

EVALUATION OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE ACTION PLAN FOR AZERBAIJAN 2022–2025

February 2026



INTRODUCTION

This evaluation assessed how the Action Plan supported Azerbaijan in aligning its legislation, institutions, and practice with Council of Europe standards in human rights, rule of law, and democracy. The Plan addressed priorities such as judicial reform, cybercrime, anti-discrimination,

anti-corruption, and gender equality, operating through standard-setting, monitoring, and co-operation activities, and aimed to advance national reforms and institutional capacity.

WHY THIS EVALUATION?

The evaluation was commissioned by DIO to inform strategic decision-making and guide future co-operation. It covered the entire duration of the Action Plan (2022 to 2025). The assessment evaluated the Action Plan's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, and efficiency in meeting Azerbaijan's reform needs. It also sought to identify key lessons learned and recommend improvements for future Action Plans.

WHAT DID THE EVALUATION FIND?



Strategic alignment

The Action Plan was broadly relevant and aligned with Azerbaijan's reform priorities and international obligations, notably in areas such as judicial reform, cybercrime, anti-discrimination, and gender equality.



Effectiveness

Tangible results achieved in select areas - justice, combating economic crime, gender equality - underpinned by strong institutional partnerships.



Gaps

Other priorities (e.g., prison reform, trafficking in human beings) showed limited progress due to funding and engagement constraints.



Ownership

The design process involved limited structured consultation with national stakeholders, reducing full national ownership and awareness of the Action Plan.



Synergy

Collaboration between projects was mostly ad hoc and not supported by formal co-ordination mechanisms.



Monitoring

Monitoring and evaluation remained focused on outputs rather than longer-term outcomes, limiting evidence of sustained change.



Operational delivery

Projects were implemented efficiently despite external challenges (COVID-19, inflation, temporary hiatus in cooperation with authorities).

LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICE



- 1. Success factors**
Strongest results were achieved where long-term Council of Europe presence, technical continuity, and peer-to-peer engagement were present.
- 2. Emerging domains**
Future cooperation should consider prioritising education, social rights, digital governance, artificial intelligence, and environmental rights.
- 3. Co-ordination**
Project synergies amplify impact but require more proactive, structured cross-project learning and planning.
- 4. Learning**
Systematic institutional learning and adaptation from project experiences and previous Action Plans are key to ongoing improvement.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS



- 1. Strengthen participatory design**
Involve national stakeholders in structured consultations when developing future Action Plans.
- 2. Improve results-based monitoring**
Focus monitoring frameworks on tracking outcomes - not just activities - and provide adequate guidance and tools
- 3. Enhance co-ordination**
Establish formal mechanisms for internal coherence and joint learning among projects.
- 4. Increase resource flexibility**
Develop mechanisms to shift resources as needs and opportunities arise.
- 5. Boost visibility**
Implement targeted communication strategies to increase awareness of the Action Plan and its achievements.



HOW WAS THIS EVALUATION CONDUCTED?

DATA COLLECTION APRIL-MAY 2024 FINDINGS VALIDATED AND REPORT FINALISED NOVEMBER 2025



60
documents reviewed



73
key informant interviewees



2
Focus group discussions



1
Data collection mission

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