

CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS BY CO-OPERATION PROJECTS: A META-EVALUATION

Management response and Action plan



June 2026

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Management response and Action Plan

Name of Evaluation Report:	Contribution to national implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights by co-operation projects: a meta-evaluation		
Date of Evaluation Report:	09/04/2026	Date of Action Plan:	09/06/2026

Overall management response to the evaluation:

The Major Administrative Entities (MAEs) concerned – Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law (DGI), Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII), the Directorate of Programme Co-ordination (DPC) and the Secretariat of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (Congress) – find the meta-evaluation to be an overall useful assessment of the contribution of co-operation projects to the national implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights and take note of the conclusions and recommendations.

While the report substantively and thematically focuses on what can be seen as the DGI mandate, the recommendations are primarily focused on enhancing the Project Management Methodology (PMM) and its application in practice including elements relating to enhanced communication and co-ordination (Recommendation 4). As the recommendations addressed are broad and go beyond the remit of one MAE, the actions to be implemented should include actions from multiple MAEs and primarily the DPC as the entity that drives the PMM processes. It is important to note that several of the issues identified are already being addressed through ongoing efforts to strengthen the PMM, and the results-based management (RBM) practices. The recommendations will be taken into account, where relevant, in the further development and update of the PMM and of DPC guidance, tools and capacity-building activities.

For its part, the Congress recognises the critical areas for improvement identified in the report, particularly the sparse evidence of long-term effectiveness and the tendency for gender mainstreaming to be treated superficially in both projects and evaluations. The Congress, within its capacities and in co-operation with other MAEs (DGI in particular), will strive to better communicate how technical assistance at the local and regional levels serves the national implementation of the Convention, ensuring our work is perceived as contributing to the promotion and protection of human rights across member states.

ACTION PLAN

Management decision ¹	Entity in charge ²	Planned actions ³ (determined by entity)	Justification for non-acceptance ⁴	Target date for action	Person responsible for action
Recommendation 1: Project teams should aim for interconnected outcomes that cause a chain of effects and contribute more collectively to impact. Project supervisors further integrate Council of Europe PMM into their supervision and approvals processes to align efforts with Council of Europe goals and enhance project design and evaluation. (High⁵) Response: The Council of Europe recognises the importance of promoting a more strategic, impact-oriented approach. To achieve this, the Organisation is committed to the full integration of the PMM into the daily management and supervision of co-operation activities. By ensuring that project outcomes are interconnected and aligned with broader strategic goals, the Council of Europe enhances the sustainability and collective impact of its work. DPC will continue ensuring that co-operation projects are designed around interconnected outcomes that drive long-term impact, by reinforcing the capacities of project teams through guidance, dedicated learning paths, and coaching. DPC will also expand the use of initiatives such as co-creation workshops to further strengthen the causal links between results and ensure a more coherent chain of effects across projects. This will be supported by a continued focus on quality assurance during the review of project proposals and logframes, in collaboration with operational entities.					
☒ Accepted ☐ Partially accepted ☐ Rejected	DPC in lead, co-ordinating actions by DGI, DGII, Congress	- In co-operation between the DGI, DGII, DPC, Congress and DHR, develop a programme for continuous training for project managers on the Project Management Methodology (PMM) taking into account its evolution over time. - Develop guidance, dedicated learning paths and coaching to ensure enhanced understanding and raising awareness of the PMM and reinforcing the capacities of project teams in its application. - Develop guidance and training focused on the strengthened interconnection between outcomes and contribute to more coherent chains of effects and impact. - Establish a requirement for project teams to develop explicit ToC during the design phase.		On going	Director of DPC
Recommendation 2: Project teams should enhance outcome-focused monitoring that is more practical and comprehensive and uses robust qualitative and quantitative indicators at output and outcome levels. Project supervisors should support more extensive monitoring in line with PMM with the help whenever possible of monitoring and evaluation officers for guidance and data quality. (High) Response: A robust outcome-focused monitoring is essential for demonstrating the effectiveness of co-operation activities. This recommendation aligns with DPC's ongoing efforts to further embed results-based management across all project phases. To make monitoring more practical and comprehensive, DPC will continue to					

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

² Initial suggestion – to be defined/updated by management.

³ For implementing accepted recommendations.

⁴ For recommendations that are partially accepted or rejected.

⁵ Recommendations have been classified as either "high" or "medium" in terms of the assessment of their importance following the evaluation.

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expand its guidance materials, including the update of the PMM Handbook before the end of the year, the provision of concrete RBM tips and examples, and the development of dedicated e-learning modules. In addition, DPC will continue to work closely with MAEs to develop harmonised “common indicators” at the output and outcome levels. This work aims to ensure that indicators are not only robust but also consistent across different thematic areas, allowing for better aggregation of results. Furthermore, DPC will use PMM training activities and ongoing operational support to reinforce the importance of data quality. By focusing on accurate and reliable data entry, DPC ensures that project teams and supervisors have the high-quality information necessary for effective monitoring, reporting, and evidence-based decision-making.					
☒ Accepted ☐ Partially accepted ☐ Rejected	DPC in lead, co-ordinating actions by DGI, DGII, Congress	- Further develop and complement guidance on results-based monitoring and reporting, using different formats (PMM Handbook, tips for RBM concrete applications and examples, e-learning) - Continue developing more robust and harmonised indicators at output and outcome levels (common indicators), in collaboration with MAEs - Reinforce, through PMM training activities or other support to project teams, the importance of accurate and reliable data entry and data quality for monitoring and reporting purposes			Director of DPC
Recommendation 3: Project teams and supervisors should strengthen and systematise gender mainstreaming and human rights approaches, with the support of PMM and gender advisors. The objectives of gender mainstreaming and the human rights approach should be made more explicit in PMM with greater emphasis on the purpose of these approaches. (Medium) Response: The Council of Europe is committed to ensuring that gender equality is not only a core value but a practical reality across all its co-operation activities. The Council of Europe ensures that a gender perspective is integrated from the initial design phase of co-operation projects through to implementation and evaluation, in line with its Gender Equality Strategy. DPC will continue efforts to integrate gender mainstreaming and the human rights approach into PMM guidance and tools. Guidance in this respect, including the development of transversal common indicators is expected to be updated before the end of 2026. DPC will promote gender analyses during the project initiation phase and ensure that findings are integrated throughout the project cycle. Furthermore, DPC will integrate gender mainstreaming into project monitoring and evaluation activities to ensure that lessons are learned, and evaluation findings effectively inform the design and implementation of future projects. In co-operation with the Gender Mainstreaming Advisor, DPC will implement Gender Equality Markers and strengthen the link between project funding allocations and high scores received by these markers. To support this, DPC will promote the use of existing toolkits and practical guidance across co-operation projects, conduct advanced gender mainstreaming trainings/workshops on project-specific topics to ensure that project objectives contribute meaningfully to gender equality, and promote mandatory completion of the HELP Gender Mainstreaming Course and participation in basic gender mainstreaming trainings.					

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☒ Accepted ☐ Partially accepted ☐ Rejected	DPC in lead, co-ordinating actions by DGI, DGII, Congress	- Continue efforts to integrate gender mainstreaming and the human rights approach into PMM guidance and tools. - Promote gender analyses during the project initiation phase and ensure that findings are integrated throughout the project cycle - Integrate gender mainstreaming into project monitoring and evaluation activities to ensure that lessons are learned and evaluation findings effectively inform the design and implementation of future projects. - Implement Gender Equality Markers in co-operation with the Gender Mainstreaming Advisor and strengthen the link between project funding allocations and high scores received by Gender Equality Markers Promote the use of existing toolkits and practical guidance across co-operation projects - Conduct advanced gender mainstreaming trainings/ workshops on project-specific topics to ensure that project objectives contribute meaningfully to gender equality			Director of DPC
Recommendation 4: Project teams and supervisors should strengthen co-ordination and communication about the link between co-operation projects and the national implementation of the Convention as a uniting concept of Council of Europe work with external stakeholders, including donors, other international organisations, and a broader range of national stakeholders beyond the immediate partners and target groups of projects. This should entail more involvement and communication with the Department for the Execution of Judgments. (Medium) Response: The Council of Europe acknowledges the importance of clearly articulating the strategic links between its co-operation activities and its core standards, particularly the national implementation of the Convention and the execution of Court judgments. Strengthening these connections ensures a more cohesive approach to the Organisation's work. To ensure this, DPC will promote a clearer articulation of these links within project design, monitoring, and reporting. This approach ensures that the Council of Europe's unique added value is effectively communicated to external stakeholders, including donors, international partners, and national authorities. Central to this effort is the reinforcement of quality assurance mechanisms and feedback loops during the review of project proposals and PMM entries. DPC will therefore use its role in the quality assurance process to ensure that project teams better articulate the links between their work and the national implementation of the Convention, and to promote co-ordination with the Department for the Execution of Judgments. For example, when reviewing project proposals and PMM entries, DPC will check that they include explicit references to the execution of Court judgments where relevant. By reinforcing this feedback mechanism at the project design stage, DPC ensures that project teams have considered and documented these strategic links.					
☒ Accepted ☐ Partially accepted ☐ Rejected	DPC in lead, co-ordinating actions by	- Plan and organise regular co-ordination meetings with the Department for the Execution of Judgments, notably to include Execution Department priorities in project design and project implementation where relevant. - Promote clearer articulation of the link between co-operation projects and the implementation of the Convention in project design, monitoring and			Director of DPC

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	DGI, DGII, Congress	reporting; - Reinforce quality assurance and feedback mechanisms during the review of PMM project proposals to ensure adequate co-ordination and communication with relevant stakeholders, including the Department for the Execution of Judgments			
Recommendation 5: Project teams and supervisors should explore possibilities and opportunities for different implementation modalities to best suit particular stakeholders, periods and domestic/local circumstances, not only in response to challenges and crises, while appraising evidence that different modalities lead to improved outcomes. (Medium) Response: The Council of Europe strives for effectiveness in its field operations. The Organisation recognises that there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to co-operation and that implementation modalities must be adapted to suit local circumstances and the needs of stakeholders. By systematically capturing lessons learned from both challenges and successes, the Council of Europe encourages a more evidence-based and flexible approach to project implementation, ensuring that the chosen methods are the ones most likely to lead to improved outcomes. To this end, DPC will continue to include dedicated “lessons learned” sections in strategic donor reporting for action plans and programme facilities. This requirement serves to incentivise project teams to critically reflect on which implementation modalities best suited particular contexts and stakeholders, ensuring these reflections are taken into account for future programming. Furthermore, DPC will conduct targeted baseline assessments of these “lessons learned” sections to identify existing best practices and successful adaptations. These findings will be shared and further developed through a roundtable involving MAEs, with the aim of identifying specific axes of improvement. Through these actions, DPC ensures that the choice of implementation modality is increasingly based on evidence and contributed to improved project outcomes.					
☒ Accepted ☐ Partially accepted ☐ Rejected	DPC in lead, co-ordinating actions by DGI, DGII, Congress	- The PMM should be developed to allow the inclusion of beneficiaries input regarding the preferred modalities of implementation in the project design. - Continue to include lessons learned sections in strategic donor reporting for action plans and programme facilities to incentivise project teams to reflect on which implementation modalities best suited particular contexts and stakeholders and take them into account for future programming - Conduct targeted baseline assessments of lessons learned sections in reporting in order to identify already existing best practices and conduct a round table together with the MAEs to identify axes of improvement. - Further diversify implementation modalities in consultation with relevant other project teams, external experts and national stakeholders. Project teams already demonstrate flexibility and adaptability in implementation modalities in response to stakeholder needs. New modalities are usually tested first as ‘pilots’ with a limited number of geographical areas or			Director of DPC

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		beneficiary groups. - Test and analyse results of innovative implementation modalities at local level, including co-creative practices, participatory monitoring, evaluation and learning, and Social and Behaviour Change. Congress has already launched a new pool of experts available to all departments to test this latter methodology.			

Abbreviations	
Congress (the)	Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
Convention (the)	European Convention on Human Rights
Court (the)	European Court of Human Rights
DGI	Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law
DGII	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity
DHR	Directorate of Human Resources
DPC	Directorate of Programme Co-ordination
MAE	Major Administrative Entity
PMM	Project Management Methodology
RBM	Results-based Management