: To what extent were the Council of Europe's activities and initiatives developed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic in line with the needs of its member states, while taking into account human rights, rule of law and democracy commitments?				
1a. To what extent are the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 in line with the needs of its member states?	Degree of alignment of actions to the needs of member states, including direct beneficiaries[22] and other stakeholders as appropriate	– Document review – Survey – Interviews – Case studies	Council of Europe documents, Council of Europe staff, heads of external offices, permanent representations, chairmanships of the CM, representatives of major donors & other international organisations	– Mapping – Content analysis – Quantitative analysis
1b. How successfully was the Council of Europe able to adapt to deliver responses during Covid-19 restrictions?	Extent of adaptation of the Council of Europe response during the pandemic			
2. Evaluation Question - Effectiveness: To what extent did these activities and initiatives help member states address problems brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, while protecting human rights, rule of law and democracy?				
2a. To what extent were the activities of the Council of Europe perceived as useful by its partners and were used?	Level of satisfaction of member states Evidence of changes to which Council of Europe interventions contributed	– Survey – Interviews – Benchmarking – Document review – Case studies – Focus group discussions	Council of Europe staff; permanent representations; National partners; Civil society representatives; Representatives of other international organisations	– Outcome harvesting – Process tracing – Content analysis – Quantitative analysis – Mapping
2b. To what extent did the Council of Europe response lead to outcomes? (what was the yield of Council of Europe outputs?)	Level of yield of outcomes from Council of Europe outputs and actions Level of intergovernmental co-operation throughout the Covid-19 crisis			
2c. How were member states' own efforts supported by the Council of Europe response to Covid-19?	Evidence of measures taken by member states in the areas covered by the Council of Europe Degree of contribution of Council of Europe response to member states efforts Level and quality of monitoring by the Council of Europe of member states' human rights obligations			

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21. Where needs of the member states are referred to, these are understood as the need to effectively address threats and challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic while fulfilling their commitments to maintaining human rights, democracy and rule of law.
22. Such as individuals impacted by the decisions and measures taken by the authorities.

Evaluation questions & sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection methods	Data sources	Data analysis methods
3. Evaluation Question - Efficiency: To what extent an efficient use of available human, material and financial resources was ensured when developing initiatives and activities implemented between March 2020 and August 2021, to protect human rights, rule of law and democracy?				
3a. To what extent have Council of Europe responses maximised the resources available and utilized them in a coordinated manner?	Level of productivity during Covid-19 Degree of co-ordination between Council of Europe actions	– Document review – Survey – Interviews – Financial & progress reports	Council of Europe documents, Council of Europe staff	– Mapping – Content analysis – Quantitative analysis
3b. To what extent and how have the Council of Europe working methods been adapted? To what extent can they be used outside the context of the Covid-19 pandemic?	Evidence of new working methods and tools used Perception of their potential use beyond the context of the pandemic	– Document review – Survey – Interviews – Focus group discussions – Benchmarking	Council of Europe documents, Council of Europe staff, permanent representations, other international organisations	

Appendix 5 – Methodology

Data collection instruments

	Staff	Foreign Affairs	Authorities	CSOs	Total
Case studies			37	13	50
Interviews	59	10			69
Surveys	573		43		616

The evaluation obtained 735 responses overall.

Staff survey

The internal survey to staff members sought a response of approximately 300 from a target of 1000. In fact there were 573 responses out of 1636 target population (PeopleSoft at 23/8/2021) = 35% response rate (see Appendix 9). The target population was made up of all staff working in operational sectors from grade B1-A4. There were 346 responses from women and 144 from men, with 83 not stating gender. 65% of responses were by staff at headquarters and 35% were by staff at field offices.

External survey

The survey to external representatives was sent to members of PACE, Congress and the participant list of member state speakers at the World Forum for Democracy. There were 43 responses out of 1404 sent to PACE (692 – PACE records), Congress (690 – Congress records) and World Forum for Democracy (82 – DGII records) = 3% response rate. There were 19 responses by women and 24 by men.

Case study

A case study of three countries provided a cross-section of the various policy areas and co-operation work:

▶ Germany has a strong component in all intergovernmental committees.

▶ Greece is involved in most committees and is a beneficiary in project work DGI and DGII.

▶ Georgia is less involved in the intergovernmental committees and monitoring mechanisms but in contrast has extensive project work in place and a Council of Europe external office.

▶ Civil society and youth working at a national level was best approached through this case study rather than only considering civil society and youth at the international level.

▶ The case study therefore enabled us to reach the public sector and citizens more directly to better appreciate the influence and effects of Council of Europe work.

▶ This complemented the intergovernmental level that was analysed through interviews in Strasbourg with representatives of member states and their ministries of foreign affairs, and with representatives of international institutions accessed through the benchmarking.

52 representatives of the case study countries were interviewed according to the following breakdown:

	Inter-governmental committee	Monitoring mechanism	PACE	Congress	Co-operation	Civil society	Women	Men
Georgia	5	3			3	7	8	10
Germany	6	1	1			3	3	8
Greece	8	4	2	1	4	4	10	13
Overall	19	8	3	1	7	14	21	31

The gender balance was 21 women to 31 men.

Interviews

- ► Four sets of interview guides
- ► Council of Europe senior staff interviews (see Appendix 6)
- ► Permanent Representations' interviews (see Appendix 7)
- ► National authorities' interviews (see Appendix 8)
- ► International institutions' interviews (Benchmarking)

1. 59 interviews were held with managers of the different services involved

CM	PACE	Congress	CommHR	DPB	DLAPIL	ODGP	DGI	DGII	EDQM
4	4	4	1	2	1	16 (11 HoOs)	15	11	1

- ► ODGP included 11 Heads of Offices in the field; DGI and DGII include different directorates and standard setting, monitoring and co-operation development perspectives
- ► The gender balance was 32 women to 27 men

2. 10 interviews were held with permanent representations. Only Germany out of the case study countries accepted an interview. The gender balance was three women to eight men (one interview was with two diplomats).

Data analysis

Output mapping of Council of Europe

1. Categories of outputs

2. Categories of producing entities

Benchmarking report

Converted into an analysis grill to assess crisis management to be more refined according to 18 assessment criteria the consultant used under the five main categories:

1. Early response

2. Strategic approaches

3. Institutional responses

4. Operational responses

5. Responsiveness

External survey

1. Categorisation by evaluation matrix indicator

2. Categorisation by positive, negative external, negative internal competence (+/- poor leadership)/bureaucracy/tools

3. Assessment against crisis management framework

Staff survey

1. Categorisation by evaluation matrix indicator

2. Categorisation by positive, negative external, negative internal competence (+/- poor leadership)/bureaucracy/tools

3. Assessment against crisis management framework

Case studies initial analysis country-by-country – to synthesise in one overall case study report

1. Categorisation by evaluation matrix indicator

2. Categorisation by positive, negative external, negative internal competence (+/- poor leadership)/ bureaucracy/tools

3. Assessment against crisis management framework

Senior management interviews

1. Categorisation by evaluation matrix indicator

2. Categorisation by positive, negative external, negative internal competence (+/- poor leadership)/ bureaucracy/tools

3. Assessment against crisis management framework

Permanent representation interviews

1. Categorisation by evaluation matrix indicator

2. Categorisation by positive, negative external, negative internal competence (+/- poor leadership)/ bureaucracy/tools

3. Assessment against crisis management framework

Cost efficiency

1. Analysis of the Progress Review Reports with detailed expenditure of the Ordinary Budget

2. Analysis of absorption rates of extra budgetary resources reported to donors.

Appendix 6 – Senior management interview guide

Below is a list of questions designed for interviews with senior management. Together with the findings of the survey, case study and benchmarking, as well as interviews with other stakeholders, they will serve as a basis for the data analysis for the evaluation.

All interviews are confidential; the respondents will not be quoted at any point afterwards. Their names will be included in the list of people interviewed in an appendix to the evaluation report, unless they prefer that it is not included. The data will be collected and analysed by the Directorate of Internal Oversight.

The data will be used exclusively for the purpose of the evaluation, treated in accordance with the Council of Europe data protection rules and will be deleted after five years or at any time sooner, at the request of interviewees.

1. What do you think were the Council of Europe's three main achievements in its response to Covid-19 as far as member states are concerned? And what were the three main greatest challenges?

2. How did the Council of Europe adapt to Covid-19 in terms of its response for member states?

3. Did the Council of Europe respond in a way it should in accordance with its mandate? Can you give any examples?

4. How did the Council of Europe response to Covid-19 meet member states' and citizens' needs?

5. How did the Council of Europe make clear the goals and objectives of the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19?

6. How timely were adjustments to Council of Europe advice in accordance with the development of the pandemic?

7. What were the opportunities for the Council of Europe in responding to Covid-19? And did it take advantage of these?

8. In what ways if any did the Council of Europe encourage more international co-operation among member states during Covid-19?

9. In what ways if any was Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 mutually reinforced by different services? Can you provide any examples?

10. What changes were there in staff behaviour during the pandemic, and what role did management play in that?

11. How useful will the innovations arising from the pandemic be in the future for the Council of Europe?

Appendix 7 – Permanent Representations interview guide

Below is a list of questions designed for interviews with member state representatives. Together with the findings of the survey, case study and benchmarking, as well as interviews with other stakeholders, they will serve as a basis for the data analysis for the evaluation.

All interviews are confidential; the respondents will not be quoted at any point afterwards. Their names will be included in the list of people interviewed in an appendix to the evaluation report, unless they prefer that it is not included. The data will be collected and analysed by the Directorate of Internal Oversight.

The data will be used exclusively for the purpose of the evaluation, treated in accordance with the Council of Europe data protection rules and will be deleted after five years or at any time sooner, at the request of interviewees.

1. What do you think were the Council of Europe's main achievements in its response to Covid-19 as far as member states are concerned? And what were its main challenges?

2. In your opinion, how well and how appropriately did the Council of Europe adapt to Covid-19 in terms of its response for member states? Was it timely?

3. What should the Council of Europe's priorities, in your opinion, have been in its response to Covid-19? And what were they in practice?

4. How much influence do you feel the Council of Europe had in promoting member states' better responses to Covid-19? Can you give any examples?

5. How different did you find Council of Europe's Covid-19 interventions from conventional ones from before the pandemic? How well did the Council of Europe take advantage of opportunities in responding to Covid-19?

Appendix 8 – Case study interview guide

Below is a list of questions designed for interviews with member state representatives. Together with the findings of the survey, case study and benchmarking, as well as interviews with other stakeholders, they will serve as a basis for the data analysis for the evaluation.

All interviews are confidential; the respondents will not be quoted at any point afterwards. Their names will be included in the list of people interviewed in an appendix to the evaluation report, unless they prefer that it is not included. The data will be collected and analysed by the Directorate of Internal Oversight.

The data will be used exclusively for the purpose of the evaluation, treated in accordance with the Council of Europe data protection rules and will be deleted after five years or at any time sooner, at the request of interviewees.

1.   What do you think were the Council of Europe's main achievements in its response to Covid-19 as far as member states are concerned? And its main challenges?

2.   In your opinion, how well and how appropriately did the Council of Europe adapt to Covid-19 in terms of its response for member states? And how timely?

3.   What should the Council of Europe's priorities have been in its response to Covid-19? And what were they in practice?

4.   How well did the Council of Europe take advantage of opportunities in responding to Covid-19?

5.   To what extent has the Council of Europe encouraged more international co-operation among member states during Covid-19?

6.   What will change in your sector's approach because of the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19?

Appendix 9 – Mapping of Council of Europe outputs in response to Covid-19 examined by the evaluators

Link to the Mapping of Council of Europe outputs.

Appendix 10 – Staff survey

This survey is part of the evaluation of the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19, undertaken by the Directorate of Internal Oversight in accordance with its Work Programme 2021-2022.

The survey should take between 10-15 minutes. It is confidential and will be treated with the strictest anonymity. As such none of the questions or identifiers are mandatory. We are looking for individual perceptions regardless of role or position in the Organisation. Any questions that make you feel uncertain are therefore completely optional.

The survey is designed to measure staff perception of the Council of Europe's response externally to Covid-19 at first (questions 1-10 mostly deal with how useful and effective the Council of Europe's response was in member states) and then also with a focus on efficiency towards the end (questions 11 onwards include the perspective of our performance as an Organisation).

Your responses will be used for both analysis and further enquiry through other data collection instruments. For this reason, when appropriate please take a little time to provide any reflections and comments inspired by any of the questions.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

1.   In your opinion, how useful was the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19?
     Very useful, mostly useful, somewhat useful, not useful, don't know

2.   Select up to three of your main expectations of the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19.
     Reaching a wider audience; providing continuity; human rights scrutiny, supporting member states' respect of human rights, rule of law and democracy; economic support; support to healthcare; citizen empowerment to respond independently to crisis; building trust in governance and expertise; A forum for exchange of experience on Covid-19 (random)

3.   Select up to three of the actual results of the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 in your opinion.
     Reaching a wider audience; providing continuity; human rights scrutiny, supporting member states' respect of human rights, rule of law and democracy; economic support; support to healthcare; citizen empowerment to respond independently to crisis; building trust in governance and expertise; A forum for exchange of experience on Covid-19 (random)

4.   How much influence do you feel the Council of Europe had in promotinga better response among member states to Covid-19?
     Very much, much, not much, none, don't know

5.   To what extent do you think the Council of Europe response to Covid-19 was in line with what the Council of Europe aims to achieve? (make it clearer the difference)
     Very much, Mostly, Somewhat, Not at all, Don't know

6.   How clear to you were the goals and objectives for the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19?
     Very clear, Mostly clear, Somewhat clear, Not clear, Don't know

7.   Choose up to three words that you feel best describe the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19?
     Focused; high quality; slow; unique; innovative; impractical; ineffective; poor quality; unfocused; mechanical; effective (random)

8.   In your opinion, how timely was the Council of Europe's advice to member states in accordance with the development of the pandemic?
     Very timely, Timely, Not very timely, Not timely at all, Don't know

9.   In your view, to what extent did the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 meet member states' and citizens' needs?
     Very much, Mostly, Somewhat, Not at all, Don't know

10. Select up to three areas in which you think the Council of Europe's response met the needs to address Covid-19 most effectively.
     Enhancing intergovernmental approaches, providing a forum for multilateral political dialogue, acting

as a watchdog against human rights abuses, technical assistance, supporting vulnerable groups, providing political leadership, stimulating government reform

11. How different did you find Council of Europe Covid-19 interventions from conventional ones from before the pandemic?
Very different, Different, Not very different, Not different at all, Don't know

12. How well did the Council of Europe take advantage of opportunities in responding to Covid-19?
Very well, Mostly well, Somewhat well, Not well, Don't know

13. Select up to three of the biggest opportunities you think there were for the Council of Europe in its Covid-19 response.
More rules based international order; stronger multilateralism; increasing skills and competences in human rights; greater civil society involvement; combat exclusionary rhetoric; connecting to citizens; increased awareness of Council of Europe conventions; increased focus on equality; realignment of priorities; institutional reform; increasing cross-sector approaches

14. In your opinion, to what extent were the human rights aspects of Covid-19 measures improved due to the Council of Europe's interventions in your field of work?
Very much, Mostly, Somewhat, Not at all, Don't know

15. To what extent has the Council of Europe encouraged more international co-operation among member states during Covid-19?
Much more than usual, More than usual, Neither more nor less, Less than usual, Much less than usual, Don't know

16. To what extent do you think the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 was co-ordinated?
Very much, Mostly, Somewhat, Not at all, Don't know

17. To what extent was Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 mutually reinforced by different services?
Very much, Mostly, Somewhat, Not at all, Don't know

18. To what extent have you seen a change in staff solidarity during the pandemic?
A great increase, some increase, no change, some decrease, a great decrease

19. To what extent have you felt enabled to innovate and try out new things during Covid-19?
Very much, Mostly, Somewhat, Not at all, Don't know

20. How useful do you think some of the innovations arising from the pandemic will be in the future for the Council of Europe?
Very useful, Useful, Not very useful, Not useful at all

21. What was the most important innovation for you in the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19?
Comments box

22. What will change in your sector's approach because of the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19?
Comments box

23. How was policy and practice in your sector supported by the Council of Europe's Covid-19 response?
Comments box

24. What improvements do you think could have been suggested for the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 during the pandemic?
Comments box

25. Indicate your MAE

26. Indicate if you are based in the field or at headquarters

27. Indicate your length of service

28. Indicate your gender

Appendix 11 – External survey

This survey is part of the evaluation of the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19, undertaken by the Directorate of Internal Oversight in accordance with its Work Programme 2021-2022.

The survey should take between 5-10 minutes. It is confidential and will be treated with the strictest anonymity. As such none of the questions or identifiers are mandatory. The survey is designed to measure the perception of the Council of Europe's response externally to Covid-19.

Your responses will be used for both analysis and further enquiry through other data collection instruments. For this reason, when appropriate please take a little time to provide any reflections and comments inspired by any of the questions.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

1.   How visible do you think the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 was where you live?
     Very visible, Visible, Somewhat visible, Not visible, Don't know/Not applicable

2.   How much influence do you feel the Council of Europe had in promoting a better response among member states to Covid-19 from the human rights perspective?
     Very much, Much/a lot, Some/a little, None

3.   In your opinion, to what extent were the human rights aspects of Covid-19 measures improved due to the Council of Europe's interventions in your field of activity?
     Very much, Much/mostly, Some/a little, Not at all, Don't know

4.   To what extent did the Council of Europe's response meet Covid-19 needs in terms of:
     Setting standards for human rights, rule of law and democracy; Monitoring of human rights, rule of law and democracy standards; Acting as a watchdog against human rights abuses; Providing a forum for multilateral political dialogue; Providing technical assistance to public sector; Supporting vulnerable groups; Empowering diverse social groups?

5.   In your view how different were the Council of Europe's Covid-19 interventions from those before the pandemic?
     Very different, Mostly different, Somewhat different, Not different, Don't know/Not applicable

6.   How well did the Council of Europe take advantage of opportunities in responding to Covid-19 in terms of:
     Promoting a stronger rules-based international order; Promoting stronger multilateralism; Increasing skills and competences in human rights; Promoting greater civil society involvement; Combating exclusionary rhetoric; Connecting to citizens; Increasing awareness of Council of Europe conventions; Increasing focus on equality?

7.   What improvements do you feel could be made to the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19?

8.   Please indicate your age group.

9.   Please indicate your gender.

10. Please indicate your field of activity.
     Studies/personal interest; Public sector; Private sector; Voluntary sector; Academia/research

Appendix 12 – List of documents consulted

Council of Europe	Council of Europe websites
CommHR	Commissioner for Human Rights Activity Reports
ODGP	External Office Quarterly Reports
DPAER	Weekly Political Briefings
DPB	Progress Review Reports
DGA	Staff survey on the working environment for the future of the Council of Europe
DIT	Annual Performance Reports
DIO	Staff survey on lessons learned during Covid-19 lockdown
DIO	Survey of diplomatic services experience of Covid-19 arrangements
DIO	Annual Reports
OIOS	Covid-19 Response Evaluation Protocol, October 2020
OSCE	Learning from Working During the COVID-19 Pandemic Final Report October 2021
WFP	Evaluation of the WFP Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic January 2022
IASC/OCHA	IASC level 3 emergency
UNDP	UNDP Crisis Response SOP Levels
UNICEF	Guidance Handbook in L1, L2 and L3 emergencies
UNESCO	UNESCO's Crisis Preparedness and Response
IASC	SOP for the new Humanitarian System-wide Scale-up Activation

Appendix 13 – List of interviews

Council of Europe in chronological order

Leyla Kayacik	CM	09-sept		William Massolin	ODGP	12-oct
Marja Ruotanen	PACE	10-sept		Hallvard Gorseth	DGII	12-oct
Alison Sidebottom	DPB	10-sept		Clare Ovey	DGI	14-oct
Isil Gachet	CHR	13-sept		Matjaz Gruden	DGII	14-oct
Verena Taylor	ODGP	13-sept		Stephanie Poirel	Congress	15-oct
Renate Zikmund	Congress	15-sept		Steen Norlov	ODGP	15-oct
Natalia Voutova	ODGP	16-sept		Frank Power	ODGP	18-oct
Alexander Seger	ODGP	20-sept		Tobias Flessenkemper	ODGP	21-oct
Claudia Luciani	DGII	20-sept		Delphine Freymann	ODGP	22-oct
Artemy Karpenko	PACE	22-sept		Tania Rakusic-Hadzic	DGI	25-oct
Regis Brillat	DGI	22-sept		Tanja Kleinsorge	PACE	03-nov
Simona Granata-Menghini	DGI	23-sept		Mikhail Lobov, Laurence Lwoff	DGI	03-nov
Eva Pastrana	DGI	23-sept		Mustafa Ferati	DGI	09-nov
Jan Kleijssen	DGI	24-sept		Patrick Penninckx	DGI	09-nov
Jeroen Schokkenbroek	DGII	24-sept		Katalin Tamus	ODGP	09-nov
Susanne Keitel	DGII	24-sept		Pilar Morales	ODGP	15-nov
Catherine Varinot	CM	27-sept		Denis Huber	DGI	15-nov
Christophe Poirel	DGI	27-sept		Daniel Popescu	DGII	18-nov
Catherine du-Bernard-Rochy/ Camille Gangloff/Jean-Etienne Kautzmann	DPB	28-sept		Jorg Polakiewicz	DLAPIL	19-nov
Rafael Benitez	Congress	29-sept		Matthew Barr	ODGP	19-nov
Ulrika Flodin-Janson	CM	30-sept		Dmitri Marchenkov	Congress	22-nov
Nicola-Daniel Cangemi	DGII	30-sept		Kathrin Merkle	DGII	23-nov
Konstantin Troussevitch	ODGP	01-oct		Bojana Urumova	ODGP	23-nov
Drahoslav Stepanek	DGI	01-oct		Petr Sich	ODGP	24-nov
Hanne Juncher	DGI	01-oct		Jan Malinowski	DGI	26-nov
Antje Rothemund	DGII	04-oct		Genevieve Mayer	CM	26-nov
Valerie Clamer	PACE	08-oct		Martina Schmidt	ODGP	29-nov
Elda Moreno	DGII	08-oct		Cristina Milagre	DGII	10-déc
Jutta Gutzkow	ODGP	11-oct		Nicola Frank	DGI	22-déc
Sjur Bergan	DGII	11-oct				

Permanent representations

Germany PR	Finland PR
Hungary PR	Turkey PR
Moldova PR	Austria PR
Denmark PR	Andorra PR
Malta PR	Portugal PR

Case study

Georgia	18
Germany	9
Greece	23

Appendix 14 – Benchmarking assessment

Ref	Category	Benchmark	Council of Europe assessment	Council of Europe level
1	Early responses	Establishing an early strategic response provided a framework for organisations' subsequent handling of the crisis.	Many statements, toolkits, guidance established a good framework for the Council of Europe's subsequent handling of the crisis.	Good
2	Early responses	Crisis preparedness was an essential factor in the speed and effectiveness with which organisations were able to respond.	Meetings during this period were cancelled as the pandemic initially had a completely debilitating effect. Certain aspects of the Council of Europe's operations, such as monitoring, were brought to a complete standstill. First events cancelled, reliance on staff and personal investment/ loaning of resources. No decision-making process operational. Monitoring and key activities impossible.	Minimal
3	Early responses	Dedicated crisis response teams provided an essential pivot-point for intervention.	There was a crisis response team, and some leadership. In terms of claiming a role however, the emphasis was on incorporating Covid-19 considerations into the existing role of the Organisation, rather than aspiring to a more proactive role in the crisis.	Minimal
4	Early responses	Early, hands-on leadership contributed strongly to the effectiveness of an organisation's response.	There was early, hands-on leadership at the Council of Europe. The Secretary General reacted quickly and by co-ordinating with senior management across the Organisation to analyse in detail the appropriate priorities in the response to Covid-19. This was then detailed in an often-cited toolkit that was disseminated within a month of the lockdown on 8th April 2020.	Satisfactory
5	Strategies and approaches	While alignment of member state priorities was at times challenging, organisations were successful in developing an advisory and mediating role.	There was a crisis response team, and some leadership. In terms of claiming a role however, the emphasis was on incorporating Covid-19 considerations into the existing role of the Organisation, rather than aspiring to a more proactive role in the crisis.	Satisfactory
6	Strategies and approaches	Organisations developed multi-sectorial approaches, and strengthened their internal co-ordination, which contributed to the effectiveness of responses.	There was good communication and internal co-ordination in terms of health considerations and working arrangements, supported by the SMT and Covid focal points in all the MAEs. This ensured clarity for staff on how to go about their work. The information flow and internal co-ordination of the strategy and the programme of the Organisation was maintained through the existing channels of DPB and ODGP. As a result specific programming to respond to the crisis was predominantly isolated and only co-ordinated through occasional informal channels.	Minimal

Ref	Category	Benchmark	Council of Europe assessment	Council of Europe level
7	Institutional responses	Organisations rapidly adopted new working modalities, which brought both positive and negative effects.	The Council of Europe provided new working modalities that offered solutions to the lockdown and distance working. There was not always a range in this offer to cater to different needs, incurring costs and preventing the most effective solutions to be applied. The new working modalities were not adequate to cover the full range of Council of Europe operations.	Satisfactory
8	Institutional responses	Organisations demonstrated strong commitment to the duty of care to staff, partners, and other stakeholders.	There were some concerns among staff, but the direct management support during the pandemic was generally praised.	Good
9	Operational responses	Organisations mobilised significantly increased resources to respond to the crisis, while strengthening and expanding their donor base.	The Council of Europe did not attempt to seek further resources because the existing resources were adequate for the response the Organisation proposed. The transfer of budget between programmes was typical of any period rather than involving exceptional reallocation of resources.	Minimal
10	Operational responses	Operational responses were broad-ranging and needs-focused, and were guided by local monitoring.	Given that the Council of Europe did not aspire to a more prominent role to address the crisis, the overall focus of work was more on observing the situation and monitoring effects on human rights, rule of law and democracy. This restricted the Organisation's capacity to provide a multi-dimensional, needs-focused, localised operational response. The question arises as to the capacity of the Organisation to do otherwise for all member states, and the extent that an equitable approach is desirable. It would appear feasible however to aspire to such goals where there are already projects in implementation and field offices.	Minimal
11	Operational responses	Organisations' co-operation and partnership efforts contributed to the effectiveness of their responses.	There was minimal co-operation and partnership both between governments and the Council of Europe, and between different international organisations. The existing relationships built into to the Organisation's working methods were relied upon more for business continuity than a specific crisis response.	Minimal
12	Operational responses	Organisations ensured strong information flows and communication about the pandemic and their own efforts.	There was good communication and internal co-ordination in terms of health considerations and working arrangements, supported by the SMT and Covid focal points in all the MAEs. This ensured clarity for staff on how to go about their work. The information flow and internal co-ordination of the strategy and the programme of the Organisation was maintained through the existing channels of DPB and ODGP. As a result specific programming to respond to the crisis was predominantly isolated and only co-ordinated through occasional informal channels.	Minimal

Ref	Category	Benchmark	Council of Europe assessment	Council of Europe level
13	Operational responses	Organisations generally integrated human rights, gender, vulnerability and inclusiveness issues in their strategies and operations.	The very nature of the Council of Europe's response to Covid-19 integrated human rights, gender, vulnerability and inclusiveness issues. The limitation was one of resources available rather than lack of action of any single sector within the Organisation.	Excellent
14	Operational responses	Organisations have ensured regular monitoring and evaluation, which has contributed to adjustments to their responses, and future planning.	Great potential from the active data collection in place - but needs co-ordinating and analysing. DGA and DIO active with early surveys on wellbeing and working methods. DPB maintained the interim progress review and specifically focused on Covid-19 measures and actions for the ordinary budget. The reporting process was applied as normal to inform the CM. ODGP carried out repeated reporting exercises to understand project delivery, results and disruptions caused by Covid-19 - reporting was shared with donors. Finally, there was a high level of interest and participation in this evaluation from all stakeholders concerned.	Satisfactory
15	Responsive-ness	Organisations have demonstrated considerable adaptability and innovation, and have effected lasting changes.	There is very strong demand for a continuation of the new working modalities operationalised during the pandemic.	Good
16	Responsive-ness	Organisations have developed best practices in approaching the pandemic, and are integrating lessons learnt into their future responses and crisis preparedness.	Great potential from the active data collection in place - but needs co-ordinating and analysing. DGA and DIO active with early surveys on wellbeing and working methods. DPB maintained the interim progress review and specifically focused on Covid-19 measures and actions for the ordinary budget. The reporting process was applied as normal to inform the CM. ODGP carried out repeated reporting exercises to understand project delivery, results and disruptions caused by Covid-19 - reporting was shared with donors. Finally, there was a high level of interest and participation in this evaluation from all stakeholders concerned.	Satisfactory

This report presents the results of the evaluation of the Council of Europe's support to member states in addressing challenges related to the Covid-19 pandemic. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the extent to which the Council of Europe's programmatic response to the crisis through its support to member states assisted them in fulfilling their commitments to maintaining human rights, rule of law and democracy in the context of threats and challenges posed by the pandemic. Overall, the findings reveal that the Council of Europe was able to respond despite little preparedness for a crisis of such magnitude. The evaluation provides recommendations to further strengthen institutional capacity to manage crisis, to optimise the Organisation's crisis preparedness and to reinforce the strong resilience the Organisation demonstrated during the pandemic.

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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