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

Management response & Action plan

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Name of Evaluation Report:	Evaluation of the Council of Europe's support to member states in addressing challenges related to the Covid-19 pandemic		
Date of Evaluation Report:	15 September 2022	Date of the Action Plan:	10 November 2022

Overall management response to the evaluation:

The Secretary General welcomes the assessment that the Council of Europe operated exceptionally well during the pandemic, making the period a highly productive one and demonstrating the relevance and added value of its actions. At the same time, the organisation recognises that there are lessons to be learnt from every crisis and will endeavour to improve its crisis preparedness to ensure that it adapts in the most appropriate manner to be able to respond to emerging needs in member states, within the framework of its mandate.

ACTION PLAN

Management Decision[1]	Entity in Charge[2]	Planned Actions[3] (determined by Entity)	Target Date for Action	Person Responsible for Action
Recommendation 1: Crisis preparedness and checklist: further adapt Level 3 crisis procedures recommended in the crisis management and business continuity audit to the Council of Europe context to address the unprecedented level of global crisis that Covid-19 caused, (see UN level-3 crisis management system (Appendix 2 in the appendices to the Evaluation report). **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[4])				
☑ Accepted ☐ Rejected ☐ Under consideration	PO (in consultation with all operational entities) and DGA	Lessons learned from Covid-19 will be taken into consideration as necessary when elaborating the future Business Continuity Plan of the Council of Europe, to be examined and endorsed in the framework of the Task Force on Crisis Management and Business Continuity (CMBC) aimed at strengthening the Organisation's crisis and risk management processes and, consequently, its overall resilience. A checklist of actions to be taken at each level of crisis is also covered by the Task Force on CMBC (notably its 2nd and 3rd deliverables: "crisis competency framework" and "appropriate forum to manage Organisation-wide crises").	31/12/2023	Director of PO with Director General of DGA

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1   The Management decision concerns the Recommendation (Accepted, Rejected, Under consideration).
2   Initial suggestion – to be defined/updated by management.
3   For implementing accepted recommendations.
4   Recommendations have been classified as either "high" or "medium" in terms of the assessment of their importance following the evaluation.

Management Decision[1]	Entity in Charge[2]	Planned Actions[3] (determined by Entity)	Target Date for Action	Person Responsible for Action
Recommendation 2: 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)				
☑ Accepted ☐ Rejected ☐ Under consideration	DPB	To shape the overall Programme and Budget response to a crisis, advice will be developed and provided to programme and sub-programme co-ordinators on how to adapt the programmes to cope with the crisis and react rapidly to any major shift provoked by the crisis. During the workshops to prepare the next Programme and Budget and the Public Policy Design training sessions, awareness will be raised on fast reaction management and on how to adapt programmes, if relevant, to cope with the crisis.	30/06/2024	Director of DPB
Recommendation 3: 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)				
☑ Accepted ☐ Rejected ☐ Under consideration	DPB	The RBM practical guide and the strategic planning guidelines will be updated to include a section on how to react to a crisis whilst contributing to the achievement of the defined or, where relevant, adjusted outcomes.	31/12/2024	Director of DPB

Management Decision[1]	Entity in Charge[2]	Planned Actions[3] (determined by Entity)	Target Date for Action	Person Responsible for Action
Recommendation 4: 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)				
☑ Accepted ☐ Rejected ☐ Under consideration	PO and DBP	A roadmap, to be followed in case of a crisis, will be developed. It will describe the necessary steps to respond to a crisis from a programmatic and budgetary point of view (including identification and estimation of needs).	30/06/2024	Director of PO and Director of DPB
Recommendation 5: 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)				
☐ Accepted ☐ Rejected ☑ Under consideration	PO with DGI and DGII	*This recommendation is understood as an invitation to the independent monitoring bodies "to consider adding flexibility to their procedures to be able to carry out "exceptional monitoring".* Monitoring bodies have already explored the possibilities of exceptional /ad hoc monitoring both under their respective treaties and Rules of Procedure; whenever possible, the latter were supplemented with specific rules to that effect (e.g. ECRI); some monitoring or advisory bodies (e.g. CPT, or the procedure under the Istanbul Convention (Articles 68.13 and 68.14) or the Venice Commission)) have the ability to react very rapidly. It is also recalled that the Organisation has the capacity to put in place ad hoc / exceptional tools at the initiative and under the authority of the Secretary General (e.g., the High-level Working Group on Judicial Reform in the Republic of Moldova) which combine expertise from various bodies and provide assistance tools for concrete solutions (beyond identification of shortcomings). The flexibility and lack of formalism is key for the success of the above tools.		

Management Decision[1]	Entity in Charge[2]	Planned Actions[3] (determined by Entity)	Target Date for Action	Person Responsible for Action
Recommendation 6: 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)				
☑ Accepted ☐ Rejected ☐ Under consideration	PO	This is a Council of Europe priority, including during the public health crisis. The designing of the appropriate measures will always depend on the nature of the crisis. Partnerships with civil society are a priority for the Secretary General (see decisions adopted, 132nd Session of the Committee of Ministers (Turin, Italy, 20 May 2022): CM/Del/Dec(2022)132/3ci)).	31/12/2023	Director of PO with MAEs concerned
Recommendation 7: 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)				
☑ Accepted ☐ Rejected ☐ Under consideration	DPC	Specific resource mobilisation guidance for crisis response will be considered. In all circumstances, it will need to take into consideration the nature of the crisis in question (e.g., country or topic concerned).	31/12/2023	Director of DPC

Management Decision[1]	Entity in Charge[2]	Planned Actions[3] (determined by Entity)	Target Date for Action	Person Responsible for Action
Recommendation 8: 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)				
☑ Accepted ☐ Rejected ☐ Under consideration	PO	This is a Council of Europe priority, including during the public health crisis. The designing of the appropriate measures will always depend on the nature of the crisis.	31/12/2023	Director of PO with MAEs concerned
Recommendation 9: 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)				
☑ Accepted ☐ Rejected ☐ Under consideration	DGA and DIT	The Organisation will continue to make available multiple solutions for online working, as part of its continuous effort to adapt to a complex and ever-changing environment, notably by streamlining its working methods through digital transformation, in line with the relevant strategic documents (including the IT Strategy 2023-2025 and IT Disaster Recovery Plan). The continuous roll-out of videoconferencing, remote interpretation and e-voting services will be pursued in order to further support the organisation of hybrid sessions and meetings, in line with business requirements. The renovation of the hemicycle in 2023, as part of the Capital Master Plan, will also allow virtual PACE sessions to be held. New teleworking arrangements and a more flexible use of workspaces ("new way of working" – launch of a pilot phase in Agora) will enable the Organisation to continue adapting to changing working practices.The extent of this more flexible and varied provision of solutions for online working, as well as the corresponding testing and consultation procedures, will take into account the necessary balance between the resources required on the one side, and the likelihood and impact of the corresponding risks on the other side.	31/12/2023	Director General of DGA

Abbreviations	
DGA	Directorate General of Administration
DPB	Directorate of Programme and Budget
DIT	Directorate of Information Technology
DPC	Directorate of Programme Co-ordination
PO	Private Office of the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General