

PROGRESS REVIEW AND FINAL EVALUATION OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE
ACTION PLAN FOR ARMENIA 2019-2022

EVALUATION REPORT

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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Prepared for ODGP, by Camille Massey and Serani Siegel, for
Camille Massey, Sole Proprietorship Company.

Table of Contents

List of acronyms	3
Executive summary.....	4
1. Introduction and Context	7
1.1 Context and Object of the Evaluation.....	7
1.2 Evaluation purpose, objectives, scope and users	9
1.3 Evaluation Methodology	10
1.4 Challenges, limitations, and remedies	16
2. Findings	18
2.1 Relevance: EQ1: To what extent was the Council of Europe’s Action Plan for Armenia relevant to the shared priorities and aspirations of Armenia and the Council of Europe?	18
2.2 Effectiveness: EQ 2: To which extent has the Action Plan achieved its objectives and outcomes?	29
2.3 Added value: EQ3: To what extent has the Council of Europe been able to optimize its comparative advantages?	41
3. Conclusions and recommendations.....	47
4. Key lessons and good practices.....	50
5. Recommendations	53
Annexes	57
Annex 1 - Sampled project results	58
Annex 2 - Results of sampled projects summary mapped against model chain of results.....	64
Annex 3 - Survey results	65
Annex 4 - Derivations from the median	91
Annex 5 - Mapping of funded actions	95
Annex 6 - Alignment with SDGs	98
Annex 7 - List of interviewees.....	102
Annex 8 - Mapping to national policies, strategies and action plans.....	104
Annex 9 - Evaluation Matrix	105
Annex 10 - Impact of COVID-19/2020 outbreak of hostilities and adjustments made on the sampled projects	108
Annex 11 - Projects per Action Plan sector and sampling.....	110

List of acronyms

CEPA	Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement signed between Armenia and the European Union
CPT	European Committee for the prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
EU	European Union
HELP	Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals
HRD	Human Rights Defender
HRDO	Human Rights Defender's Office
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
ODGP	Office of the Directorate General of Programmes
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
RNA	Risk and Needs Assessment
SC	Steering Committee of the Project
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
ToT	Training of Trainers

Sampled-project names used in the report

Title	Short title used in the report
- Enhancing the Application of Human Rights in the Armed Forces and Strengthening the Rights and Role of Women in the Military Service in Armenia phase I and phase II	- HR and women in the armed forces
- Protection of Human Rights in the Field of Biomedicine	- Biomedicine project
- PGG II: Support to the judicial reform – enhancing the independence and professionalism of the judiciary in Armenia	- Support to Judicial reform project
- PGG II: Supporting the criminal justice reform in Armenia and harmonising the application of European standards	- Support to Criminal Justice Reform
- Enhancing Health Care and Human Rights Protection in Prisons in Armenia	- HR in prisons project
- Support the scaling-up of the probation service in Armenia	- Probation project

Executive summary

Introduction

This report presents the results of the evaluation of the Council of Europe Action Plan for Armenia 2019-2022. The company Camille Massey ULTD was contracted by the Office of the Directorate of General Programmes (ODGP) and conducted the evaluation.

The Action Plan is a strategic programming document prepared on the basis of the findings and recommendations of the Council of Europe's monitoring and expert advisory bodies as well as consultations with Armenian authorities. The Action Plan aims to support the Armenian reform agenda towards fulfilment of the country's commitment to Council of Europe standards, through a structured set of cooperation actions. It is organised around the three thematic sectors: Human Rights, Rule of Law and Democracy. The implementation of the Action Plan is then subject to funding, which may include funds from the ordinary budget and extra-budgetary contributions. The **implemented Action Plan 2019 - 2022** comprises 22 country-specific and regional projects (ongoing or completed) and had mobilised roughly 13 million EUR as of December 2021. This amount represents less than 60% of the estimated cost of the revised overall action plan budget (22.9 million EUR as foreseen in 2020)¹.

The scope of the evaluation includes the Action Plan as a whole and bilateral projects (specific to Armenia), including bilateral projects within regional facilities. Other regional projects were not included. The evaluation aims to draw lessons from implementation, to provide the stakeholders of the Action Plan with an objective assessment of the results achieved, and to inform the preparation of future Council of Europe Action Plans for Armenia and other countries, with a view to enhancing efficiency and effectiveness. The evaluation took a strategic view and assessed the Action Plan in a synthetic way. The evaluation methodology is based on contribution analysis and informed by qualitative data collection (47 semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from 6 sampled projects), document review and an online survey looking at transversal and strategic issues covering all action plan funded projects and covering all evaluation criteria.

Key findings:

The **Action Plan was prepared following dialogue and consultations** with the authorities of Armenia, within the Council of Europe, with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and with the EU. Consultations took place throughout 2018, immediately after the political upheaval of 2018 and accession to power by the opposition. As a result, the Armenian political leadership has lent strong backing to the cooperation with the Council of Europe. This is commendable, since **Armenia faced acutely challenging circumstances**, and sometimes fundamental threats, during the period under review:

- A regime transition with sweeping changes of political personnel and senior civil servants;
- The COVID-19 pandemic, which hit the country particularly hard;
- An outbreak of hostilities with Azerbaijan with severe economic, territorial, geopolitical, and political implications.

Relevance and Coherence with the Armenian Reform Agenda

The evaluation confirms that thanks to the consultative process and the use of monitoring results, the Action Plan acted as **a clear roadmap in challenging times**. It channeled the **continuous commitment** of the Armenian government to sustain cooperation with the Council of Europe.

Whereas the full Action Plan, as drafted initially, is comprehensive and responds well to the common priorities of the Government of Armenia reform agenda and the Council of Europe, it was not

matched with corresponding funding: **the Council of Europe was only able to implement parts of its Action Plan**, to uneven extents depending on the Action plan sectors.

However, the evaluation found **uneven degrees of alignment**, depending on Action plan sectors, between the **rapidly changing needs and vision** of Armenian stakeholders, and the Council of Europe's response. Strategic directions remain relevant, but the pandemic, the profound political changes, and the staff turnover in Armenian institutions and in the Council of Europe, have all complicated tactical adjustments to emerging needs. The Council of Europe and the projects' counterparts did not significantly channel the **implications of the 2020 outbreak of hostilities** into their dialogue at technical level, nor into project implementation approaches. Also, the participation of CSOs in the Action Plan and its implementation is uneven and lacking in some sectors, limiting outreach, partnerships and critical review for the Action Plan implementation.

Although gender analysis was not part of the Action Plan planning and design process, the 2021 Action Plan progress report is now fully gender mainstreamed, illustrating how the **gender perspective has gradually made implementation more effective and impactful**, in particular in the Ensuring Justice sector. The quality of gender mainstreaming and gender analysis, and their incorporation in project design, vary considerably between projects, as does the quality of gender related reporting.

Effectiveness

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the timing of project implementation, but the Council of Europe harnessed adapted methods to maintain its support to the partner institutions.

The Council of Europe has succeeded in supporting the **adoption of benchmark legal and policy documents**, which are essential prerequisites for the Action Plan to contribute to the implementation of the standards. **The Ensuring Justice sector is particularly illustrative** of how the Council of Europe's approach has built up over three Action plans, cumulating with the current one.

This Action Plan contributed to reforms in criminal justice and probation, which are gradually moving from a punitive to a re-socialisation policy, expanding the list of non-custodial sentences and thus viewing imprisonment as a last resort measure. In summer 2022 when the new legislation comes into force, changes in the sentencing practice may inform the practical implementation of this change of paradigm.

The next step is to adopt and implement new practices based on the newly adopted frameworks and the capacities and skills built by the Council of Europe projects. The evaluation found that there are **incremental changes in the practices of the Armenian authorities supported, but to varying degrees depending on the Action plan sectors**. Although projects have increased the knowledge and understanding of direct project beneficiaries, the new skills are not used to the same extent in all sectors, or new practices rolled out. Change is again most visible in the Ensuring Justice sector including criminal justice reform. The evaluation also confirmed that change processes in all Action Plan sectors are long-term in nature and holistically linked to each other and strongly depend on the locally available budgets and resources. Yet, the evaluation recorded **some significant changes in the services delivered by the partner institutions, as a direct result of the sampled projects**:

- Some prisons have successfully modelled and piloted new health support, including mental and psychological health. The death rate in these prisons has decreased due to several factors which, according to stakeholders, include the modelling. Additionally, no restriction or punishment should anymore be applied to prisoners who attempted suicide or inflicted self-harm.
- In the judiciary, one third of the judges underwent performance evaluation as designed and modelled with Action Plan support, and the percentage of women among the judges in

management positions has increased from 11% at the start of the Action Plan, to 25% now, in connection (among others) with targeted (and certifying) training on leadership for women judges.

The evaluation showed that **monitoring and reporting on the Action Plan projects is not sufficient to document changes at the outcome level** beyond the adoption of legislation and the change of regulations and policies. Most project reports would benefit from a more outcome oriented, evidence-based approach to reporting longer-term changes in capacities and services for the rights holders, rather than focusing on describing processes and activities.

Added Value

The **implementation of the Action Plan has been satisfactory despite exceptional external challenges** during the period under review, representing a **stress-test situation**. Despite extraordinary efforts by staff this stress-test situation has affected the satisfaction of some stakeholders.

The Council of Europe is generally perceived as a much needed and valuable partner, but it has not fully capitalized on its full **potential to cultivate strong, long-term partnerships with a broad variety of stakeholders in state institutions, with CSOs and international partners**. This is explained by the turnover in both the national authorities and the Council of Europe, which was acute during the implementation period of this Action Plan on top of a long period of online meetings only. A second explanatory factor is the limits in the synergy of values and vision, between the Council of Europe and some (often new in place) decision makers at management and technical level – whereas there is clearly a common wish to cooperate at the top political level.

The Council of Europe has a margin of progression to ensure awareness of stakeholders regarding its role, its priorities, and the results of its work. The evaluation found a lack of awareness on the part of some (often new) stakeholders regarding the nature of the Council of Europe's work. Bearing turnover in mind, officials need to experience, map and understand the positioning of the international cooperation actors. Additionally, there is a donor coordination issue. This is surely linked to the fact that the Armenian government is currently not driving donor coordination, which is seen by stakeholders mainly due to the difficult political situation. This situation has affected people's understanding of the Action Plan and of the Council of Europe: the stakeholders who work closely with the Council of Europe saw it as a trusted adviser, while others (both national and international) still perceived it as a donor with limited financial means. The sampled projects have frequently organised events and disseminated information, including in the social media, yet all stakeholders concur that the public is not aware of the Council of Europe's role in Armenia or the joint Action Plan.

During the period of the Action Plan, the Field Office faced significant **Council of Europe-internal challenges**, which reduced its resilience. Between 2019-2022 and most of this time, the two senior management positions in the Field Office (Head of Office and Deputy) were vacant each for about one year. This created **gaps in management** while steering administrative adjustments, and placed the responsibility of representation and promotion of the Council of Europe on the remaining senior manager and project staff in Yerevan. These gaps were particularly felt during the outbreak of hostilities (September-November).

Lastly and despite higher resources mobilised compared to the previous Action Plan, **insufficient resources and lack of synergies among some projects and sectors eroded the added value** of the Action Plan. The Action Plan as a tool has high added value for resource mobilisation. From one Action Plan to the next, the total amount of funding has increased. Donors have also earmarked their contributions less strictly. However, donor response remained modest. Usually, action plans

are funded between 75%-90% of their initial budget according to ODGP. In comparison, the Armenia Action Plan, with 57%, is particularly underfunded. In this context, it is all the more essential for the Council of Europe to optimise resources, in particular through synergies among and within the Action Plan sectors and its projects. The Action Plan as a tool increases the ability of the various Council of Europe entities and project staff to know about one another's priorities and actions, but this is not sufficiently used to facilitate synergies. Beside the good practice found in the sector Ensuring Justice and with the project on criminal Justice Reform in the Protecting Human Rights sector, the evaluation also found strong compartmentalisation between and within Action Plan sectors, usually corresponding to the organisation's organigramme. This points to difficulties to ensure horizontal cooperation among entities, even when several projects shared the same counterparts.

Recommendations:

Relevance and coherence

1. Enhance and broaden partnerships with CSOs in Armenia. This should start with a mapping of CSOs, their roles and capacities and how to enhance partnerships with them;
2. Ensure that all projects include a gender analysis.

Effectiveness

3. Strengthen the evidence basis of reported Action Plan outcomes related to training/capacity building and new practices in the partner institutions, through more analytical and evidence-based project reports;
4. Commission strong, lesson learned-oriented independent end-evaluations of the Biomedicine project and of the Human Rights in Armed Forces project.

Added value

5. Enhance synergies between an across Action Plan sectors and projects
6. Enhance and broaden partnerships with donors and seek closer synergies
7. Enhance outreach and communication with donors, CSOs, professionals and the wider public about the Council of Europe's role and the added value of the Action Plan

1. Introduction and Context

1.1 Context and Object of the Evaluation

The Council of Europe operates around a "dynamic triangle" of action, including:

- Standard setting: activities aimed at the preparation and adoption of norms (legally binding or not) such as Conventions, protocols, recommendations, conclusions, guidelines or policy recommendations;
- Monitoring: activities aimed at assessing compliance by States with Council of Europe's standards, through various monitoring mechanisms, in particular specialised monitoring bodies as foreseen by the respective Conventions or Council of Europe Institutions;
- Cooperation: projects aiming to support the member States in their efforts to implement the standards, taking into account the monitoring results.

In States where there is an agreement between the Government and the Council of Europe to work through an Action Plan or an equivalent document, such documents are developed through a joint

process with the national authorities, in consultation with the civil society. Action Plans serve as the vehicle and outputs of this joint processes. They consider the gaps identified by the Council of Europe institutions, monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory, the results of previous cooperation as well as the judgements of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). On this basis, Action Plans outline the technical assistance in support of the country's reform priorities.

An **Action Plan is therefore a strategic programming instrument**: it includes a package of actions and their respective expected outcomes, organised following the structure of the Council of Europe's Programme and Budget, which are deemed necessary to further the implementation of standards. The necessary technical cooperation is costed at the sector level, and donors are invited to contribute to funding; they can do so either in a light-earmarked way, at Action Plan level, or in a hard-earmarked way, at project level.

Action Plans are implemented through co-operation projects which are guided by:

- The Project Management Methodology. Co-operation projects are designed and managed according to the Council of Europe Project Management Methodology (PMM). It is based on the Organisation's theory of change, as presented in the Programme and Budget document;
- The Human Rights Approach. The Council of Europe applies a human rights approach (HRA) in its work and incorporates human rights standards and principles into all levels of project management¹;
- Gender equality approach. The Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023 and the Council of Europe Gender mainstreaming toolkit for co-operation projects;
- Sustainable Development Goals. The implementation of the Council of Europe action plans supports the countries' efforts in achieving their commitments towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and
- Inclusion of civil society. The Council of Europe promotes the active participation of civil society in project activities.

The **current Council of Europe Action Plan for Armenia 2019-2022** was adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 9 January 2019. Through the Action Plan, the Council of Europe aims to support national reforms with a view to bringing Armenian legislation, institutions and practice further in line with Council of Europe standards in the areas of human rights, the rule of law and democracy. Ultimately, the Action Plan acts as a road map and a cooperation vehicle to support the country's efforts to honour its obligations as a Council of Europe member State.

The Action Plan sectors of co-operation are:

- Protecting and Promoting Human Rights;
- Ensuring Social Rights;
- Ensuring Justice;
- Strengthening the Rule of Law;
- Countering Threats to the Rule of Law;
- Strengthening Democratic Governance and Fostering Innovation;
- Promoting Participation and Diversity.

These eight sectors are organised again into overall 19 planned actions with 69 outcomes. However, not all Action Plan sectors and planned actions could be implemented due to funding limitations.

The evaluation of the Action Plan therefore differentiated between the Action Plan as a package agreed-upon with Armenia and adopted by the Committee of Ministers and the part of it that was

¹ Human Rights Approach – Practical Guide for Co-operation projects. Council of Europe

implemented through specific projects designed subsequently and carried out thanks to the resources that could be mobilised.

The **implemented Action Plan 2019 - 2022** comprises 22 country-specific and regional projects (ongoing or completed) and had mobilised roughly 13 million EUR as of December 2021. This amount represents less than 60% of the estimated cost of the revised overall action plan budget of 22.9 million EUR as foreseen in 2020². It is financed by voluntary contributions by the European Union (EU), Norway, Sweden, Austria, Switzerland, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Human Rights Trust Fund, the Fund to End Violence Against Children, Ireland and Liechtenstein. It is implemented by the operational Directorates through project teams whose members are located both in the Council of Europe headquarters and in the Council of Europe Office in Yerevan.

Table 1: Action Plan sectors, outcomes, and projects

Action Plan sectors	Actions planned	No of Outcomes	Projects with country specific components implemented	Regional projects
HUMAN RIGHTS		1 thematic		
Protecting Human Rights	3	9	5	0
Promoting Human Rights and Dignity	4	17	2	3
Ensuring Social Rights	1	4	0	0
RULE OF LAW		1 thematic		
Ensuring Justice	3	12	3	2
Strengthening the Rule of Law	3	9	0*	0
Countering Threats to the Rule of Law	3	10	1	2
DEMOCRACY		1 thematic		
Strengthening Democratic Governance and Fostering Innovation	2	7	3	
Promoting Participation and Diversity	2	4	0	7

* a media sector needs assessment was undertaken, but no other activities were funded, so not counted as a project in sampling below.

1.2 Evaluation purpose, objectives, scope and users

As outlined in the Terms of Reference (ToR), the **purposes of the evaluation** include drawing lessons from implementation and providing the stakeholders of the Action plan with an objective assessment of the results achieved as well as informing the preparation of future Council of Europe Action Plans for Armenia and other countries, with a view to enhancing their efficiency and effectiveness.

The evaluation's purpose is defined in view of its usefulness to the main users including both core (Programme and Budget-funded) and project (project-funded) staff: the Council of Europe Office of the Directorate General of Programmes (ODGP), operation Directorates, and the Field Office in Yerevan. The evaluation responds to the need to inform the preparation of a new Action Plan, to be launched in 2023. This evaluation is, therefore, **strategic** and mostly **formative**: it will derive lessons learned, good practices and recommendations for decision making. It also takes stock of successes and challenges in attaining the expected results of the Action Plan, and the factors that influenced them, from a **summative** perspective.

² The initial budget of the Action Plan was 18.9 million EUR.

The **objectives of the evaluation** outlined in the Terms of Reference have been streamlined to the following:

1. To assess the outcomes achieved by the project implemented and their contribution to Armenia's alignment to the Council of Europe's standards and the SDGs & to what extent the progress has been hindered by the COVID-19 pandemic;
2. To draw lessons, identify good practices and provide recommendations related to the management of the Action Plan and project implementation;
3. To assess to what extent gender was mainstreamed in the Action Plan implementation.

Based on the ToR, the **scope of the evaluation** covered the Action Plan as a whole, from 2019 to 2022. The geographic scope is the territory of Armenia as defined by international law. **All bilateral projects (specific to Armenia), including bilateral projects within regional facilities, were in the scope of the evaluation.** Other regional projects were not included.

1.3 Evaluation Methodology

This evaluation had a very short timeframe and limited resources (overall budget of 28 000 EUR), compared to the number and diversity of projects, number of stakeholders, decisions and issues at stake, overall cost of the activities evaluated, and potential impact of activities to be evaluated. The evaluation approach took this context into account by adjusting the evaluation questions, right-sizing and adapting data collection accordingly.

Evaluation criteria

The evaluation assesses the three evaluation criteria selected in the ToR, either in relation to the Action Plan as originally envisioned or the Action Plan as funded and implemented: relevance, effectiveness, and added value. A gender lens was included in all above criteria.

Project sampling

Considering the time and budget limitations, not all projects could be assessed in depth. In consultation with the ODGP and the Council of Europe Office in Yerevan, the evaluation team therefore established a sampling strategy. However, the evaluation was not an aggregation of several project evaluations: sampled projects were examined for the purpose of drawing Action Plan-level findings, conclusions and recommendations. The sampled projects exemplify achievements and drawbacks and identify factors that contributed to success or limitations for the implementation of the Action Plan. The evaluation assessed the entire Action Plan sectors, including also non-sampled projects from a strategic perspective: this approach allowed a helicopter view analysis of all funded activities and considered the effectiveness of non-sampled projects to the extent possible. Emerging findings are generalised through interviews with actors with an overall view of the Action Plan and through an online survey.

In line with the Terms of Reference, 14 relevant closed and ongoing Action Plan projects were covered (a table of projects can be found in annex 11). From these, in consultation with ODGP, the evaluation team sampled based on the following criteria:

- Maximum of eight projects;
- Projects which have been evaluated or are under evaluation or had planned an evaluation were excluded;
- Projects which had a high relevance considering the reform agenda of the country and the core areas of intervention of the Organisation;
- Projects which had particular financial significance were prioritized;
- Projects which tackled a new or unusual thematic area were prioritized.

The final sampling includes six projects, which relate to Human Rights and Rule of Law, represent three Action Plan sectors, and cover more than half of the ongoing projects included in the scope of the evaluation:

Sector: Protecting Human Rights

- Human Rights and Women in the Armed Forces;
- PGG II: Supporting the criminal justice reform;

Sector: Promoting Human Rights and Dignity

Protection of human rights in biomedicine;

Sector: Ensuring Justice

- PGG II: Support to the judicial reform;
- Support the scaling up of probation services;
- Enhancing Health Care and Human Rights Protection in Prisons.

Evaluation questions

The evaluation team streamlined the evaluation questions (from ten outlined in the ToR) into three key questions complemented by eight sub-questions. The Evaluation Matrix describes how the evaluation questions, sub-questions, indicators, data collection methods and data sources are linked and triangulated³.

Table 2: Evaluation Questions and sub-questions

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions
Relevance	
To what extent was the Council of Europe’s Action Plan for Armenia relevant to the shared priorities and aspirations of Armenia and the Council of Europe?	To what extent is the Council of Europe’s Action Plan in line with the needs and priorities of Armenia in the areas of human rights, rule of law and democracy?
	To what extent was the Council of Europe’s Action Plan for Armenia in line with the standards, strategic guidance and priority of the Council of Europe?
	To what extent did the Action Plan and its implementation mainstream a gender equality approach?
Effectiveness	
To which extent has the Action Plan achieved its objectives and outcomes?	To what extent did the Action Plan contribute to changes in targeted reform sectors?
	Which factors have supported and hindered the effectiveness of the projects?
	How effective was the Council of Europe in adapting to the restrictions brought about by the pandemic and in ensuring business continuity?
Added value	
To what extent has the Council of Europe been able to optimize its comparative advantages?	What are the Council of Europe’s advantages compared to other international actors in the areas covered by the Action Plan?
	To what extent were these comparative advantages put to use in the implementation of the Action Plan?

Data collection methodology

³ For a detailed list of questions, including sub-questions, see Annex 9 Evaluation Matrix.

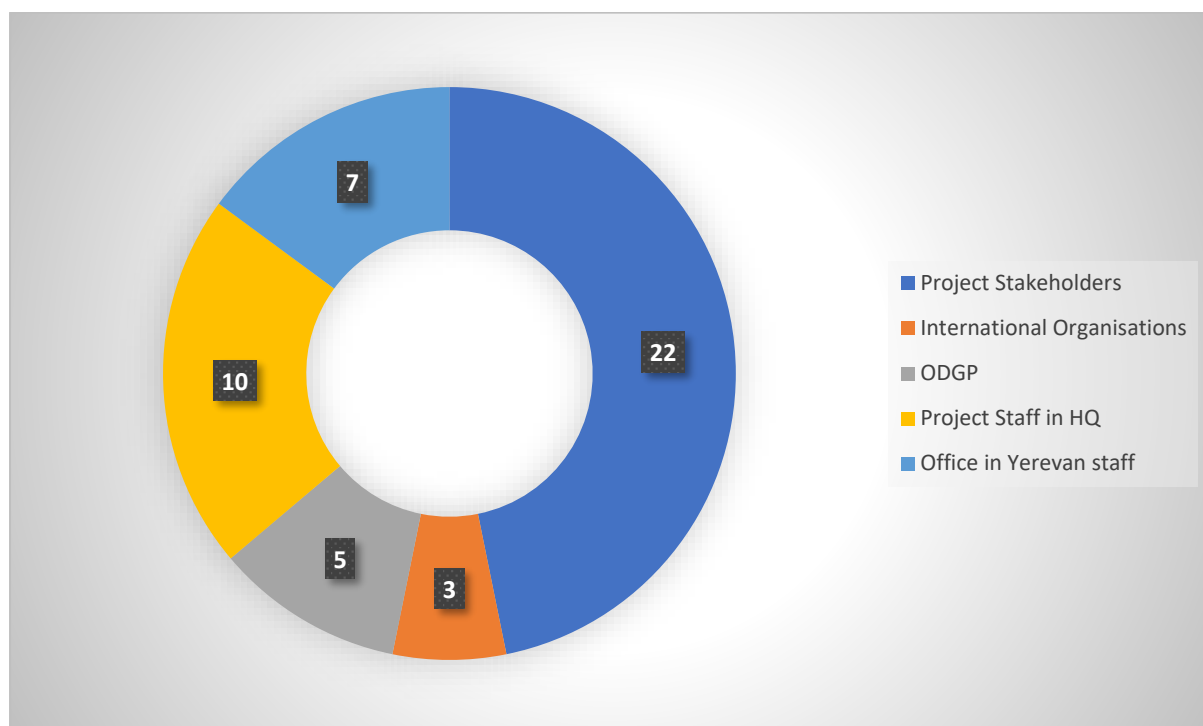
Data collection tools needed to be complementary but swiftly deployable, to secure triangulation of data while complying with deadline and budgetary constraints. Owing to the COVID 19-related travel and social distancing restrictions, as well as the constraints imposed by the post-conflict context, all data collection was planned to be done remotely.

The following data collection tools served to address questions, sub-questions and indicators as per the evaluation matrix:

- A document review of Council of Europe-provided documentation and other online relevant publications, covering the entire Action Plan scope;
- 47 semi-structured interviews related mostly to the sampled projects;⁴
- An online survey with 59 responses out of 106 addressees, looking at transversal and strategic issues covering all Action Plan funded projects and covering all evaluation criteria.

The identification of interviewees and survey respondents followed an iterative approach. ODGP in consultation with the Office in Yerevan provided a stakeholder list of interviewees and survey respondents, which was later increased based on the evaluation team’s feedback.⁵

Figure 1: Stakeholder interview distribution



⁴ Interviewees included five persons with general overview, and 42 persons mainly related to sampled projects (including three Strasbourg based Project Managers of three non-sampled projects). All proposed stakeholders were interviewed out of which three stakeholders were involved in multiple projects and six stakeholders cancelled or did not reply.

⁵ This initiative aimed to enhance statistical significance and representativeness of the respondents, in particular with a view of increasing the proportion of Armenian partners (as opposed to Council of Europe staff or consultants) among interviewees and respondents.

Data analysis and triangulation

The team used contribution analysis methodology to test, confirm and report on the findings, so the evaluation analysed and acknowledged the changes that took place within the normative framework of the country (legislation, regulations, policies) and among the direct beneficiaries of the Action Plan. The team established whether and how the Action Plan has contributed to these changes. Based on the evidence available, the team then assessed the level of certainty of this contribution.

This is not a theory-based evaluation, owing to the approach defined in the ToR which takes constraints, limitations and risks into account. However, project analysis yielded a typical results chain which informed data analysis (see annex 2).

Disaggregation of the survey respondents

The general survey results are deemed representative and reliable.⁶ Disaggregated and compared results were significant and reliable for some categories: the evaluation team used them critically, and only in triangulation with other data sources. See all survey results in annex 3.

The evaluation team analysed the survey results as a whole, but also disaggregated the survey data on respondents, and compared responses to the various categories of respondents. When disaggregating and comparing the survey results, the evaluation team ensured at least ten respondents per group.

45% of respondents have been in their current position longer than since 2019, 48% have been in their current position shorter. This reflects the changes in government that have occurred.

54 % of respondents have been participating in Council of Europe projects since 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022 as opposed to 46% who have been involved since before 2019. This means that about half of the respondent's main way to interact with the Council of Europe and its projects was through videoconferencing and not in in-person meetings.

Respondents who have participated in Council of Europe projects longer are more likely to agree that they increased knowledge and capacity (question 4) and that the work done has changed how their institution works (question 5). Those involved since 2019 have a lower agreement to these questions.

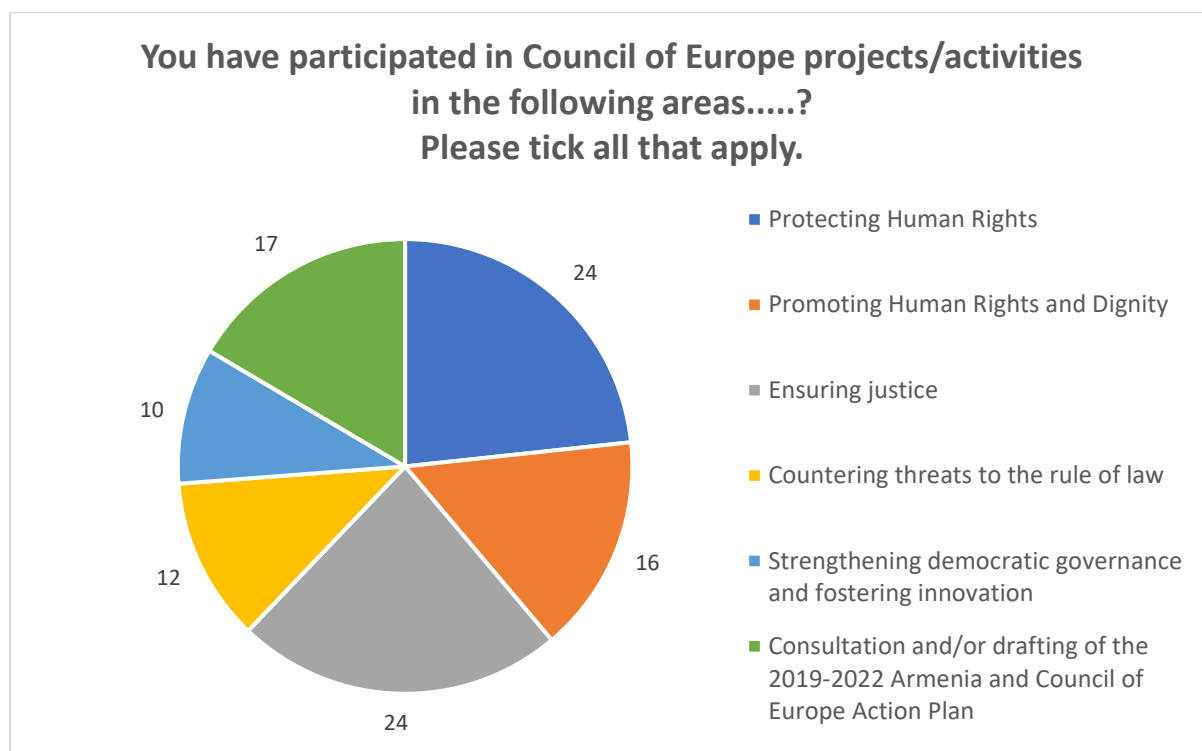
47,5% of respondents participate in Council of Europe events or projects a few times a year, 25% participate a few times a month.

Only 8% of the respondents worked outside of Yerevan.

The respondents of the survey have been involved in the following Action Plan sectors:

⁶ The survey was sent to 106 Armenian project stakeholders. Seven of these stakeholders were involved in multiple projects (usually two). The survey was taken by 59 and was completed by 48 Armenian project stakeholders: this represents a response rate of 63% and a completion rate of 81%, which are good rates considerably limiting non-response bias (*What's the average survey response rate?* [2021 benchmark] accessed at 6th of August 2022 at <https://pointerpro.com/blog/average-survey-response-rate/>)

Figure 2: Respondents in Action Plan sectors



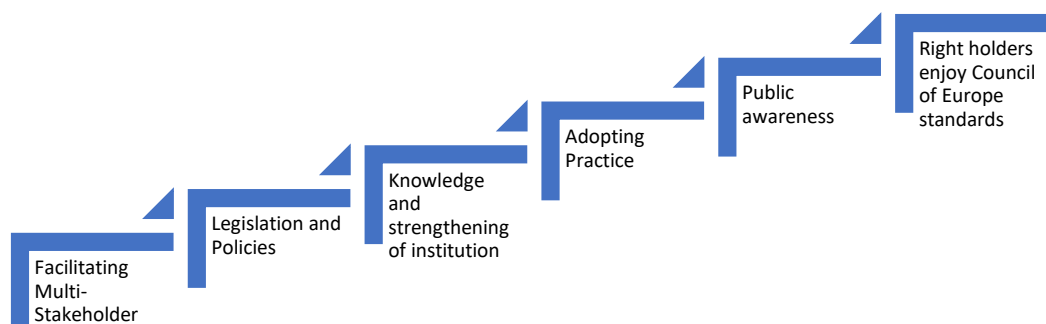
The respondents were often involved in several Action Plan sectors, thus they are most probably the core beneficiaries and partners of the Council of Europe work in and with Armenia.

Summary of sampled projects

The evaluation team analysed all project progress reports at Action Plan-level, and all projects in the scope of the evaluation, to produce:

- Summaries of sampled projects. These project summaries were then summarised in one table to provide an overall picture of the results of the sampled projects (see annex 2).
- Mapping of projects along relevant Action Plan sector outcomes and indicators (see annex 1).
- A typical results chain for Action Plan projects:

Figure 3: Action Plan results chain



The team used these analytical outputs to test the interviews and the document review, particularly with regards to the effectiveness evaluation questions.

Supporting the criminal justice reform and harmonising the application of European standards in Armenia (EU-JP/2340- PGG II): The project aims at contributing to the criminal justice reform in Armenia through legislative, methodological and capacity-building assistance.

Support to the judicial reform – enhancing the independence and professionalism of the judiciary in Armenia (EU-JP/2339 - PGG II): The project aims at supporting Armenia in implementing reform in the justice and judicial field, with a focus on the improvement of the implementation of legal acts as well as active application of alternative dispute resolution means, in particular mediation and arbitration. It provides support to the Government of Armenia for the implementation of the "Strategy for Judicial and Legal Reform 2019-2023".

Human Rights and Women in the Armed Forces in Armenia (VC/2324): The project aimed at contributing to a better protection of human rights in the armed forces in Armenia, with a specific focus on the rights of female members of the military by helping to guarantee equality-based conditions of service for women and empower them to become champions of positive change. **Phase II (VC/2691) of the project** also aims at raising effectiveness of the legal proceedings in military cases by providing legal expertise and capacity building support for the implementation of the Human Rights Strategy.

Protection of human rights in biomedicine (VC/2474): The project aims at supporting Armenia in better preparing for the possible future ratification the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine (Oviedo Convention). To this end the project brings relevant legal texts and law-enforcement practices in line with the principles enshrined in the Oviedo Convention, fosters public awareness and public discussion on the main challenges to the human rights protection in biomedicine, as well as increases overall level of human rights protection in the biomedical field.

Support the scaling-up of the probation service in Armenia (VC 26): The project aims at assisting the national authorities to fully endorse the concept of probation in practice through providing the necessary legislative, institutional and operational framework that will facilitate the use of probation services in the country, thus enhancing community safety and the fair administration of justice. The project is a follow-up of two previous projects implemented by the Criminal Law Cooperation Unit (CLCU) of the Council of Europe in 2013-2017 and State Probation Service (SPS).

Enhancing Health Care and Human Rights Protection in Prisons in Armenia (VC/2400): The project aims at further supporting the national authorities in reforming regulatory and operational framework of healthcare provision for inmates in Armenia in line with the international standards with special attention paid to the improvement of material conditions of healthcare services through introduction of new technologies in healthcare services. The project is a follow-up for 2015-2018 PGG EU/Council of Europe project on "Strengthening healthcare and human rights protection in prisons in Armenia".

Analysis of interview results

The evaluation team took structured verbatim notes of all interviews, and systematically analysed all notes through the evaluation questions, sub-questions, and indicators. Only opinions which were shared by a majority of interviewees, were confronted with survey results and document review, and further used to support findings. Following the establishment of findings based on all data sources, the evaluation team extracted the most illustrative interview quotes: these quotes do not represent the opinion or experience of one person, but rather exemplify a widely shared opinion across the interviewees, which one person expressed in a particularly transparent or synthetic fashion. The most exemplary ones were chosen to illustrate the Findings section of this report and increase reader-friendliness.

1.4 Challenges, limitations, and remedies

The evaluation process has gone smoothly with the support of the evaluation manager in ODGP. However, several challenges appeared, linked to context and resources.

Challenges related to the context in Armenia

- COVID-19 constrained the evaluation stakeholders and the evaluation team. As a result, the online interviews with Armenian stakeholders were often shorter and less interactive than planned, in particular when cameras were turned off due to connectivity problems;
- The scope of the evaluation covered a long period of exclusively, or partly, online project activities. This limited the visibility of some stakeholders on the project activities;
- The evaluation scope covered a period of political volatility and high turnover of staff in Armenian institutions, limiting the hindsight of some interlocutors;
- The scope of the evaluation covered a period of pause in Action Plan in almost all activities from September-November 2020, during the hostilities.

To mitigate context-related challenges, the evaluation team increased the depth and number of interviews, and consulted with ODGP and the Office in Yerevan to fine-tune interview and survey questions to the current sensitivities.

Challenges related to timing and resources

- This evaluation had a very short timeframe and limited resources.
- The evaluation took place during a post-conflict period characterised by regional security tensions – which explains certain difficulties to interview/survey project interlocutors from the Ministry of Defence (MoD).
- The evaluation was done in parallel with ongoing consultations concerning the preparation of the next Action Plan, activities, and an audit which limited the availability of some stakeholders to contribute to the evaluation.
- As both projects under the sector Strengthening Democratic Governance and Fostering Innovation were conducting or initiated to conduct project evaluations, no interviews with direct beneficiaries were planned or conducted. However, their evaluation findings were not available for this evaluation.
- The main source of information from non-sampled projects was an online survey (in Armenian). Demographic information in the survey shows, that a very small number of respondents are located outside of Yerevan. This limits the information available in particular for projects in the Strengthening Democratic Governance and Fostering Innovation sector.

To mitigate the time and resource challenges, the team tightly focused the sample, broadened the coverage of the survey, and relied on the stakeholder lists provided by the Council of Europe.

Challenges related to availability of data

- The Office in Yerevan provided a limited number and variety of stakeholders' details for the interviews and survey.⁷ This challenge could result from two factors:
 - o The radical change in government in 2018 has led to a lot of changes also at the medium and lower levels in Ministries and Institutions
 - o Council of Europe staff had to build new contacts and networks during the time of the pandemic and the hostilities in 2020 mainly with online meetings.
- Despite a result-oriented reporting template as per the PMM, gaps in outcome-level monitoring data existed in nearly all project progress reports. Consequently, there are also gaps in outcome-level evidence for the Action Plan progress reports.

To remedy the challenges related to data availability, the evaluation team:

- Analysed the entirety of all project documentation, asked the Council of Europe project staff to introduce the evaluation to the stakeholders (followed with regular reminder by the evaluation team);
- Requested the relevant project staff for additional stakeholder details⁸ and invited every survey contact to forward the survey. The evaluation team also reached out to two additional CSOs to ensure another perspective and triangulate the information.
- Opened the survey for responses for nearly one month (31. March-23. April 2022);
- Cross checked findings with publicly available information from Armenian Institutions, CSOs and other international organisations, to the extent possible.

Despite these efforts, the final numbers stayed relatively low. This yields a finding in itself: it is unpacked and explained in the findings section below.

Lessons learned from the evaluation process

Action Plan evaluation requires more **focus on the Action Plan sector level** as the main unit of analysis for data collection and analysis (as opposed to the project level, or general Action Plan level). However, this would also require more outcome level monitoring data (beyond the Action Plan progress reports) – either generated by the Council of Europe as a part of its regular internal reporting or generated by the evaluation team if more time and resources were available). Council of Europe Country Offices require **more time to complete lists of stakeholders**, and more **detailed instructions on the level and involvement of interviewees and survey respondents**. Such instructions should specify that stakeholders include:

- Participants in Council of Europe trainings on the mid-level;
- CSO representatives who are involved in the projects and not working as experts for the Council of Europe;
- Interviewees who can provide informed opinions about the situation of the rights holders.

Another key lesson is the need for a reference group for Action Plan level evaluations. This ensures sufficient feedback loops between the manager of the Action Plan evaluation (ODGP), the evaluation team and the CoE staff in charge of the Action Plan projects in Strasbourg and the Country Office.

⁷ The initial stakeholder list provided by ODGP included only 12 direct beneficiaries, only one CSO representatives not engaged as Council of Europe expert, and a comparably high number of Council of Europe experts and Council of Europe staff. Over-representing stakeholders employed or procured by the Council of Europe would have created a bias, so this list needed to be complemented.

⁸ The adapted list included then 18 direct beneficiaries, three international organisations/donors and 106 contacts for the survey (direct beneficiaries, national experts and five CSO representatives).

2. Findings

2.1 Relevance: EQ1: To what extent was the Council of Europe's Action Plan for Armenia relevant to the shared priorities and aspirations of Armenia and the Council of Europe?

Finding 1: Thanks to a consultative process and the use of monitoring bodies' work, the Action Plan acted as a clear roadmap in challenging times, to channel the continuous commitment of the government to sustain cooperation with the Council of Europe.

The Action Plan document was prepared following dialogue and consultations with the authorities of Armenia, within the Council of Europe governing bodies and main administrative entities, and with the EU. Consultations took place throughout 2018, immediately after the political upheaval of 2018 and accession to power by the opposition, referred to by some members of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly,⁹ and by some researchers, as the "Velvet revolution".¹⁰ As a result, the Armenian political leadership has lent strong backing to the cooperation with the Council of Europe; interviews and steering committee (SC) proceedings show that this top-level support has not faltered since then. This is commendable, since Armenia faced acutely challenging circumstances, and sometimes fundamental threats, during the period under review:

- A regime transition with sweeping changes of political personnel and senior civil servants;
- The COVID-19 pandemic, which hit the country particularly hard¹¹;
- An outbreak of hostilities with Azerbaijan leading to severe economic, territorial, geopolitical, and political implications.

Despite these events, the projects have continued to be implemented, and cooperation was never questioned. This is a testimony to the relevance of the Action Plan as a vehicle for mutual commitments and common strategic priorities, at least at the top level. The Council of Europe staff emphasised how useful the Action Plan has been in the last years as a red thread and roadmap. Interviews with Armenian counterparts confirm the resilience of this high-level commitment, and the eagerness of civil servants at all levels to cooperate with the Council of Europe. They all acknowledged the usefulness of the Action Plan as a tool for cooperation.

National policy documents are well reflected in the Action Plan priorities and projects. The Action Plan considers the Government Program of the Republic of Armenia, the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement signed between Armenia and the EU (CEPA), and the national reform agenda of Armenia including the National Action Plan for the Protection of Human Rights 2017-2019. Projects have integrated the National Strategy on Human Rights Protection 2020-2022 and other relevant country sectorial programmatic strategies. The document review showed that the Action Plan and most projects have referenced and integrated the most relevant policy documents into their activities and project design and project reporting. There is one exception: the Police reform Strategy from 2020 was not mentioned in relevant project documentation. Nonetheless, work with police was undertaken under the Promoting Human Rights and Dignity Sector.

⁹ <https://assembly.coe.int/LifeRay/MON/Pdf/TextesProvisoires/2021/20211217-ArmeniaInstitutions-EN.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/armenias-velvet-revolution/> and <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/707882/pdf>

¹¹ https://ourworldindata.org/explorers/coronavirus-data-explorer?tab=map&zoomToSelection=true®ion=Asia&facet=none&pickerSort=desc&pickerMetric=new_cases_per_million&Interval=Cumulative&Relative+to+Population=true&Color+by+test+positivity=false&country=USA~GBR~DEU~ARM~GEO&Metric=Confirmed+deaths

The Action Plan further aligns with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): mainly SDGs 5 and 16, although a few projects also align with Goals 3, 4 and 11. This is in line with the Government's commitment to the implementation of SDGs¹². Projects do not usually define targets nor details of contributions to the SDG's goals and targets, because project logframes are not designed through the lens of SDGs, however three projects provided information in 2021 about the links between their results and relevant SDG¹³.

All interviewees from among the stakeholders from the Ministries, the Judiciary, and the few CSOs interviewed, appreciated the consultation process which underpinned the design of the Action Plan. These stakeholders considered the process participatory. Many mentioned that some projects were initiated based on their own requests. This was confirmed by the survey results: 35% of the survey respondents stated that they took part in the consultation process of the current Action Plan¹⁴ - although this opinion was not shared by the CSOs interviewed and taking part in the survey. Finding 4 below expands on the participation of CSOs.

Quotes:

"The Council of Europe advantage is that its team always tries to ensure inclusiveness and takes into account all concerns and recommendations of public authorities."

- *Representative of a State institution in the area of criminal justice*

"I think one of the positive processes of Council of Europe in Armenia is trying to keep this link with different authorities and among the authorities, discussions on issues that are intersectional, relate to multi-agency cooperation, etc."

- *Ombudsperson Office staff*

Council of Europe staff also highlighted the importance of Council of Europe-internal consultations and the review of recommendations from the Council of Europe monitoring bodies: both processes underpinned the preparation of the Action Plan. The recommendations of the Council of Europe monitoring and advisory bodies in respect of Armenia were used extensively in the Action Plan design.

As a result, the Action Plan achieves good alignment with the strategic priorities of the Government of Armenia, and with the priorities identified by the Council of Europe towards implementation of Council of Europe standards. However, some stakeholders within and outside of the Council of Europe wished for more depth from the SC meetings¹⁵: they qualified the SC as too formalistic. Deep consultation during SC meetings may be difficult to reconcile with the high number of participants (around 70) and the limited time which stakeholders can invest in preparation of, and during the meeting.

Finding 2: Depending on Action plan sectors, the evaluation found uneven degrees of alignment of the Council of Europe response to the changing (and sometimes contradictory) needs and vision of Armenian stakeholders. Strategic directions remain relevant, but the pandemic and the profound political changes in Armenia curtailed the Council of Europe's ability to identify and respond to emerging needs at the technical level.

¹² See more detail in annex 6 Alignment to SDGs

¹³ Document review showed that in some years, projects report on SDGs and in some years they do not.

¹⁴ Survey question Nr 22 , see annex 3

¹⁵ The Steering Committee is a body formed to oversee and steer the implementation and monitoring of the Action Plan. It convenes several times a year.

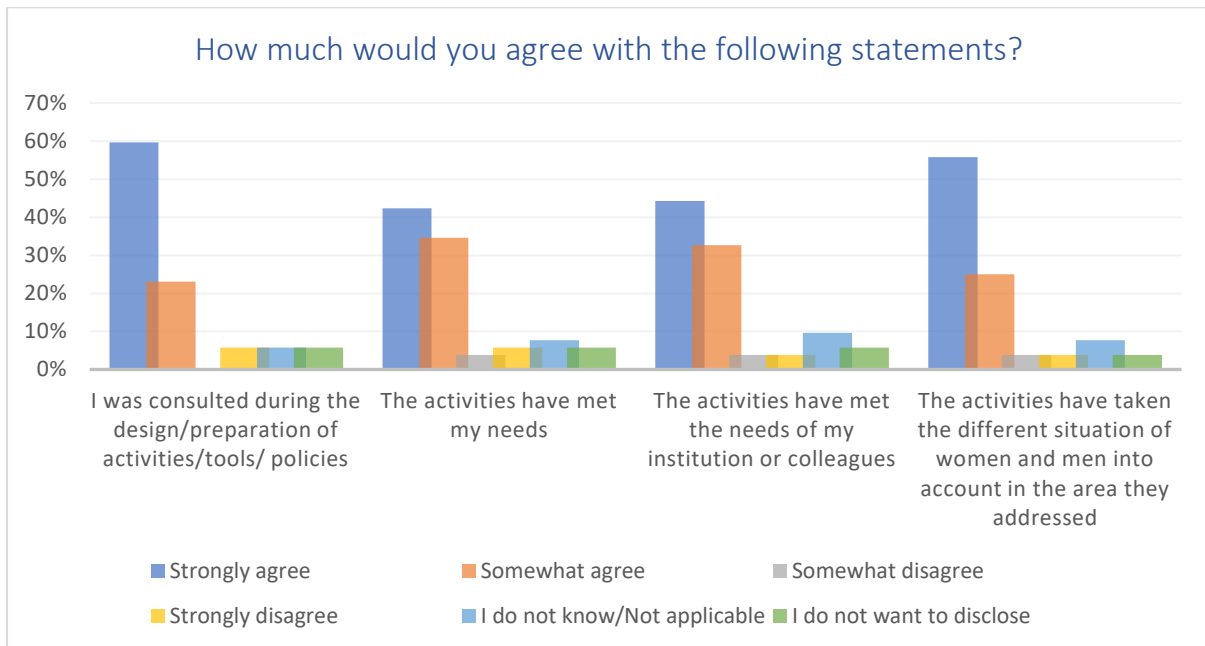
During the design of activities and tools to implement the Action Plan's projects, the breadth and depth of consultation were uneven depending on the **Action Plan sector**. Around 80% of the respondents strongly (60%) or somewhat agree (23%) that they were consulted during the design/preparation of activities/tools. Consultation was felt the most among the stakeholders involved in the sector of Ensuring Justice.

In addition, consultation does not necessarily lead to full alignment between projects and the stakeholders' needs or expectations. Several survey respondents and interviewees concurred that the Council of Europe actively consulted them. Some of them considered that despite consultations, their needs were not fully understood. Others considered that they were consulted and understood, but that for various reasons the projects did not, or could not, respond to these needs sufficiently, or rapidly enough. Of course, not all needs and expectations can be met, in particular when the need or expectation is not in line with the Council of Europe's standards, role and mandate.

However, across the board, there is a discrepancy between the high level of consultation acknowledged by survey respondents, and their appreciation of the Council of Europe's response to their own needs (42% strongly agree), to the needs of their institutions (44 % strongly agree). Overall, the dominant opinion is that the Council of Europe heard the needs and expectations but could not or did not always fully meet them. Reasons for this discrepancy are explained more in detail below and are in short:

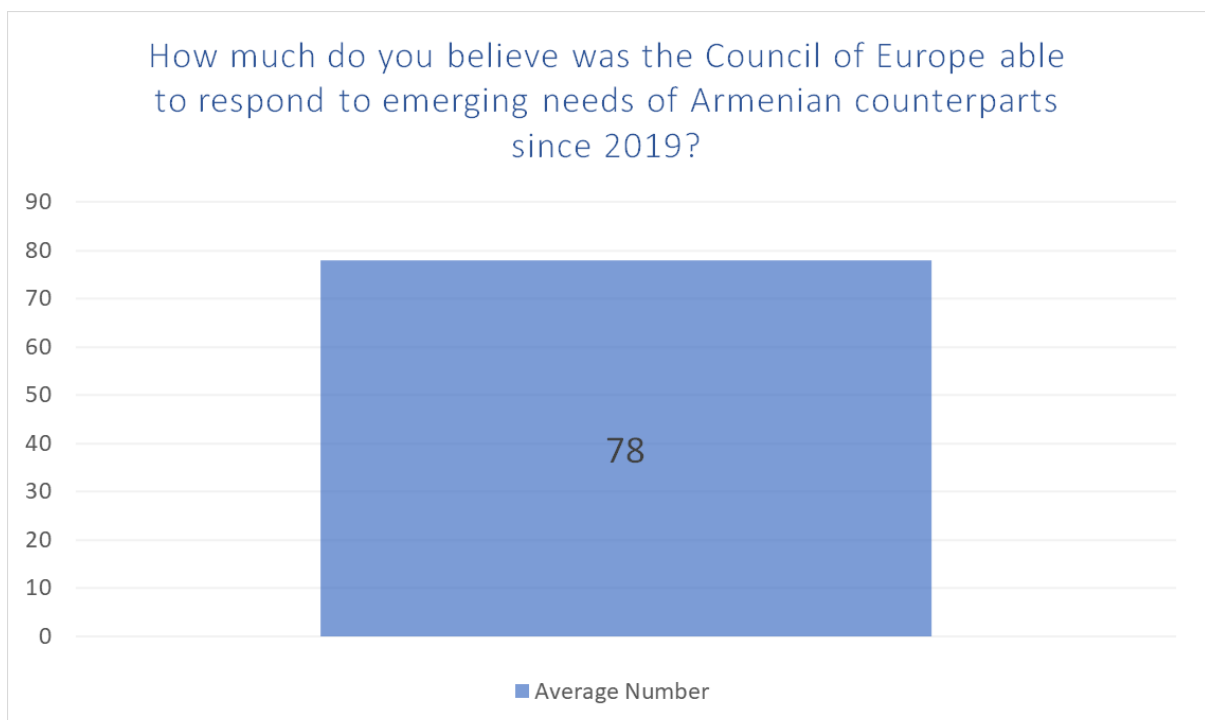
- Although a number of projects worked on substantive topics since 2013 or 2015 continuously, many of the current Armenian partners (as individuals not as institutions) are working with the Council of Europe only since 2019 and are not yet fully aware of the Council of Europe's approaches and nature of interventions, as illustrated by several interviews. **Some interlocutors did not realize that Council of Europe projects are directly related to the implementation of standards: as such they cannot cover topics which do not pertain to this mandate.**
- The high turnover of Armenian officials, visible in the survey and reported in the interviews, implies that needs (in particular capacity building needs) change rapidly. The Council of Europe programming and funding cycles cannot always adapt so swiftly.
- Virtual meetings and online activities during the COVID-19 pandemic reduce the ability to be aware of changing needs as reported in the interviews.

Figure 4: Survey Question 15



There are nuances depending on the Action Plan sectors. Stakeholders of the Ensuring Justice sector felt that the Council of Europe responded better to their **emerging needs** than stakeholders in the other Action Plan sectors. This is coherent with the data generated on the sampled projects Judicial Reform, Human Rights and health care in prisons and the probation service. Other sectors are around the response average. Survey respondents expressed below-average satisfaction with adaptation to emerging needs in the sector of Strengthening Democratic Governance and Fostering Innovation.

Figure 5: How much do you believe was the Council of Europe able to respond to emerging needs of Armenian counterparts since 2019?



Several reasons explain these observations. Firstly, in most Ministries, Ministers and Deputy ministers changed several times between 2019-2022, leading to changing priorities and expectations. The regime change, and possibly the introduction of new models and reforms, also led to high turnover among practitioners in some sectors.

Quote:

“During 2019-2021 we have appointed two ministers, three deputy-ministers, and changed the whole staff in [the Service].”

- Representative from a partner institution

This is not only a challenge for Armenian authorities, but also for the Council of Europe staff. At times, this factor affected the degree of alignment of decision makers with the standards and values championed by the Council of Europe. The projects are compelled to evolve and react, without departing from the priorities linked to the identified gaps in the implementation of Council of Europe standards and monitoring results.

Document review showed that the projects, both sampled and non-sampled, made clear reference to the findings and recommendations of the Council of Europe monitoring bodies. These were used typically to identify the needs and areas of intervention. However, due to the long monitoring cycles, and the longer timeframes sometimes needed to obtain funding to launch the projects, the monitoring reports which underpin the projects’ design were sometimes outdated by the time the Council of Europe rolled out the projects.

These circumstances create a tension between circumstantial adjustments (responding to quickly emerging needs in the short run) and consistency with values and standards (relevance to Council of Europe mandate in the long run). Each project has navigated this tension with more or less ease, sometimes leaving certain actors dissatisfied.

Quote:

“Every time there was a change of Minister, change of chief of staff, every time this would mean slow down, as we have to meet the new management.”

- Council of Europe Staff

The Council of Europe staff interviewed is aware of the changing needs and priorities. The evaluation found **that in most cases**, the Council of Europe staff arbitrated with sound judgement, showing flexibility about the type of tools and activities deployed while sticking to the standards.

Quote:

“We had a very good cooperation both with Yerevan and Strasbourg offices (...) As I said, the steering committees, discussions, everything was very good to bring all the people together to make them responsive, push the implementation, and by combining also this personal and institutional work and cooperation I think this made the cooperation great.”

- Representative from a partner institution

Therefore, concerns about adjustments to the needs, raised by interviewees, are limited to the project level - nobody questioned the principle of the Action Plan, nor its overall priorities.

Finding 3: The Action Plan implementation encountered exceptional challenges which faced Armenia during the period under review. The Council of Europe and the projects’ counterparts did not significantly channel the implications of the 2020 outbreak of hostilities into their dialogue, nor into project implementation approaches.

During 2020, the Armenian counterparts were overwhelmed by two concurring crises: the COVID-19 pandemic and the outbreak of hostilities. While project documentation shows repeated assessments of the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, the evaluation team did not find any evidence of documented analysis of the consequences of the outbreak of hostilities for the project partners, for the rights holders as end beneficiaries of the Action Plan, or for Armenia's preparedness to meet its commitments in terms of standards and joint project implementation: related adjustments, where they occurred, were not the result of explicit or formalised analysis.

On this topic, the Council of Europe and some of its partners displayed differing perceptions of how the Action Plan and its projects adjusted to the new needs of the rights holders, the concerns of project partners, and the constraints of the partner institutions. The 2020 outbreak of hostilities stopped most activities for several months in 2020. It further led to significant changes in priorities of several Armenian authorities, in particular for the MoD, but also for local authorities, as they were responsible for receiving displaced persons.

Some Council of Europe stakeholders highlighted that conflict issues are not within Council of Europe's mandate. In the mind of the partners, it is not a question of mandate for conflict prevention or resolution work: it is a matter of understanding how the events impacted the field of work where the Council of Europe works – similarly to understanding how the COVID-19 pandemic affected all counterparts – and adapting to it. The Armenian authorities and the Council of Europe rather paused the work during the outbreak of hostilities and then restarted where they had left according to initial plans. The evaluation team observed that the budget of the Action Plan was slightly revised in the summer of 2020 – but this was done following discussions which took place before the hostilities erupted. This budget analysis shows that the Council of Europe did adjust its Action Plan to other demands, but that there was no visible cost-adjustment to the consequences of the hostilities.

The Council of Europe reports its attempts to adjust activities within the Women and Human Rights in armed forces project, but this effort did not yield full satisfaction of all stakeholders. This is also reflected in the survey responses on meeting individual and institutional needs: respondents from this sampled project did give a lower rating compared to all survey respondents.

Quotes:

“... the lack of flexibility, the Council of Europe does not respond to the situation fast enough. Until the response to an urgent situation comes, considering also the bureaucracy, the efficiency is lost.

“A bigger challenge we had when war approached. Discussion about human rights is not the most important thing that people from the defence sector want to hear. Still the Council of Europe handled the situation well.”

“There are needs that are bigger and I don't know if they were addressed in perfect ratio.”

“As the Minister of Defence also mentioned during the discussion, there are new needs for our country after the war...The educational and legislative components must be developed. I think there must also be new educational topics, for example about the legislative sector reforms in our country.”

“With the 2020 outbreak of hostilities and COVID this project had an extremely hard time. In addition, there was a rapid change of management in MoD, which is a key stakeholder in this project.”

- Stakeholders in the defence area

At a strategic level, the evaluation team observed that the Action Plan SC meeting participants did not discuss the 2020 outbreak of hostilities and its possible consequences on joint programming during the review meeting in 2022. In contrast, dialogue about the outbreak of hostilities took place at the political level, separately from any Action Plan-related dialogue.¹⁶ Interviews suggest this compartmentalisation is indicative of a reluctance on both sides to dwell into a difficult and sensitive topic in relation with Action Plan implementation. As a result, there is no trace of active analysis of implications for ongoing projects. Key adjustments at project level were limited to the discontinuation of some PGG regional projects activities in some countries of the region, and the pausing certain activities in country projects. It is very likely that active and systematic analysis of the implications of the outbreak of hostilities at project level, if conducted, would have yielded valuable understanding and useful adjustments. Similar to gender analysis, such considerations tend to emerge when pro-actively sought.

Another key challenge was the COVID-19 pandemic, however it did not profoundly affect the relevance of the Action Plan – its consequences rather weighed on implementation.

Lesson Learned:

A new initiative which became highly relevant with the pandemic

Protection of human rights in biomedicine was selected as a very specialized, technical area, but became a good showcase about adaptation to the pandemic.

The COVID pandemic accelerated the “door opener” effect of the project on biomedicine. This project was not designed to address all these needs, but rather as an entry point. The partner institutions have realized, during (and thanks to) the implementation the project, the nature and magnitude of their needs, which the project was not designed to all address. The level of satisfaction with relevance therefore remained very high throughout the project, but the stakeholders are eager to do more. This dynamic was further fuelled by the COVID-19 pandemic, which placed biomedicine on the forefront of the needs and public debate: the pandemic multiplied the needs of the counterparts in the health sector, further increased the relevance of the project, and accented its visibility.

The work carried out under this project could potentially benefit other countries in the near future, in particular the diagnostic study on human rights issues in emergency situations analysing existing laws and law-enforcement practices on the protection of human rights in emergency situations. A related guiding tool for decision-makers and practitioners who face the same challenge could become useful for other Council of Europe member-states.

Finding 4: The participation of CSOs in the Action Plan and its implementation is uneven and lacking in some sectors.

The Action Plan methodology includes the commitment to promote the participation of civil society in the Action Plan design and its implementation. This could take three different forms:

- i. Consultation of CSOs for the design of projects, the selection of Action Plan priorities;
- ii. Contracting/granting CSOs for the implementation of sections of the projects. Typically, CSOs may play the role of implementing partners, or of experts;
- iii. Support to CSOs aiming to reinforce their expertise and capacity to play an oversight role in a specific sector within the Council of Europe’s mandate.

¹⁶ Council of Europe staff reported such dialogue between the country’s leadership and the Council of Europe Secretary General and top management, in addition with separate Confidence Building Measures.

The evaluation found little evidence regarding cooperation with CSOs. On the first aspect (i), the current practice is to consult with a large number of CSOs on the Action Plan design (every 4 years); some were invited by the Armenian Government to the last Action Plan SC meeting for reviewing the progress. Yet, some actors deplored that CSOs were not (sufficiently) consulted at strategic level, about the priorities and thematic areas of the Action Plan. This feedback, corroborated by the Field Office's limited list of proposed evaluation interviewees across a varied civil society landscape, suggest a tendency to involve only a small, recurring group of civil society actors into the programming dialogue at the national level, where CSOs act as watchdogs.¹⁷

The second aspect (ii) is mostly practiced with a small group of CSOs at national level, because, according to interviewees, there is a limited number of CSOs with expertise in the technical areas where the Council of Europe is active. This is also confirmed by the survey: only 10% of the respondents identified themselves as CSO representatives who work with the Council of Europe since at least 6 years, and most of them have also procured services to the Council of Europe. Some CSOs also regretted that the Council of Europe was not more visible in the country's public debate about its standards/European standards and the necessary reforms. Civil society actors found that they were seldom engaged in project design or implementation. The situation is reportedly different as regards local-level CSOs: for instance, the Council of Europe provided grants to local community-based NGOs under the Strengthening Democratic Governance and Fostering Innovation sector.¹⁸

There is no evidence in the documentation on the third aspect (iii), and interviews suggest that this is not a common objective in project design and implementation. Project documents, which rarely refer to CSO reports¹⁹, and which only foresee cooperation with a chosen few among CSOs, confirm this tendency to work with a few organisations only. The CSOs involved in the Action Plan projects did not see cooperation with the civil society as a strength of the Council of Europe Action Plan in Armenia.

There is clearly an understanding of key institutional partners of the importance and role of CSOs as partners, critical reviewers of new policies and holders of expertise and knowledge, and there is some recent progress: for instance one CSO representative reported that they were for the first time invited in the consultation process of the upcoming Action Plan in 2022 and commented very positively on this new involvement. However, several factors curtail the Council of Europe' and its partners' ability to mobilise CSOs.

Quote:

“There are cases where NGOs are much more informed about the issue and have a vision on how to ensure Human Rights and freedoms protection. I think that the participation of CSOs will ensure the sensitiveness, include the perspective of the CSO in conjunction with the State's perspective towards ensuring Human Rights protection. Sometimes when we want to solve issues [in the field of criminal justice], we maybe lose the Human Rights protection agenda.”

- *Ombudsperson Office staff*

¹⁷ The initial list of interviewees, prepared by the Council of Europe included only representatives of three CSOs, where two were included as a national expert and not in his/her role as a representative of this CSO. The Evaluation team added two additional CSOs to the interviewees to get more information. The contact list for the survey included for all sectors 5 CSO representatives and several experts from NGOs, which acted as National experts for the Council of Europe. However, these experts cannot be seen as providing pure CSO perspective as they have an economic interest in the project activities.

¹⁸ An evaluation of this intervention was planned but was not completed at the time of writing this report.

¹⁹ The evaluation found one positive exception: the Democratic Development, Decentralisation and Good Governance in Armenia project refers to one CSO report: “Gender politics in Armenia”.

Some interviewees from among Council of Europe staff and Armenian counterparts explained that the CSO landscape is limited in Armenia, especially in the Action Plan sectors. With the political regime change, many CSO actors became civil servants, and/or a limited capacity of CSOs to act as strong supports of the Council of Europe's standards at national and policy level. The evaluation could not find evidence that the Council of Europe conducted a mapping of CSOs in Armenia during the period under review: there is an opportunity to learn more about the CSO landscape, its recent evolution, and possible partnerships.

Quote:

"I would not say this [involvement of CSOs] is a strength of Council of Europe and it depends on the project. At least in our country in [our] sector there are not so many NGOs working and not many organisations experienced in this field. However, it is difficult to take into consideration the involvement of NGOs as a strength of Council of Europe. Sometimes, it happened that in one project NGOs were very actively involved."

- Stakeholder in the Human Rights sector

Finding 5: Whereas the full Action Plan, as drafted initially, is comprehensive and responds well to the common priorities of the Council of Europe and the Government of Armenia reform agenda, it was not matched with corresponding funding: the Council of Europe was therefore only able to implement parts of its Action Plan, to uneven extents depending on Action Plan sectors.

The Action Plan 2019-2022 covers most aspects of the Council of Europe's human rights, rule of law and democracy priorities²⁰. However, some of the agreed Action Plan sectors and planned activities were not funded and thus not addressed at all, like media freedom, the work on the revised Social European Charter and education for democratic citizenship.

When compared to its predecessor, the current Action Plan also displays a gradual transition from a reactive project approach to a longer-term approach, especially in the Council of Europe's historical niches of expertise. This is particularly apparent as regards judicial reforms and the corresponding deployment of long-term capacity building. In other areas, the Action Plan rather initiated engagement in an innovative fashion: biomedicine appears for the first time in this Action Plan (the predecessor did not mention the topic).

However, approximately half of the envisaged budget for the Action Plan was effectively funded and implemented: the Council of Europe Action Plan for Armenia 2019-2022 received a total of 13 million EUR (57% of the total revised budget of 22,9 million EUR)²¹. Action Plan-level funding totalled 4,2 million EUR, and project-level funding totalled 7,4 million EUR. Donors only funded 11 out of 20 actions proposed in the Action Plan.

Some sectors or sub-sectors also stayed completely unfunded, which compromised the comprehensive, holistic approach to the shared priorities of the Council of Europe and the Government. For example:

- Three sectors of the Action Plan (Ensuring Social Rights, Strengthening the Rule of Law and Promoting Participation and Diversity)
- and several sub areas (police reform, national minorities) remained without funds.

²⁰ See the 2018 and 2019 annual reports of the Council of Europe Secretary General

²¹ The initial Action Plan budget was 18,9 million EUR and was revised and increased in 2020.

Table 3: Overview of Action Plan sectors and their funding

HUMAN RIGHTS	
Outcome: Human rights protection and equality are enhanced through the well-structured and coordinated implementation of human rights standards, including those on gender equality, and an improved effectiveness of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) system.	
Protecting Human Rights	Partly funded
Promoting Human Rights and Dignity	Partly funded
Ensuring Social Rights	Not funded
RULE OF LAW	
Outcome: Democratic security is strengthened by an enhanced implementation of the existing legislation and European standards, the development of an enabling legal and institutional framework for a democratic society and an improved quality of justice and efficiency in combating corruption.	
Ensuring Justice	Partly funded
Strengthening the Rule of Law	Not funded*
Countering Threats to the Rule of Law	Partly funded
DEMOCRACY	
Outcome: The democratisation of society is fostered through electoral integrity, strengthened local democracy, and increased participation of young people in the democratic process.	
Strengthening Democratic Governance and Fostering Innovation	Partly funded
Promoting Participation and Diversity	Not funded

* Except a media sector needs assessment

While other donors (in this case the EU) helped bridge the gap in the area of elections, in the others the envisaged actions could not be implemented and the sectors stayed without significant support.

None of the Action Plan sectors was fully funded and implemented, which limited the Council of Europe's capacity to roll out its long-term approach. As a result, some projects stayed under-funded. The most prominent examples are the support to criminal justice reform, the health care in prisons and the biomedicine projects: the final project budgets were well under the initially assessed budgetary needs. This implied cuts in some activities initially agreed with the national counterparts.

Quote:

“When talking about our international partners, the EU or U.S. Embassy Yerevan’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL), for example, have a lot of funds. The Council of Europe does not have such funds, it needs external support from EU or (Council of Europe) government(s). I wish the Council of Europe had more funds to realise very important and critical projects within the scope of human rights, democracy and rule of law.”

- Academy of Justice

There were also delays in obtaining funding or when launching some projects, which created gaps in support to certain institutions, or altered the momentum accumulated with certain institutions during the Action Plan design. For example:

- The Protection of human rights in biomedicine project had an initial budget of 980 000 EUR which was reduced to 530 000 EUR and started only in June 2020 after several revisions;
- The support for the execution by Armenia of judgments in respect of Article 6 of the ECHR, which only started in 2021 with a reduced budget.

Finding 6: Although gender analysis was not part of the Action Plan design and planning process, the 2021 Action Plan progress report is now fully gender mainstreamed. The quality of gender mainstreaming and gender analysis and its incorporation in project design varies considerably between projects, as does the quality of gender-related reporting.

The evaluation found that the joint programming process did not cover gender inequalities as well as one would expect when the promotion of gender equality is mentioned as a priority of the current Action Plan. The Action Plan logframe's outcomes and indicators are not gendered or disaggregated, but the Action Plan methodology section reflects upon gender mainstreaming and offers some clear examples on how this will be implemented. However, the Action Plan does not refer to nor append any country gender analysis, but they are carried out in the framework of projects. In its methodology section the Action Plan refers to the previous gender mainstreaming approach, which was limited to cooperation projects²² and the new 2019 guidelines on gender (Council of Europe Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit for Co-operation Projects²³) were just rolled out. According to ODGP, Gender Country profiles were developed, but they were not shared with the evaluation team and only referred to in the interviews in relation to one sampled project.

At project level, the mainstreaming of gender is uneven, however some of the sampled projects mainstreamed gender successfully and increased the benefit of the projects results with it. The evaluation identifies overall three notable transformative gender actions:

- Human Rights sector: two projects with targeted gender transformative results at objective level: the HR and women in armed forces project and the violence against women project respectively.
- Rule of Law sector: in the support to judicial reform project, a study and a Training of Trainers (ToT) on women in judicial leadership positions seems to have resulted in an actual increase of women in managerial positions (see more below in the box).

Good practice:

Embedding gender analysis into capacity building and institutional support activities

The project "Supporting judicial reform" produced a new manual "Gender equality in the judiciary in Armenia", with examples of gender inequality and how to address them. A ToT activity followed on "Ensuring gender equality", targeting judges, prosecutors and investigators. Comprehensive research on gender equality supported the relevant policy changes in the judiciary to bring the composition of the judiciary in Armenia in compliance with the Council of Europe standards, which is a minimum of 40% of the opposite sex in decision-making bodies. Additionally, the same project initiated a *Gender Impact Assessment of the Judicial Code*, resulting in the commitments of Armenian authorities to consider them in the future. Armenian authorities demonstrated their commitment towards the gender equality within the judiciary.

In 2021 the percentage of women judges increased from 26,6% to 32%. Moreover, 44% of Armenian women judges significantly increased their leadership skills through the training organised by the Project, as a result the percentage of women judges in managerial positions increased from 11% to 25%. These practices are promising but must be underpinned by gender analysis at project design stage, and the design of gender transformative results.

The project "Supporting the criminal justice reform and harmonising the application of European standards in Armenia" included a gender analysis in 2020-2021 which analysed training for legal professionals. The analysis showed that the five training courses developed with the support of the project are fully gender mainstreamed and ensure the consideration of gender equality aspects. Furthermore, there has been a lack of gender-sensitive training courses for legal professionals: the stakeholders therefore welcomed the project's approach.

²² <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680656cf0>

²³ <https://www.coe.int/fr/web/project-management-methodology/tools>

The other sectors are formulated in a gender-blind way, except for two actions under Democracy (Elections and Youth for Democracy), which did not receive funding and were therefore not implemented.

A second group of projects (sampled and non-sampled²⁴) have mainstreamed differing needs of different groups into their work, for example:

- In the probation project specific needs of women and juvenile offenders were taken into consideration and integrated into so the review of legislation and the risk and needs assessment (RNA) tool;
- The project on health care protection and prisons addressed gender specific needs of women and men inmates in the newly developed methodologies;
- The decentralisation project included how well grant proposals responded to the needs of women and youth as an assessment criterion.

A third group of projects limited mainstreaming to balanced gender participation.

Interviews have confirmed the uneven way of mainstreaming gender: some presented examples of gender analysis that improved outputs, while others were unaware of the topic, and others expressed the opinion that ensuring an equal participation was sufficient. This shows that not all counterparts are fully aware of or fully agree with the Council of Europe gender mainstreaming approach, and that not all staff (despite training) and partners are ready to use or are aware of the tools to change the existing inequalities.

However, there has been good progress since the design of the Action Plan in terms of gender-mainstreamed monitoring and reporting. The 2021 Action Plan progress report is now fully gender mainstreamed. The evaluation found that this report's sections on outcomes achieved and on transversal issues present gender-sensitive activities in the projects, and gender- mainstreaming actions.

2.2 Effectiveness: EQ 2: To which extent has the Action Plan achieved its objectives and outcomes?

Finding 7: The Council of Europe has succeeded in supporting the adoption of benchmark legal and policy documents, which are essential prerequisites for the Action Plan to contribute to the implementation of the standards.

In all Action Plan sectors, projects have succeeded to create or change the legal (national legislation), regulatory (by-laws), and policy (strategies, action plans) framework. Survey respondents consider the Council of Europe's contribution to bringing Armenian legislation, institutions and practices further into line with European Standards as important with a rating of 85 points out of 100.

Quote:

"The Convention on human rights in biomedicine was very little implemented in Armenia, now it is more widely implemented. The Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) courses were successful, the trainings conducted, legislative acts were developed, etc. Many state and non-state actors want the project to continue and have more results."

- Stakeholder in the Health sector

²⁴ Findings are based on document review of progress reports and project design documents of all projects and interviews with stakeholders from sampled projects and relevant regional and headquarter staff.

However, the level of contribution varies depending on the Action Plan sectors. The case of the sampled projects in the Ensuring Justice sector and the projects in criminal justice reform in the Protecting Human Rights sector is particularly illustrative of how the Council of Europe's approach has built up over three Action Plans, culminating with the current one.

For instance, during the implementation period of the projects on prisons and probation, the framework for modernised judicial governance (independence and accountability of the justice system and judicial professionals), criminal law, criminal procedure law, alternative dispute resolution in civil law, probation, and protection of health and human rights have progressed incrementally towards better harmonisation with the applicable Council of Europe Conventions and recommendations of the Council of Europe monitoring bodies.

Following the legislation, the relevant institutions, with advice from the projects, further adjusted the regulations: for instance, once the concepts of judicial governance and performance appraisal of judges were introduced into the law, the Council of Europe supported guidance to Magistrates and the regulations on probation.

The Council of Europe, in parallel, played a decisive role in the adjustment of the institutional setup, as envisaged by the new/amended legal and regulatory framework, but also in terms of internal processes. For instance, the projects supported the Dispute Resolution Centre, installed/prepared to be installed new IT systems supporting the performance review of judges and the e-probation system, and provided methodological tools and guidance for the implementation of the framework on judicial governance.

Quote:

“Through the help of Council of Europe we have the proper legislation, and we are developing another law with their help.”

- Stakeholder in the justice system

Finally, the projects worked on the readiness of the relevant actors and the public: they provided cascade trainings to the judicial professionals on independence and accountability, performance review, probation, and worked (albeit very modestly) on public awareness to prepare future use of the amended judicial policies – in this case, alternative dispute resolution.

This holistic setup has functioned thanks to the long-term vision of the Armenian Government and the Council of Europe, which materialised in a suite of projects from Action Plan to Action Plan.

Quote:

“Council of Europe projects complement each other. For example, if we are speaking about criminal justice reforms, we tackle a lot of issues concerning probation as well. Through projects on probation we tackle other issues concerning probation and even ones concerning judicial part. So, I think that due to the complementary nature of the projects, we have tackled a lot of issues.”

- Stakeholder in the justice system

During interviews, stakeholders representing various points of view reported that the Council of Europe projects have contributed to these changes. Some considered that the projects made these changes possible, by:

- Making legal advice available;
- Promoting the standards and recommendations to inspire legal changes;
- Facilitating dialogue and consultation among the law-making actors, at least within the Executive branch;

- Supporting the relevant institutions in the long run, with relatively steady project-specific human resources;
- Informing advice with analysis, such as the Impact assessment of the Judicial Code.

Quote:

“Within criminal justice reforms, the adoption of criminal code, criminal procedure code, as well as penitentiary reforms, capacity building, exchange of experience are the most fundamental reform directions in our country. In this respect the Council of Europe projects are very topical and targeted.”

- *Representative of a State institution*

To summarize, the contribution of the Council of Europe at the outcome level was to help put in place the main conditions for a modernised, standard-compliant judicial system to function. An interviewee summarized: “the Council of Europe ensured that the framework we have in place and expand once the judges start ordering probation.”

This is particularly visible with the establishment of a probation system: as a stakeholder put it, “Now, there is no excuse for judicial actors to not use probation, not be accountable, not apply alternative dispute resolution”.

Quote:

“I would say that one of the impacts of this project is that the probation system was introduced. We are now establishing united social assistance centres in each district of Yerevan and also in each region of Armenia. Regarding the population’s awareness is low and there are only very few NGOs available to be involved.”

- *Representative of a State institution*

Also, the Health and Human rights in prisons project has laid the ground for significant improvements with the adoption *Guidelines on documentation and reporting on indications of ill-treatment and their examination and reporting* and 146 staff were trained in its application when rolled out²⁵.

This contribution rested on several conditions: judicial reform had the full backing of the Justice Ministry, and the stakeholders were conscious of the holistic character of the new policy approaches. They shared a vision with the Council of Europe, which encompassed the entire judicial chain, from prosecution to trial, sentencing and execution of the sentences. This vision also enjoyed support from the EU Delegation viewed as the key donor and an influential actor in the national policy debate. Overall, there was a consensus on the general direction of the reform – with an important nuance: the projects did not significantly involve CSOs, and other donors (such as bilateral donors) did not engage in this area.

This project illustrates the most achieved example within the project portfolio, due to the continuity of the Government’s, Council of Europe and donor support to the judicial reforms: it could be seen as potentially inspiring for other Action plan sectors, provided the same conditions/assumptions are in place.

The Council of Europe’s contribution in criminal reform also benefits from the organisation’s niche of expertise: this contribution is well recognised, in the absence of very sizeable investments from other international partners. In contrast, other thematic areas enjoy support by parallel projects of

²⁵ The Council of Europe supported the infection control programme for penitentiary institutions, as well as training curricula and training sessions on specialized skills and knowledge for 69 penitentiary medical staff. This improved Covid-19 related prevention and infection control systems in prison healthcare services in general.

the EU Delegation (e.g. anti-corruption), of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (e.g. security sector reform, funded by the Government of Switzerland), or of bilateral donors.

Change processes in some sectors or specific sub-topics are still in early stages. In biomedicine and armed forces, the stakeholders mostly viewed the projects as door openers, which put the issues on the agenda of the respective ministries and dedicated institutions, and triggered discussions with varying degrees of success and resulting in legal changes in the case of biomedicine.

Quote:

“The most important thing that we can record as an achievement [of the project] is that in the Republic of Armenia, a discussion started on the topic [of biomedicine]. “

- Stakeholder of the biomedicine project

The biomedicine project built a strong and promising partnership with very aligned values and objectives for the Council of Europe and the Ministry of Health and the Human Rights Defender's Office (HRDO). Here again, the uniqueness of the Council of Europe's support in an area that does not capture high donor attention, increases the ability to attribute changes to the Council of Europe Action Plan.

Quote:

“No other [foreign] institution is involved in human rights and healthcare aspects in bioethics. There is no other project in this field. That is why the role of the Council of Europe is very important. There may have been other institutions, such as WHO, or Open society foundation, that have throughout the years done small work in this or that field of human rights in bioethics, but it was not as big and continuous.”

- Stakeholder of the biomedicine project

The project on armed forces faced stronger resistance to change and suffered from the implications of the 2020 outbreak of hostilities.

Some of the non-sampled projects in the other Action plan sectors have also supported the revision of legal frameworks, however with a much lower degree of progress and breadth/holistic changes²⁶.

The support for the execution by Armenia of judgments in respect of article 6 of the ECHR only started in 2021 and has a very high potential to successfully support the adoption of a high number of new benchmark legal changes in the area of access to justice, reducing the length of judicial proceedings and ensuring the impartiality of judges.

Document review does not reveal tangible changes in combating violence against women as a direct result of the Action Plan as the work in this area is still at an early stage of the change process; however, the partners have shown sustained commitment throughout the period, including at the peak of the COVID pandemic and of the 2020 outbreak of hostilities – both circumstances which are proven to have increased the prevalence of violence against women worldwide.

Finding 8: There are incremental changes in the practices of the Armenian authorities supported by the Action Plan, to varying degrees depending on the Action Plan sectors. Action Plan projects have increased the knowledge and understanding of direct project beneficiaries; however, the use

²⁶ The Decentralisation project has supported the preparation of possible legal and constitutional changes for local governance and concretely a draft law on Hotel tax. With the support of the anti-corruption project Armenia has adopted a new law on public services, taking Council of Europe recommendations into account.

of skills and deployment of new practices are uneven among sectors, because these changes are long-term in nature, linked to each other, and strongly dependent on local budgets and resources.

Depending on the Action Plan sector and on the project, the stakeholders use, to varying extents, the frameworks put in place with the Council of Europe's contribution. The Action Plan contributed to reforms in criminal justice and probation, which are gradually moving from a punitive to a re-socialisation policy, expanding the list of non-custodial sentences and thus viewing imprisonment as a last resort measure. In summer 2022 when the new legislation comes into force, changes in the sentencing practice may inform the practical implementation of this change of paradigm.

Most survey respondents consider that the projects have first and foremost changed them personally. 53,7 % of the survey respondents are more confident in their work than before the project (survey question 5). The Action Plan projects also affected their knowledge and understanding: around 90% of respondents agree strongly or somewhat (with predominance of "strongly agree") to this across nearly all Action Plan sectors. This owes to strong training and cascade training (both online and face-to-face) approaches and tools, and to the projects' ability to entrench their trainings into the national curricula of the practitioners. This level of ownership owes a lot to the Council of Europe's long and close cooperation with Justice Academy (JA), in nearly all projects.

Quote:

"The Council of Europe and our institution have prepared a lot of important manuals on human rights, and all of them are included in our main curriculum. In our new curriculums you can see very actual topics, for example violence against women, gender equality, anti-corruption, ECtHR case law, human rights of women in armed forces, how to scale up probation service in Armenia, protection of human rights in biomedicine... All the courses done with Council of Europe, mainly HELP courses are counted as credits for mandatory trainings for judges, prosecutors and investigators."

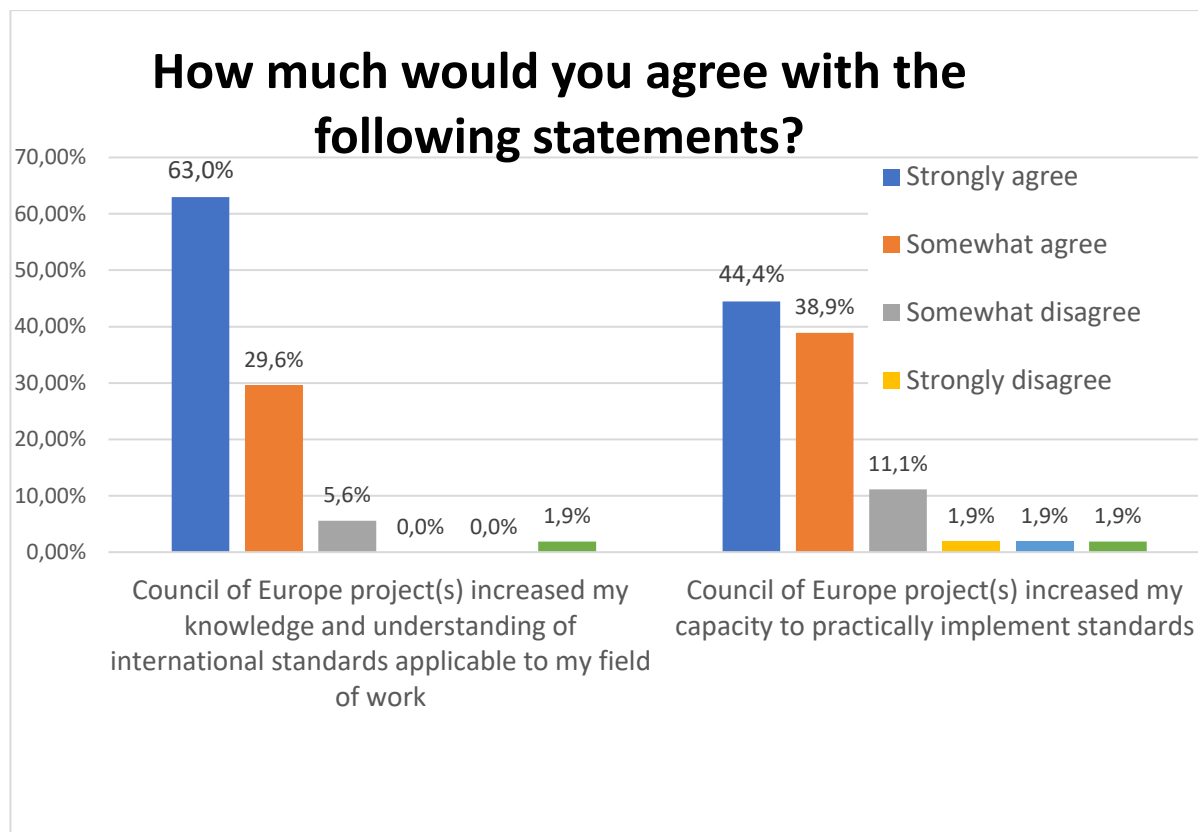
- Stakeholder of the Academy of Justice

However, the stakeholders are less certain about their ability to use this knowledge and understanding: as survey questions move to more and more practical aspects, the responses are more and more split. When asked to what extent the work with Council of Europe has changed their skills to practically implement international standards 80% strongly agree or somewhat agree, however the split is more even between the two statements²⁷. About half of the survey respondents use the materials issued by the respective projects very often, and about one third use them sometimes²⁸.

²⁷ Survey question 4 in annex 3

²⁸ Survey question 11 in annex 3

Figure 6: Survey question 16 - Knowledge and capacity to implement standards



The highest scores on the likelihood that knowledge will be used in practice are found in the Promoting Human Rights and Dignity and Ensuring Justice sectors.

The above results should be cross-referenced with the doubts of stakeholders in the projects’ ability to affect their institutions’ functioning and delivery of services to the rights holders. Stakeholders gave a score of 63 points out of 100 that this work has changed the way their institution works, which is the lowest score in the series. It is therefore possible that the practitioners, while feeling more knowledgeable and sensitized about the standards, feel constrained by the inertia of the institutions where they work.

Table 4: Rating of survey questions 7 and 8 at Action Plan level (rating 1-100)

How useful was the work of Council of Europe for your institution?	The work of the Council of Europe has changed the way my institution works.
82 out of 100	63 out of 100

Interviews and document review suggest different reasons for below-average ratings in different sectors:

- Protecting Human Rights: after new legislation was adopted and training rolled out in the judicial area, implementation of the new legal framework was not complete at the time of the evaluation.
- Strengthening Democratic Governance and Fostering Innovation and Countering Threats to the Rule of Law: project execution issues, political and personal disagreements among

stakeholders seem to constrain the effects of projects on the implementation of Council of Europe standards.

- This was in particular visible in the survey responses of people working in the sector of Strengthening Democratic Governance and Fostering Innovation, however as there were no interviews conducted with stakeholders in this sector it's not clear what are the reasons for this.

Survey participants believe that, thanks to the projects, their institution is better recognized in Armenia (44%), more governed by law and standards (35%), more result-oriented and accountable, more effective at delivering quality work, and better recognized internationally (33%). They see less change in terms of independence or transparency of their institutions.

In all Action Plan sectors, the implementation of the frameworks developed with support of the Action Plan faces budgetary and human resources challenges locally, which authorities gradually address thanks to the materials and cascade trainings of the Council of Europe, but which cannot be tackled in the short run.

Quote:

“We just have 106 probation officers and now we have 4000 cases. For comparison we can say that we have 2150 prisons staff and 2140 prisoners including detainees and sentenced. The probation service is very small and very few staff to do this job with efficiency. “

“In the framework of "Scaling up probation system in Armenia" the experts from the Council of Europe who are also our trainers have prepared a handbook, which is now used in our curriculum since 2022. Afterwards, the course will continue to be conducted, but for us the mentoring component is also very important. If the project ends, the only way is to allocate State resources. It is impossible for us to pay an expert of international scale.”

- Representatives from partner institutions

Yet, the evaluation recorded some significant changes in the services delivered by the partner institutions, as a direct result of the sampled projects.

Some prisons have successfully modelled and piloted new health support, including mental and psychological health. The death rate in these prisons has decreased due to several factors which, according to stakeholders, include the modelling. Additionally, no restriction or punishment should anymore be applied to prisoners who attempted suicide or inflicted self-harm.

In the judiciary, one third of the judges underwent performance evaluation as designed and modelled with Action Plan support, and the percentage of women among the judges in management positions has increased from 11% at the start of the Action Plan, to 25% now, in connection (among others) with targeted (and certifying) training on leadership for women judges.

Potential changes in practices/services might have occurred in the following sampled projects, but could not be verified due to missing data:

- Trainings on "Informed consent", "Medical secret and Confidentiality", "Reproductive health rights", "General Principles of Bioethics" for healthcare and legal professional might have had a positive effect on patient's rights, although there is no data available on that in biomedicine project.
- Women Councils of the Military Units started to use the model Methodological guide on internal monitoring on the rights of women servicepersons on the gender equality and prohibition of discrimination in the armed forces. It is not clear from the available information if this is fully implemented as the feedback was mixed.

- The Human Rights Defender (HRD) is more effectively monitoring human rights violations in the armed forces.
- The probation project has piloted a new RNA tool for adult and juvenile probationers in all Probation units and might roll this out very soon.

All other project progress reports have not included robust and verifiable data on actual changes in practices/services. Taking the survey responses on practical skills to implement standards and if the Council of Europe's work has changed how their institution works into account, actual changes for citizens will still take time to materialize.

Based on document review (with very limited data about new practices and changes for right holders, beyond the well-documented adoption of new legislation²⁹) and interviews of sampled projects' stakeholder³⁰, a ladder of changes was identified, starting with creating dialogue to ultimately contributing to changed attitudes and practices. Benchmarking against this ladder, the sampled projects seem to have mainly progressed in legislation and policies and knowledge/strengthening institutional capacities (Finding 7), and less on rolling out practices in line with Council of Europe standards (Finding 8). A detailed analysis of the changes resulting from the sampled projects can be found in annex 1.

²⁹ Limited data is also due to the lack of systematic outcome level data collection, which is linked to low M&E budgets and the long-time span necessary to measure changes.

³⁰ if new practices are really rolled out and implemented or public awareness was really increased could not be verified in some cases, due to the low number of stakeholder interviews in some sectors and missing outcome monitoring data in nearly all project progress reports.

Table 5: Overview of results of sampled projects

Title	Facilitating Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue	Legislation and Policies	Strengthening of institutions	Adopting Practice	Public awareness	Rights holders enjoy Council of Europe standards
Enhancing the Application of Human Rights in the Armed Forces and Strengthening the Rights and Role of Women in the Military Service in Armenia phase I and phase II				Could not be verified & not sufficient data in progress reports	not sufficient data in progress reports	No data available
Protection of Human Rights in the Field of Biomedicine				Could not be verified & not sufficient data in progress reports	not sufficient data in progress reports	No data available
PGG II: Support to the judicial reform – enhancing the independence and professionalism of the judiciary in Armenia						No data available
PGG II: Supporting the criminal justice reform in Armenia and harmonising the application of European standards				To be verified when new law implemented as of Summer 2022	not sufficient data in progress reports	No data available
Enhancing Health Care and Human Rights Protection in Prisons in Armenia				Could not be verified & not sufficient data in progress reports		No data available
Support the scaling-up of the probation service in Armenia					not sufficient data in progress reports	No data available

	No activities
	Activities and results

Finding 9: The COVID-19 pandemic affected the timing of project implementation, but the Council of Europe harnessed adapted methods to maintain its support to the partner institutions.

The COVID-19 pandemic imposed heavy constraints on the implementation of projects, especially as Armenia experienced high prevalence rates during the evaluated period. For most projects, this resulted in delays (as evidenced by the high number of no-cost extensions), as time was required to adjust the project activities to the online mode. The Council of Europe also had to cancel or postpone some activities especially in the armed forces and biomedicine areas.

In nearly all Action Plan sectors, stakeholders did not all feel well connected to peers in Armenia and even less with peers from other countries. Benchmarking with other recent country evaluations³¹ suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic is a key underlying cause for this shortfall. The outbreak of hostilities with Azerbaijan probably also reduced connections.

However, the evaluation found numerous examples of adaptations to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the stakeholders often appreciated the results of these adjustments. The sampled projects benefited from successful online events and the prioritisation of desk work to produce assessments, analysis and advice, while the restrictions lasted. Existing online tools were particularly helpful, such as the HELP training platform, which the interviewees appreciated.

Quote:

“During the COVID pandemic, legal professionals did not have a chance to have face-to-face communication with experts, trainers and HELP is one of the main tools, which helped people to be in touch with European standards. HELP courses are counted as credits for mandatory trainings for judges, prosecutors and investigators.”

- Stakeholder of the Academy of Justice

Details of the impact of COVID 19/2020 outbreak of hostilities on the sampled projects can be found in annex 10.

Interviewees report overall satisfaction with these adjustments, but some interviewees found that the Council of Europe stayed too long in the “online mode”, when the pandemic receded and the need for direct interaction re-emerged in their opinion³².

Quote:

“We could not organise seminars, for example for journalists, outside of Yerevan. It was always advised to have an online one. After not receiving these confirmations, we had to often refer to other organisations, which left the Council of Europe aside from some developments to some extent. “

- Representative of a partner institution

³¹ See for instance:

https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/strategic-evaluation-reports_en

<https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/reports#/detail/17029/evaluation-of-the-unicef-government-of-albania-country-programme-2017-2021>

³² All projects were implemented in compliance with the instructions provided by the Directorate General of Administration, based on the Security Management Team’s decisions.

Good practice:**Accommodating emerging needs to boost project performance and delivery increases the project's effectiveness**

In one case, and despite the huge constraint posed on the country as a whole, the COVID-19 pandemic multiplied the success of the project. In the biomedicine project, the pandemic, which placed the health authorities in the forefront, spurred their common motivation along with that of the Council of Europe staff. Such windows of opportunity are highly dependent on volatile project environments, but also on the agility of a given project team, backed by the respective Department in Strasbourg. In the case of the biomedicine project, the team and the Department harnessed the challenge and accommodated the required project changes quickly. The project took the conjunction of the pandemic and the 2020 into account in at least one deliverable: it issued a guide on law enforcement practices in times of emergency, which was appreciated by the interviewees.

“Such issues as medical secret, patients' rights, were discussed. When the program was launched, especially coinciding with the Covid 19, there were major problems in this area of biomedicine. If we think of the potential ratification of the Oviedo Convention in the future [...] very good work has been done already.”

-Stakeholder in the Health sector

Finding 10: Monitoring and reporting on the Action Plan projects is not sufficient to document changes at the outcome level.

The evaluation found that the projects and Action Plan-level reports do not harmoniously track projects' contributions to changes. The monitoring quality is contrasted. This appears to depend mostly on four factors. In every sector and at Action Plan level, the evaluation found good practices and shortfalls in how these factors were addressed. The table below presents an overview of these findings. An additional finding is, that outcomes and indicators which became obsolete (due to gaps in funding) are not marked in the Action Plan logframe, making it more difficult to keep track.

Table 6: Findings on project monitoring data

Factors	Good practices	Shortfalls
Factor 1: The quality and simplicity of results framework, for the projects and at Action Plan level	<p>Some projects use the uptake of Monitoring Bodies' recommendations as a basis for monitoring reporting. This optimises monitoring and creates internal synergies. Even if project lifetimes are shorter than Council of Europe standard monitoring cycles they are used as red threads across several follow-up projects.</p> <p>The armed forces project refers to the relevant Action Plan outcomes in its executive summary. This ensures to focus the reporting towards progress on that level.</p>	<p>Action Plan level: the results framework is too complex and nearly impossible to document (with the human resources available). The Action Plan has 64 indicators at outcome level. As a consequence, these indicators and their targets are not reported on.</p> <p>In most projects, there is no clear link or reference to the relevant Action Plan outcomes.</p> <p>In most projects, the indicators (in the logframes) are also too numerous and often vague. This creates disproportionate expectations for reporting, and</p>

Factors	Good practices	Shortfalls
		disproportionate reporting work. As a consequence, projects seldom use their logframes for reporting. They rarely report on targets. Instead, projects report on output indicators.
Factor 2: The varying ability of the project/ODGP staff to characterise changes at the various levels (output, outcome, impact) and to analyse their projects' contribution	<p>The Action Plan reports produce analysis at outcome level, including on gender outcomes.</p> <p>The justice reform project reports distinguish (1) what the project did, and (2) the changes it achieved.</p> <p>The Human rights and women in the armed forces project follows in its reporting a clear chain of changes: Policy, legal and institutional changes; increase of knowledge, skills and awareness. This helps at Action Plan reporting level to assess progress according to the PMM methodology.</p>	Most project indicators and targets are associated to the wrong level. For instance, output indicators are often, in reality, activity indicators. As a result, projects often report on activities. This produces long, descriptive reports rather than analytical ones.
Factor 3: The different expectations of the respective donors		Donors place constraints on the Council of Europe to report at differing levels (some at activity levels, others at output and more rarely at outcome levels). Donor constraints are not always compatible with the organisational monitoring and reporting guidelines, which target mostly the intermediary levels of change (especially outcomes)
Factor 4: The presence or absence of clear baseline research and analysis	<p>Some project descriptions (e.g. criminal justice reform) have strong baseline research and analysis. This may be because this project is the follow up to previous projects, which conducted research and analysis.</p> <p>Most projects produce training needs assessments and after-training surveys</p>	<p>There is no baseline research and analysis at Action Plan level.</p> <p>The projects which have baseline research and analysis do not update the data gathered for the baseline, and changes are not recorded, because there is no link between most of the baseline data and the project indicators.</p>

2.3 Added value: EQ3: To what extent has the Council of Europe been able to optimize its comparative advantages?

Finding 11: The Council of Europe in Armenia has not fully capitalized on its potential to cultivate strong, long-term partnerships with a broad variety of stakeholders in state institutions, with CSOs and international partners.

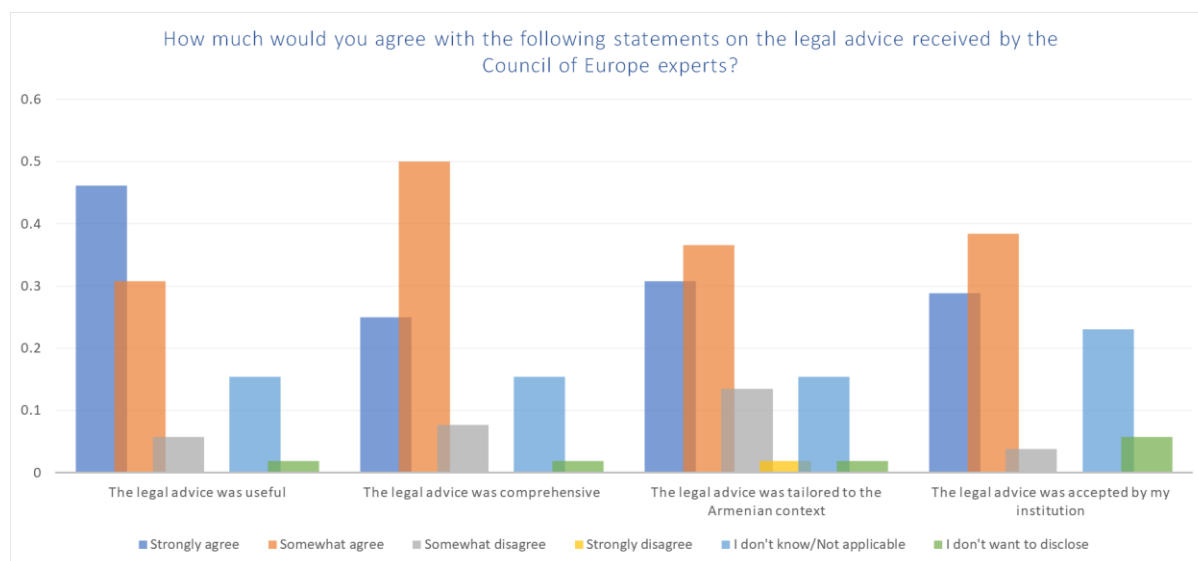
The analysis of effectiveness questions showed that the projects which belong to a suite (projects which continue the efforts started under the previous Action Plans) tend to have more outcome-level effects than the others. This is logical, as the Council of Europe works on long-term reforms in sensitive areas, which require strong ownership and a community of values with the partners. At the same time, the partners of these suites of projects do not necessarily manifest more satisfaction or commitment than those involved in new projects (such as biomedicine). This is highly unusual in an evaluation of the Council of Europe's work, which classically builds on long-term, trust-based, deep partnerships in terms of **people, reach within institutions, partners, and substance**.

The first explanatory factor has to do with turnover **of people** in both the Council of Europe and national authorities, which was acute during the implementation period of this Action Plan. The survey results show that appreciation for the Council of Europe's distinctive assets depends a lot on length of cooperation with the individuals in partner institutions: survey respondents who have been longer in their position and/or longer cooperating with the Council of Europe tend to agree more with the organisation's distinctive traits. But, due to turnover in the State authorities, most respondents have cooperated with Council of Europe only since 2019 or more recently: the Council of Europe in Armenia, unlike in some other countries, does not enjoy long partnership with a large proportion of officials. The problem is amplified as one goes up in the hierarchy of national counterparts.

A second explanatory factor is the limits in the synergy of values and vision, between the Council of Europe and the decision makers at management level – whereas there is clearly a common wish to cooperate at the top political level. A majority of survey respondents (question 16) agree that the Council of Europe's conventions and standards constitute one of the organisation's distinctive assets. But the fact that Armenia is a member State comes significantly lower in the list of distinctive characteristics. The contrast between the two suggest that respondents see the standards as useful tools, but not always as a set of commitments and obligations.

Another asset praised by the survey respondents is the independence of expertise it mobilizes. But the survey results (question 12) show that the legal and legislative advice provided by the Council of Europe, while useful, is not consensual for the stakeholders. Interviewees and survey respondents see this advice – a traditional beacon of the organisation's cooperation work – as sometimes ill-adapted to context of Armenia's rapid transition and security context. In some cases, the respondents' dissatisfaction meant that they were not ready, when confronted with the standards and changes promoted, to fully accept them. As a result, some stakeholders reported that it was not always fully accepted by the partner institutions.

Figure 7: Legal advice



A third factor, combined with the other two, could be the **lack of outreach within the partner institutions and CSOs** (see finding 4). During this Action Plan, despite formal partnerships with numerous institutions, the Council of Europe did not build close ties with a large number of counterparts. 57% survey respondents interact with Council of Europe a few times a year or less. 5% once a month or more. 25% a few times a month. 12% once a week/everyday. The Field Office also experienced difficulties to identify interviewees for this evaluation beyond the limited number of project contact points.

Possible explanations are as stated earlier:

- High turnover at all levels in Ministries and Institutions after 2018 and ongoing
- Limited possibilities to build new relationships as work was done mainly online due to the pandemic
- A pause in activities during the hostilities in 2020
- The long vacancy of two key senior positions which play a key role in building relationship at higher level and with other international partners.

This points to a need in bridging the gap between long-term work and partnerships on substance, which has taken place in all Action Plan sectors³³ and a high turnover of staff and people in state institutions and a changing CSO landscape. This is also true for international actors and donors as described in finding 12 below.

Finding 12: The Council of Europe has a margin of progression to ensure awareness of stakeholders regarding its role, its priorities, and the results of its work

During the implementation of the Action Plan, the Council of Europe has invested in its visibility in Armenia. The sampled projects frequently organised events and disseminated information, including in the social media. The human rights and women in the armed force project, and the probation project aired television spots and video, and broader information campaigns with leaflets and the biomedicine project went public with several interviews of Council of Europe staff on the public

³³ One example of a long-term substantive partnership is the work on the probation service, as the Council of Europe has started in 2013 the debate about creating a probation service and has since supported the drafting of legislation and currently the actual start of implementing a probation service according to European standards.

radio. The VAWDV project implemented a television programme³⁴, issued numerous publications, and financed a regional awareness raising campaign implemented by a local CSO. Yet, survey respondents³⁵ and interviewees concur that the public is not aware of the Council of Europe's role in Armenia or of its priorities under the Action Plan.

Quote:

“The Council of Europe projects tend to have very little visibility. I would say if they can work on that aspect more, it would definitely be beneficial for the projects.”

- *Former staff of Ombudsperson Office*

“I also think that the office should organise more public outreach components. It is one thing when you do excellent work, but it does not reach its full potential if the public outreach and communication are not in place. So I think more effort should be done in that direction, to show the mission, the expectations and then later on the real impact that the Action Plan realisation has in the country.”

- *CSO representative*

Interviews suggest lack of awareness on the part of some (often new) stakeholders regarding the nature of the Council of Europe's work. This could be related to turnover at middle- and senior-management level in national authorities, and the need for officials to experience, map and understand the positioning of the international cooperation actors (EU, bilaterals, Council of Europe...). For instance, several interviewees, including in the justice system, the prison administration, and the armed forces, view donors as potential providers of equipment and goods – which is not the Council of Europe's usual intervention technique. Likewise, the CSO's perception that they were not involved could partly be explained by the CSOs' expectations of direct funding and large grants, which may have been expressed during consultations but not directly addressed by the projects because this is not the approach of the Council of Europe.

The stakeholders also identified a donor coordination issue. The Action Plan's coordination section foresees ties with all relevant partners.³⁶ In practice, several stakeholders reported that the international partners in Armenia have not been able, or ready, to coordinate during the succession of crises which the country experienced since 2020. This situation has affected people's understanding of the Action Plan and of the Council of Europe: the stakeholders who work closely with the Council of Europe saw it as a trusted adviser, while others (both national and international) mostly perceived it as a donor with limited financial means. This also applies to some donor staff, who are not clear about the Council of Europe's added value in technical cooperation (including from the EUD).

Additionally, the Armenian government is not driving donor coordination, which is seen by stakeholders mainly due to the difficult political situation.

³⁴ Public Discussion with GREVIO and Venice Commission representatives

³⁵ Survey question 14, annex 3

³⁶ This section of the Action Plan states: “To ensure the relevance of its actions, the Council of Europe works in close co-ordination with international partners, notably the EU and, in particular, the EU Delegation. Co-ordination is also ensured with the United Nations (UN) and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe/ Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ ODIHR). Where appropriate, co-ordination platforms are set-up and joint activities undertaken. The Council of Europe Office in Yerevan participates and co-chairs with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Donor Coordination Group on Democratic Governance. The Council of Europe also maintains close contact with the development agencies of Council of Europe member States, including but not confined to the Swiss Agency of Development and Co-operation (SDC), the German Agency for International Co-operation (GIZ), the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (SIDA), the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the governments of the United Kingdom, Norway and Denmark.”

Quote:

“The Armenian government is unfortunately not driving the donor coordination. This is a young government which is under terrible internal and international pressure, due to the 2020 outbreak of hostilities. Additionally, there is quite a high turnover of staff in Ministries. “

- donor representative

Finding 13: During the period of the Action Plan, the Field Office faced significant Council of Europe-internal challenges, which sectors faced with varying levels of resilience. This in turn affected effectiveness in some sectors.

The Action Plan implementation encountered exceptional external and internal challenges during the period under review. Despite extraordinary efforts, this stress-test situation has affected the satisfaction of some stakeholders. As presented in the Relevance section, **the period of implementation of the Action Plan has proven particularly challenging, both for Armenia and for the Council of Europe:** the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuing economic turbulences, and the 2020 outbreak of hostilities, all intervened on top of the demanding political transition stemming from the 2018 “velvet revolution”. The implementation of the Action Plan therefore acted as a particularly challenging stress test for the Action Plan and its implementation at project level.

An internal constraining factor added to the difficulty: between 2019-2022, most of this time, one or both senior management positions in the Field Office (Head of Office and Deputy) were vacant each for about one year (not always at the same time)³⁷, creating management gaps to steer administrative adjustments, and placing the responsibility of representation and promotion of the organisation fully on the other senior manager and project management staff in Yerevan (or, sometimes, on staff from Strasbourg), in particular during the outbreak of hostilities (September-November) when this was particularly needed. Although in the absence of both senior managers between July-November 2020 the Office was managed remotely from HQ, this has put a heavy burden on the staff with the ongoing pandemic since spring 2020. Finally, the Field Office also received a large proportion of new staff members. The urgency probably took over the need to embrace newly introduced systemic processes. This protracted conjunction of many crises and challenges made some staff members insecure, in effect reducing their ownership and level of initiative.

Unsteady funding compounded these challenges: the projects last less than the Action Plan, creating funding gaps for staff salaries. The transition from the current to the upcoming Action Plan, with further gaps foreseeable, also creates an unusually high risk of losing even the most committed and/or experienced staff.

The partners of the Action Plan have perceived turbulences and expressed their perceptions in the survey with various aspects of the Council of Europe’s qualities³⁸. When interpreting this data it needs to be seen in relation to the context of the pandemic and the political context described above and in particular that for many state officials, the work with the Council of Europe was new and took place mainly online. Thus, the survey respondents had unusual uneven levels of satisfaction with the commitment and expertise of the relevant Council of Europe staff.

³⁷ There was neither a **Head of Office** nor a *Deputy Head of Office* between July and November 2020. The *Deputy Head of Office* arrived in November 2020 and remained until December 2021. The current **Head of Office** arrived in May 2021 (this key position was vacant for almost one year between 2019-2022). The current Deputy Head of Office arrived in June 2022 (overall vacant one year between 2019-2022). There was no full management team from July 2020- June 2022.

³⁸ See Survey Question 16 in annex 3

Many interviewed stakeholders commented positively on the commitment and expertise of the Council of Europe staff. Some interviewees also praised the relentlessness and skills of their counterparts in the Field Office, who weathered turbulences.

Quote:

I was cooperating with the project managers, who were very flexible, committed, cooperative and responsive. In this respect, I can only say positive things about the Council of Europe.”

- Former staff of Ombudsperson Office

“Local project staff who treats counterparts with respect and ensures a good link with the Strasbourg office, has a successful project. This is why the human rights in armed forces project succeeded: the managerial skills of the project manager.”

- Stakeholders in the armed forces area

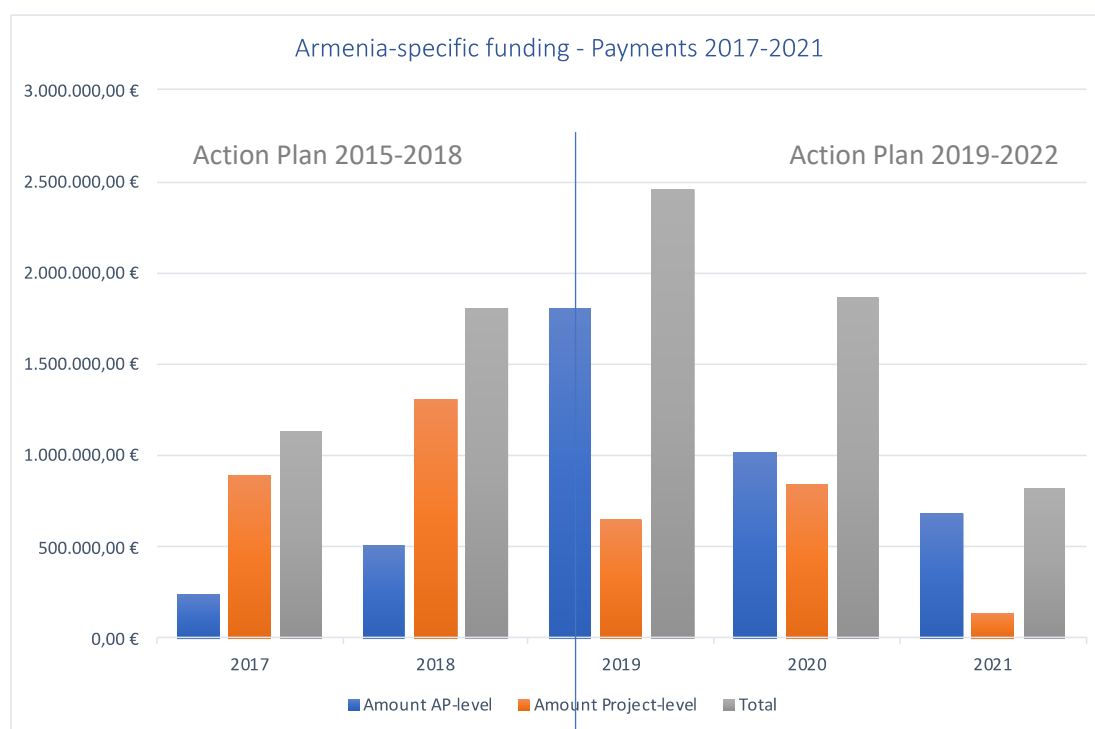
However, there is strong disagreement among survey respondents regarding the expertise and the **cultural/context appropriateness of the services** rendered by the Council of Europe (see above figure 7 under finding 11). Where there was dissatisfaction, it was limited to some sectors: this shows that general circumstances in the countries were not the key cause, but rather particular factors specific to one or the other sector or project. These aspects impact the perception of usefulness among stakeholders.

Finally, about 20% survey respondents disagree that Council of Europe is efficient with administration and logistics.

Finding 14: Despite higher resources mobilisation as compared to its predecessor, the Action Plan suffered from insufficient resources and lack of synergies among the projects and sectors, which eroded the added value of the Action Plan

The Action Plan as a tool has high added value for resource mobilisation. From one Action Plan to the next, the total amount of funding has increased. Donors have also earmarked their contributions less strictly: the proportion of Action Plan-level funding, and thematic area funding (as opposed to strict project funding) have increased steadily. This gives the Council of Europe more latitude to allocate according to the priorities agreed with the Government, and to reallocate as circumstances may require.

Figure 8: Payments received by donors



However, resource mobilisation was not met by sufficient response. Usually, Action Plans are funded between 75%-90% of their initial budget according to ODGP. In comparison, the Armenia Action Plan, with 57%, is particularly underfunded. The evaluation identified three possible causes:

- When the Action Plan was finalised, its initially planned budget of 18.9 Million EUR was well funded early on. Then the Action Plan budget was revised and increased to 22.9 Million EUR presumably based on Donors interest. However, not all of this interest materialised in the expected funding.
- The changing political situation after 2018, plus the need of funding of the Humanitarian Action Plan for Armenia in response to the 2020 outbreak of hostilities, could have diverted donor funding – although donors usually finance Council of Europe projects and humanitarian support from different budget lines, which are often hermetic to each other.
- As part of the EU-Council of Europe strategic partnership, The Action Plan for Armenia receives EU funding through Joint regional programmes, co-programmed by both organisations’ headquarters. There is no additional bilateral funding from the EU Delegation in Armenia. Meanwhile, the EU Delegation implements one Budget Support programme in the justice sector, and some projects in Human Rights, Justice, Governance and anti-corruption (since 2019). The EU Delegation provides an ongoing EU budget support program for justice reform in Armenia.

In this context of limited funding, it is all the more essential for the Council of Europe to optimise resources, in particular through synergies among and within the Action Plan sectors and the projects. The Action Plan, as a tool which gives high visibility to the various Council of Europe entities and project staff about one another’s priorities and actions, should facilitate synergies.

Good practice:
Examples of joint operations harnessing synergy among projects in the area of justice and prison reform

The evaluation found good synergies among five projects (four in one Action Plan sector and one in another Action Plan sector), in the form of cross-fertilisation and mutualisation of certain tools or

promotion efforts. According to Council of Europe staff and national stakeholders, criminal justice reform, prison reform, probation, judicial reform projects worked together. Project reports also report joint activity planning and implementation.

Close partners in these two Action Plan Sectors **noticed Council of Europe’s added value through cooperation and discussions across Armenian institutions.**

“I think one of the positive processes of Council of Europe in Armenia is trying to keep this link with different authorities and among the authorities, discussions on issues that are intersectional, relate to multi-agency cooperation, etc.”

- Ombudsperson Office staff

However, the evaluation also found strong compartmentalisation between and within Action Plan sectors, usually corresponding to the organisation’s organigramme. This points to difficulties to ensure horizontal cooperation among entities even when several projects shared the same counterparts (such as the Ministry of territorial administration in the case of democratic governance, or the Ministry of Justice (MoJ)).

Lesson Learned:

Missing synergies erode added value of the Action Plan

The sector Strengthening Democratic Governance and Fostering Innovation is served by two projects: one implemented by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities with the Association of Communities of Armenia; the other by the DGII Centre of Expertise for Good Governance. Between these projects, there was no evidence of joint operations found in the project documents and the interviews conducted with CoE staff and donors, and all perceived these projects to be separate – although interviewees pointed that they expected synergies: ideally, democratic (multilevel) governance would have been better served by one programme. This situation compounds the tensions between the various actors of decentralisation, from the State to the community levels.

Interviews strongly point that this situation negatively affects the effectiveness and efficiency of projects and, potentially, staff resilience. It also reflects poorly on the perception of stakeholders and of some donors and the reputation of the Council of Europe among these partners. In addition, one project worked on anti-corruption at the local level, but the evaluation team could not find any convincing evidence of synergies with the anti-corruption project working at national level. The other project in this sector had initially planned to work on public ethics at local level, but adjusted its workplan to respond to emerging needs by working on resilience.

3. Conclusions and recommendations

The Council of Europe Action Plan for Armenia 2019-2022 was drafted during, and adopted immediately after the velvet revolution, during a culminating change in the political situation and structures of the country. It has acted as a relevant and effective vehicle to channel and focus the mutual impetus to cooperate and bring Armenia closer to the standards it has adhered to. It has proven particularly instrumental to maintain commitment in a turbulent and critical period for Armenia, which during this period has confronted an intense reform agenda and renewal of many officials following the “Velvet revolution”, acute waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the outbreak of hostilities in 2020. The consultations and analysis of the needs underpinning the Action Plan

enabled to clearly identify common priority areas and to address key recommendations of the Council of Europe monitoring bodies.

Most importantly, the Action Plan was a relevant and comprehensive document, but the level of donor support forced the Council of Europe and the Government of Armenia to make choices, sometimes heavily constrained, and to restrict the initially envisaged actions to hardly more than half of what was planned. The evaluation can attribute this shortfall to several factors:

- Limited donor coordination and donor interest in some areas (since 2020 possibly also due to the diversion of funds towards the Humanitarian Response 39)
- Shortcomings in the Council of Europe's ability to communicate clearly and visibly on its added value and positioning in Armenia

During their implementation, the Action Plan's projects which were funded faced multiple internal and extraordinary external challenges, which amounted to a "stress test" for the Council of Europe in Armenia. The projects have adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic in the best manners possible, although this placed pressure on the staff and the partners. On the other hand, the Council of Europe did not channel its high-level dialogue with Armenian partners, and the analysis of the consequences of the 2020 outbreak of hostilities, into the implementation of the Action Plan. This is regrettable: regardless of an organisation's mandate and specialisation, when a conflict takes place, it has impact on all sectors of the Council of Europe, much in the same way as gender inequalities and human rights violations do. The organisation needs to understand and take into account these consequences in order to remain relevant and effective.

In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2020 outbreak of hostilities which slowed implementation down, the projects had to adjust to the high turnover in many key positions within partner institutions. In some cases, while there was strong political will at leadership level to cooperate with the Council of Europe, the mid-level partners' vision of whether and how to embrace the Council of Europe standards in the reforms was not always aligned with the solutions promoted by the projects.

These factors have curtailed the projects' ability to build on a traditional comparative advantage of the Council of Europe: the maintenance of long and deep partnerships at all levels of many institutions, and synergy of visions for standard-compliant reforms. At the same time, the Field Office in Armenia was understaffed: its two leadership positions remaining vacant for protracted periods of times, and there was turnover among project staff. In this context, the implementation of projects drew on teams which were insufficiently supported. There were also shortcomings in internal coordination and synergies, particularly in the democratic governance sector and on the anti-corruption topic cutting across two sectors and three projects.

Faced with this multi-faceted "stress test", the Action Plan sectors performed unevenly. The evaluation found that the sampled projects' level of contribution to changes depends on several factors:

- Political backing by policy makers, and alignment between their vision and values with those championed by the Council of Europe
- Length of cooperation with the Council of Europe: suites of projects have had more success, thanks to the accrued momentum of cooperation
- Funding available
- Quality of the advice provided

³⁹ Since 2020 possibly also due to the diversion of funds towards the Humanitarian Response of the UN of around 49 Million USD (<https://www.unhcr.org/am/en/humanitarian-response>) and the European Commission of 16,9 EUR since 2020 (https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/europe/armenia-and-azerbaijan_en#facts--figures)

- Quality of cooperation with complementary actors, including CSOs.

Synthesizing the success and hindering factors, the evaluation team found that:

- Most sampled projects on human rights and rule of law (judicial and criminal reform, prisons, biomedicine) enjoyed close alignment of priorities and values with their counterparts. They adapted to the highest extent possible to emerging needs, but were hindered by limited funding.
- Some stakeholders in the democratic governance sector and in the defence/armed forces project, found that the Council of Europe did not align closely with the expectations and dynamics among the stakeholders, and in the face of the various challenges. Whether or not this perception is correct, it does affect the Council of Europe's ability to maintain support for changes in the corresponding institutions.

Despite the extraordinary challenges all Action Plan sectors have achieved valuable results in terms of changes to the legal, regulatory, and institutional frameworks of the partner institutions. Overall, the partner institutions enjoy clearer, and more compliant legislation and internal rules, and the capacity of their staff to implement these has increased. Some institutions have adapted their internal working processes. In the areas of justice and prisons, the evaluation also identified changes in the practices and in the services delivered to the citizen. These successes are largely due to the suite of successive and complementary projects of which they formed a part, and to the shared holistic approach of both the Council of Europe entities and the State institutions involved. In other words, the performance of these projects was multiplied by synergies within and across Action Plan sectors. However, the new skills are not yet used to the same extent in all sectors. Change is more visible in the Ensuring Justice sector and the criminal justice reform project (Protecting Human Rights sector), than in the other sectors. The change processes necessary for the implementation of Council of Europe standards are long-term in nature. They are holistically linked to each other and strongly depend on the locally available budgets and resources.

The monitoring, reporting, and communication on the results of the Action Plan have improved over the period, however some shortfalls remain. There is a lack of alignment between project monitoring and Action Plan-level monitoring. The monitoring and reporting frameworks are complicated by large numbers of indicators, and the lack of clarity of some targets. Several project reports, and thus the Action Plan as a whole, lack baseline research in some cases – although the evaluation identified a good use of the findings and recommendations of the monitoring bodies of the Council of Europe. The analytical qualities of the reports is uneven, though it has improved steadily during the Action Plan implementation. Most project reports would benefit from a more outcome oriented, evidence-based approach to reporting longer-term changes, rather than focusing on the description of activities and of legislative processes.

The visibility of the Council of Europe in Armenia remains limited, and several actors, including CSOs, State institutions and donors, do not fully capture the added value and positioning of the Organisation. The limited outreach to, and inclusion of CSOs in the implementation of the Action Plan and its projects, reduces the number of strong allies, critical reviewers and additional expertise. There is room to build stronger ties with a broader range of CSOs, for instance to promote Council of Europe Standards with rights holders.

Stronger visibility will constitute a challenge for the recently appointed leadership of the Field Office, and it will require sustained support from the headquarters: it will be paramount to ensure that the stakeholders' uneven perception of the Action Plan implementation does not affect the will to cooperate. The priorities of the future Action Plan should be the enhancement and broadening of

partnerships, and the multiplication of achieved results in the most promising Action Plan sectors and projects.

These conclusions lead to the following recommendations to ODGP and the Office in Yerevan, in cooperation with the main administrative entities implementing the Action Plan:

1. Enhance outreach and communication with donors, CSOs, professionals and the wider public about the Council of Europe's role and the added value of the Action Plan
2. Enhance and broaden partnerships with CSOs in Armenia. This should start with a mapping of CSOs, their roles and capacities and how to enhance partnerships with them
3. Enhance and broaden partnerships with donors and seek closer synergies
4. Ensure that all projects include a gender analysis
5. Enhance synergies between and across Action Plan sectors and projects
6. Strengthen the evidence basis of reported Action Plan outcomes related to training/capacity building and new practices in the partner institutions, through more analytical and evidence-based project reports
7. Commission strong, lesson learned-oriented independent end-evaluations of the Biomedicine project and of the Human Rights in Armed Forces project.

Section 5 elaborates on these recommendations, their benefits and possible operational aspects.

4. Key lessons and good practices

Relevance

Lesson Learned:

A new initiative which became highly relevant with the pandemic

Protection of human rights in biomedicine was selected as a very specialized, technical area, but became a good showcase about adaptation to the pandemic.

The COVID pandemic accelerated the “door opener” effect of the project on biomedicine. This project was not designed to address all these needs, but rather as an entry point. The partner institutions have realized, during (and thanks to) the implementation the project, the nature and magnitude of their needs, which the project was not designed to all address. The level of satisfaction with relevance therefore remained very high throughout the project, but the stakeholders are eager to do more. This dynamic was further fuelled by the COVID-19 pandemic, which placed biomedicine on the forefront of the needs and public debate: the pandemic multiplied the needs of the counterparts in the health sector, further increased the relevance of the project, and accented its visibility.

The work carried out under this project could potentially benefit other countries in the near future, in particular the diagnostic study on human rights issues in emergency situations analysing existing laws and law-enforcement practices on the protection of human rights in emergency situations. A related guiding tool for decision-makers and practitioners who face the same challenge could become useful for other Council of Europe member-states.

Added Value

Lesson Learned:

Missing synergies erode added value of the Action Plan

The sector Strengthening Democratic Governance and Fostering Innovation is served by two projects: one implemented by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities with the Association of Communities of Armenia; the other by the DGII Centre of Expertise for Good Governance. Between

these projects, there was no evidence of joint operations found in the project documents and the interviews conducted with CoE staff and donors, and all perceived these projects to be separate – although interviewees pointed that they expected synergies: ideally, democratic (multilevel) governance would have been better served by one programme. This situation compounds the tensions between the various actors of decentralisation, from the State to the community levels.

Interviews strongly point that this situation negatively affects the effectiveness and efficiency of projects and, potentially, staff resilience. It also reflects poorly on the perception of stakeholders and of some donors and the reputation of the Council of Europe among these partners. In addition, one project worked on anti-corruption at the local level, but the evaluation team could not find any convincing evidence of synergies with the anti-corruption project working at national level. The other project in this sector had initially planned to work on public ethics at local level, but adjusted its workplan to respond to emerging needs by working on resilience.

Relevance

Good practice:

Embedding gender analysis into capacity building and institutional support activities

The project "Supporting judicial reform" produced a new manual "Gender equality in the judiciary in Armenia", with examples of gender inequality and how to address them. A ToT activity followed on "Ensuring gender equality", targeting judges, prosecutors and investigators. Comprehensive research on gender equality supported the relevant policy changes in the judiciary to bring the composition of the judiciary in Armenia in compliance with the Council of Europe standards, which is a minimum of 40% of the opposite sex in decision-making bodies. Additionally, the same project initiated a *Gender Impact Assessment of the Judicial Code*, resulting in the commitments of Armenian authorities to consider them in the future. Armenian authorities demonstrated their commitment towards the gender equality within the judiciary.

In 2021 the percentage of women judges increased from 26,6% to 32%. Moreover, 44% of Armenian women judges significantly increased their leadership skills through the training organised by the Project, as a result the percentage of women judges in managerial positions increased from 11% to 25%. These practices are promising, but must be underpinned by gender analysis at project design stage, and the design of gender transformative results.

The project "Supporting the criminal justice reform and harmonising the application of European standards in Armenia" included a gender analysis in 2020-2021 which analysed training for legal professionals. The analysis showed that the five training courses developed with the support of the project are fully gender mainstreamed and ensure the consideration of gender equality aspects. Furthermore, there has been a lack of gender-sensitive training courses for legal professionals: the stakeholders therefore welcomed the project's approach.

Relevance

Good practice:

Accommodating emerging needs to boost project performance and delivery increases the project's effectiveness

In one case, and despite the huge constraint posed on the country as a whole, the COVID-19 pandemic multiplied the success of the project. In the biomedicine project, the pandemic, which placed the health authorities in the forefront, spurred their common motivation along with that of the Council of Europe staff. Such windows of opportunity are highly dependent on volatile project environments, but also on the agility of a given project team, backed by the respective Department in Strasbourg. In the case of the biomedicine project, the team and the Department harnessed the challenge and accommodated the required project changes quickly. The project took the conjunction of the

pandemic and the 2020 into account in at least one deliverable: it issued a guide on law enforcement practices in times of emergency, which was appreciated by the interviewees.

“Such issues as medical secret, patients' rights, were discussed. When the program was launched, especially coinciding with the Covid 19, there were major problems in this area of biomedicine. If we think of the potential ratification of the Oviedo Convention in the future [...] very good work has been done already.”

-Stakeholder in the Health sector

Added value

Good practice:

Examples of joint operations harnessing synergy among projects in the area of justice and prison reform

The evaluation found good synergies among five projects (four in one Action Plan sector and one in another Action Plan sector), in the form of cross-fertilisation and mutualisation of certain tools or promotion efforts. According to Council of Europe staff and national stakeholders, criminal justice reform, prison reform, probation, judicial reform projects worked together. Project reports also report joint activity planning and implementation.

Close partners in these two Action Plan Sectors **noticed Council of Europe's added value through cooperation and discussions across Armenian institutions.**

“I think one of the positive processes of Council of Europe in Armenia is trying to keep this link with different authorities and among the authorities, discussions on issues that are intersectional, relate to multi-agency cooperation, etc.”

- Ombudsperson Office staff

5. Recommendations

Nb	Priority	Recommendations	Addressees	Timeline	Benefit	Related Findings
1.	high	Enhance outreach and communication with donors, CSOs, professionals and the wider public about the Council of Europe's role and the added value of the Action Plan.	ODGP, Head of Office	Continuous	A better understanding of the Council of Europe's role and the added value of the Action Plan will enable closer and aligned relationships with key actors, partners and supporters. Better knowledge by the wider public will create a more supportive context for Armenia's reform agenda and possible future ratifications of Council of Europe Conventions.	4 and 13
<p>Points to consider:</p> <p>Developing key messages for specific targets audiences of the Action Plan in Armenia could be a starting point. An example could be the communication strategy around the Istanbul Convention of the GREVIO Secretariat. Another good example are the radio interviews conducted for the biomedicine project.</p> <p>The Field Office staff could more actively interact with experts/students who are not part of the day-to-day work to start building knowledge about the role of the Council of Europe in Armenia.</p> <p>Ensure better accessibility of the institutional memory/products to new state officials of past co-operation.</p>						
2.	high	Enhance and broaden partnerships with CSOs in Armenia. This should start with a mapping of CSOs, their roles and capacities and how to enhance partnerships with them.	ODGP, Field Office	Continuous	CSOs are an important element of democratic processes and including them increases the access to information about reform processes and adds an important perspective and expertise. Additionally, the role and added value of the Council of Europe is spread.	4 and 12
<p>Points to consider:</p>						

CSO Mapping: Enables more systematic identification of potential partners at different levels (national/policy level or community based CSOs). Maybe there is a need to build capacities, so CSOs can be stronger supporters of the Council of Europe causes? Analyse the different roles these CSOs are currently playing or could play: reviewing and advocating for policies and laws, and providing shadow reports when monitoring standards.

CSO participation: would benefit from being more inclusive: a larger number of CSOs should be engaged. CSO participation could take place at the stage of preparation of Action Plans, when designing project documents, and during the implementation of projects. Various mechanisms could be strengthened, including bilateral and multilateral consultations with CSOs offering expertise and/or representing the interests of particular groups of rights holders; multilateral consultations with CSOs and with the government and CSOs; granting/sub-granting schemes within projects to support CSOs which contribute to policy-making, to the implementation of relevant standards, or to oversight (with more sizeable grants than has been the case so far). The participatory process(es) should be in line with the existing guidelines on CSO participation in the Council of Europe's cooperation activities. ([https://rm.Council of Europe.int/Council of EuropeRMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680656cef](https://rm.CouncilofEurope.int/CouncilofEuropeRMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680656cef))

3.	high	Enhance and broaden partnerships with donors and seek closer synergies.	ODGP, Head of Office	Continuous	This could have positive effects on the level of funding and coordination with other international partners and donors as well as the EU Delegation and would contribute to a coherent support of the Armenian reform agenda.	4 and 12
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Points to consider:

The Council of Europe could push the government for increased donor coordination in the thematic areas of priority of the Action Plan. The review of donors undertaken for the new Action Plan could be expanded to include an analysis of potential areas of synergies and explore new cooperation possibilities.

In future project(s) on judicial reform (including prison and probation), the Council of Europe in cooperation with Armenian Authorities should closely coordinate with other international actors, in particular the EU Delegation, to promote response to the needs of the criminal justice reform implementation. For example: the Council of Europe and the MoJ may propose to include some of the Council of Europe capacity building activities for criminal justice, under the relevant Sector Budget Support programme(s) of the EU, as complementary assistance. The Council of Europe could seek closer cooperation with UN organizations on awareness raising on judicial responses to violence against women. When the new Action Plan is adopted, the Council of Europe could organize a specific briefing with international actors to identify linkages, possible cooperation, and possible synergies.

4.	medium	Ensure that all projects include a gender analysis.	ODGP, FO management, Regional Gender Advisor	Continuous	Gender analysis and other more systematic tools allow project staff and stakeholders to explore what needs exist in their area of work in relation to gender equality, which go beyond the questions of a balanced participation in events. Even if these needs cannot be met due to missing resources the	6
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					analysis may help stakeholders to address the needs outside of Council of Europe activities.	
Points to consider: Consider using the concept of gender markers to be better able to see where the Council of Europe stands with gender mainstreaming and to have a more systematic picture on what sectors, regions and activities might need more efforts to gender mainstream						
5.	high	Enhance synergies between and across Action Plan sectors and projects.	ODGP, Head of Office	Continuous		4 and 12
Points to consider: For optimisation of synergies, ODGP and the Main Administrative Entities could draft projects contributing to the same thematic outcome(s) and/or Action Plan sectors, as much as possible, through a collaborative process in order to build synergies in the projects from the start. Wherever possible, projects tackling the same broad thematic area should share the same thematic outcome indicators and assumption, so as to join forces and optimize monitoring. Regular internal review/progress meetings at the Action Plan sector levels (and beyond when relevant) could help to keep synergies on track and explore new ones.						
6.	high	Strengthen the evidence basis of reported Action Plan outcomes related to training/capacity building and new practices in the partner institutions, through more analytical and evidence-based project reports.	ODGP, operational Main Administrative Entities /project coordinators	Continuous and Project design	Facilitation of project reporting, and of ODGP Action Plan reporting. Ability to demonstrate progress (to donors and Armenian counterparts) in capacity building and adopting new practices to evidence Council of Europe's added value and expertise.	3, 5, 7 and 8
Points to consider: A review of existing tools/data collection/surveys used in the Office in Yerevan and by ODGP could result in new tools/templates which are more focused on the medium and long-term change of knowledge, practices/skill, attitudes and behaviours of direct project beneficiaries. To the extent possible, project indicators and assumptions at outcome level should reproduce Action Plan indicators, in order to feed directly into Action Plan reporting without adding any reporting burden to the project staff. Projects should systematically present baseline data. ODGP should ask programme managers to update baselines and targets of logframes at the mid-course of implementation of the Action Plan, and at the end of implementation of the Action Plan. Another or additional way to strengthen the evidence is by supporting partners in assessing the mid- to long-term outcomes of trainings as part of their human resource management (key ministries, judiciary possibly through the Academy of Justice). Governmental actors of Armenia could contribute to the evidence base of Action Plan project results by defining and tracking their mid- to long-term capacity building goals from their respective institutional perspective.						
7.	high	Commission strong, lesson learned-oriented independent end-evaluations of the Biomedicine project and of the Human Rights in Armed Forces project. These evaluations should include an	ODGP, Operational MAEs/project coordinators, DIO	End of projects	This could constitute a scaling up, or also a refocusing of the existing projects towards the core competencies of the Council of Europe.	3, 5, 7 and 8

		analysis of the potential benefits of these projects for other countries.				
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Points to consider:

Given the sensitivity of the project on Human Rights in Armed Forces, such evaluation could rely on electronic and/or anonymised data collection tools, such as:

- Electronic survey
- Online text-based “open comments board” with a small number of open-ended questions open to all direct/indirect project beneficiaries in order to increase the number of respondents and strengthen confidentiality (anonymous, password-protected access to a single repository of answers, giving respondents space to write text anonymously) to be analysed with qualitative data analysis software).

Another way to gather proxy data on changes of behaviour, using a form of action research, could be the organisation of a mock event to be observed by evaluators. The event would have to be scenarized so as to create virtual situations of technical decision-making where the knowledge/know how/ attitudes promoted by the project could be mobilised.

Focus of both evaluations could be:

- Effectiveness in terms of adopting new practices and raising public awareness of these newly adopted practices
- Potential or actual changes for rights holders to enjoy Council of Europe standards (potential impact)
- Added value and sustainability
- Identifying good practices and lessons learned which are transferrable to other country contexts.

Annexes

[Annex 1 - Sampled project results](#)

[Annex 2 - Results of sampled projects summary mapped against model chain of results](#)

[Annex 3 - Survey results](#)

[Annex 4 - Derivations from the median](#)

[Annex 5 - Mapping of funded actions](#)

[Annex 6 - Alignment with SDGs](#)

[Annex 7 - List of interviewees](#)

[Annex 8 - Mapping to national policies, strategies and action plans](#)

[Annex 9 - Evaluation Matrix](#)

[Annex 10 - Impact of COVID-19/2020 outbreak of hostilities and adjustments made on the sampled projects](#)

[Annex 11 - Projects per Action Plan sector and sampling](#)

Annex 1 - Sampled project results

Note: based on document review and stakeholder interviews, however, if new practices are really rolled out and implemented or public awareness was really increased could not be verified in some cases, due to missing outcome monitoring data.

Relevant Action Plan Sector outcomes	Relevant Sector indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Criminal legislation is adopted and implemented in line with European standards. - Legal professionals, including judges, prosecutors and investigators implement in a harmonised way the new criminal legislation in line with European standards. - Pre-trial detention is correctly and proportionally applied in line with ECHR standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Degree of compliance of criminal legislation with European standards and of implementation. - Extent to which new criminal law is applied by criminal justice stakeholders. - Decrease in pre-trial detention cases in violation of ECHR.
<p>Sampled project: PGG II, Supporting the criminal justice reform in Armenia and harmonising the application of European standards</p>	<p>Progress: Criminal Code (CC) and the new Criminal Procedure Code (CPC) adopted and in line with European standards. Institutions are strengthened with knowledge & access to information to implement the new legislation in line with standards and harmonized. However, as the new legislation will only be applied as of 1st of July 2022 implementation in practice cannot be assessed. Awareness raising of the public and contributing to changes in attitudes and practice not yet addressed.</p>
<p>Legislation and Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The new Criminal Code (CC) and the new Criminal Procedure Code (CPC) were adopted and support to harmonise 10 legal acts in line with the new CPC. - Policy recommendations for the prevention of torture and ill-treatment provided <p>Knowledge and strengthening of institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Justice Academy capacity with a set-up of a group of 20 national trainers for new CC including a 6 days ToT. 109 (56 F/ 53 M) legal professionals received knowledge on the new legislation. - Several HELP training courses available and part of training credits system - Training of Cassation Court’s staff and staff of the Representative of the Knowledge and skills of Armenian legal professionals on the ECHR standards were enhanced and their access to and use of the case-law of the ECtHR in the national language was facilitated. - Legal professionals’ access both to decisions of the Cassation Court, and to the case-law and publications of the Strasbourg Court was increased. - Judicial servants of the Court of Cassation acquired new skills and knowledge in the field of Articles 5, 6 and 8 of the ECHR. <p>Adopting Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Handbook on “Detention as a preventive measure - justification for its use and prolongation” published. - Two Guides on implementing the new Code of Criminal Procedure and Criminal Code are under development. - Guides of the ECtHR on Articles 5, 6, 7 of the ECHR and Article 4 of Protocol No.7 to the ECHR published - Armenian language interface of HUDOC 	

Relevant Action Plan Sector outcomes	Relevant Sector indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National legal acts on the judiciary are adopted and implemented in line with Council of Europe standards. - The judicial self-governing bodies, including the Judicial Supreme Council (JSC), carry out their work with enhanced transparency and efficiency in line with European standards and good practices. - Equal access to justice is improved in line with the best practices of Council of Europe member States. - The general measures in the relevant judgments of the ECtHR related to Article 6 of the Convention are effectively implemented. - Effective application on a wider scale of arbitration and mediation help to reduce the backlog and to enhance access to justice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extent to which legislation on the judiciary is in place and/or amended and implemented in line with European standards. - Quality of the procedures, rules and regulations and management capacities of the judicial self-governing bodies. - Level of introduction and implementation of <i>a unified e-court system (addressed by the EU)</i>, e-bankruptcy and an e-petition website by the judicial self-governing bodies. - Level of implementation of European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) tools and methodology in courts' daily work. - Level of application of mediation and arbitration and decrease in the backlog.
<p><i>Sampled project: PGG II, Support to the judicial reform – enhancing the independence and professionalism of the judiciary in Armenia</i></p>	<p>Progress: Judicial Code mostly in line with Council of Europe standards, work on amending recently adopted civil procedure code started. Institutions provided with tools & knowledge to a more unified application of law by lower courts. Tools & training provided to improve judicial decisions. More knowledge provided about arbitration and mediation. Judiciary adopted a new practice of performance evaluation. Gender balance of judges and female judges in decision making positions. Public can inform itself about mediation services.</p>
<p>Legislation and Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The post-adoption review of the Judicial Code of Armenia showed that most of the Council of Europe recommendations were considered by the national authorities in the law amended in 2020. Work on Civil Procedure Code started as the code adopted in 2018 needs amendments. <p>Knowledge and strengthening of institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unified application of the law by the lower courts supported by disseminating 700 copies of the decisions passed in 2019 by the Civil and Administrative Chamber of the Court of Cassation. - Contributed to increasing the knowledge about the establishment of the Arbitration Centre, as well as the improvement of the application of mediation in Armenia. - 37 judges and assistants to judges trained in legal in civil and administrative courts of different instances. - All 16 courts in Armenia received a Handbook on improving the quality of judicial decisions <p>Adopting Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First round of performance evaluation of 60 judges was made (23% of all judges in Armenia) .Only 4 Council of Europe recommendations were included for this procedure. - Gender balance: in 2021 the percentage of women judges increased from 26,6% to 32%. (Council of Europe standard: 40%). 44% of Armenian women judges significantly increased their leadership skills through the training organised by the Project, as a result the percentage of women judges in managerial positions increased from 11% to 25%. <p>Public awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting the development of the website for the Self-regulating organisation of mediators of Armenia. 	

Relevant Action Plan Sector outcomes	Relevant Sector indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The armed forces apply regulatory and institutional frameworks to better protect and promote human rights. - Training institutions actively contribute to the protection and promotion of human rights in the armed forces. - The profile of female military personnel is raised within the armed forces. - Military service personnel have better access to justice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Degree of compliance of regulatory and institutional frameworks with European standards for the protection of human rights in the armed forces and of implementation. - Level of knowledge about human rights in the armed forces and extent of their application by legal professionals and military personnel. - Level of recruitment and promotion of female military personnel and number of male military personnel under their supervision.
<p><i>Sampled project: Enhancing the Application of Human Rights in the Armed Forces and Strengthening the Rights and Role of Women in the Military Service in Armenia phase I and phase II</i></p>	<p>Progress: Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue was facilitated in particular also with the Human Rights Defenders Office. Capacity building was hampered by the political situation and the pandemic. Potential adoption of the Women Council practice (not mentioned in interviews). Monitoring of HR violations by Human Rights defender Strong reach out to increase public awareness on the rights of military servicepersons.</p>
<p><u>Facilitating Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Intersectoral Committee on coordination of the implementation of the obligations of Armenia under the ECHR was established. - A better coordination and cooperation between the MoD and the HRDO was facilitated. As a result, both partners reached an agreement towards the pending initiative, namely, to set up a Mobile Application on “Citizen in Uniform”. <p><u>Legislation and Policies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A gradual progress had been recorded on the way to improving the legal framework related to the social and health care rights of military servicepersons. The results of an assessment maybe used for potential changes needed to the legal/regulatory framework. <p><u>Knowledge and strengthening of institutions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 29 representatives of the Military Police of Armenia (M/F: 27/2) raised their knowledge on the European human rights standards on the right to life, as well as effective investigation of torture, other forms of ill treatment and death in the armed forces. - HELP online model course on the Protection of human rights in the armed forces developed (first of its kind in Council of Europe) <p><u>Adopting Practice</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women Councils of the Military Units started to use the model Methodological guide on internal monitoring on the rights of women servicepersons on the gender equality and prohibition of discrimination in the armed forces. - The model Human Rights Course for military universities was included in the curricula of the Military University (without a ToT course due to COVID). - effective monitoring by the HRDO of the human rights violations in the armed forces was facilitated, with the Manual “Legal framework for human rights monitoring in armed forces by the Human Rights Defender”. - <u>Public awareness</u> - The awareness of rights of military servicepersons and of public at large was raised through four animation films. The theme of the video covered the national legal framework on the equal military service opportunities for women, legal remedies as well as the system of social guarantees and benefits for all military servicepersons. The films were broadcast by the Armenian Public TV with a wide audience. - The national legal framework on the civil and political rights of military servicepersons was made accessible servicepersons 	

Relevant Action Plan Sector outcomes	Relevant Sector indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relevant legal texts and law-enforcement practices are brought into line with the principles enshrined in the Oviedo Convention. - Further public awareness and public discussion on main challenges to the human rights protection in biomedicine are fostered. - The overall level of human rights protection in the biomedical field is increased. - Armenia is better prepared for the possible future accession to the Oviedo Convention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extent of incorporation of European standards in national legislation, policy and practice in the field of biomedicine. - Extent of knowledge, level of protection of patients' rights and degree of implementation of ethical obligations by legal and health professionals in the field of biomedicine in line with European standards.
<p><i>Sampled project: Protection of Human Rights in the Field of Biomedicine</i></p>	<p>Progress: The project worked as an eye opener for relevant stakeholders and has resulted in greater awareness and knowledge of more than 180 health care workers and legal professionals. The Ministry of Health's capacity was strengthened the Oviedo Convention. Drafts of two legal acts ethical rules and code of conduct of healthcare professionals & functioning of ethical committees. Potentially trained professionals are now better protecting the Human Rights of the rights holders (could not be verified with a third source)</p>
<p>Facilitating Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue</p> <p>Legislation and Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analysis on the compliance of the current legislation and policies in the field of biomedicine vis-a-vis the Human Rights standards enshrined in the Oviedo Convention completed - legal act on ethical rules and code of conduct of healthcare professionals was adopted & draft of legal act on methodology of functioning of ethical committees submitted to government for approval. - Project has started bilateral discussions and consultations with RA authorities and the HRD with regard to the possible ratification of the Oviedo Convention by Armenia. <p>Knowledge and strengthening of institutions/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diagnostic study on human rights issues in emergency situations in order to analyze existing laws and law-enforcement practices on the protection of human rights in emergency situations. - ToT and a numerous training session on HELP Course on the Key Principles in Biomedicine in Armenian for a total number of 181 participants - ToT on the HELP course on Key Ethical Principles on Bioethics: 9 successful certified HELP trainers who carried out 8 rollouts of the course. 8 HELP training roll-outs for 150 healthcare, legal professionals - Several online training sessions on different topics of the biomedical field, including "Informed consent", "Medical secret and Confidentiality", "Reproductive health rights", "General Principles of Bioethics" were organized for healthcare and legal professional - started negotiations with several academic institutions to include the HELP course on Bioethics in their curricula - capacity-building training for the staff of the Ministry of Health of RA on the main principles of the Oviedo Convention and its Additional Protocols - unique launch of the HELP course on Key Principles on Bioethics for journalists covering the healthcare sphere <p>Adopting Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TOTs and HELP trainings have possibly resulted in trained professionals better protecting the Human Rights of the rights holders (could not be verified with a third source) <p>Public awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased the interest in the Protection of human rights in the field of biomedicine through: HELP course on Key Principles on Bioethics for journalists, translated videos of the Council of Europe on the topic of: "Human rights and bioethics in times of COVID-19" and several interviews of Council of Europe staff and experts broadcasted in public radio. 	

Relevant Action Plan Sector outcomes	Relevant Sector indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A fully-fledged probation service is operational at national level in line with European standards - Probation service staff increases their capacity to carry out their new duties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Level and geographical scope of the operation of the probation service in Armenia. - Quality of services delivered by the Armenian probation service.
<p><i>Sampled project: Support the scaling-up of the probation service in Armenia</i></p>	<p>Progress: Capacities of the probation service was strengthened and the RNA tool for adult and juvenile probationers was piloted in all Probation units. Awareness about role of the Probation Service among general public was raised through a video and leaflets.</p>
<p>Facilitating Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cooperation with the judicial sector and awareness raising among legal professionals on probation were increased - Creating a more coordinated approach around the Probation Service and provided numerous inter-agency platforms for discussion <p>Legislation and Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The legal amendments were proposed to the Law on Probation, other relevant laws and bylaw in order to strengthen the status of the probation officers, ensure the shift to performance evaluation system, clarify the role of probation in enforcement of monetary penalties- approval by government expected. <p>Knowledge and strengthening of institutions/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The capacities of staff of new service were enhanced through the improved training curricula of the Probation Service and a number of cascade trainings on selected topics; - A group of 14 trainers on probation are now part of a pool of trainers ready to train their peers - The RNA tool for adult and juvenile beneficiaries was improved through the revision of the IT tool, its methodology and content. - 70 probation officers increased their knowledge to ensure application of an RNA tool in practice. - e-probation: The tender for an IT system (e-probation) was conducted in late 2021 that should lead to the development of the IT case file management system for the Probation Service in 2022 - Rehabilitation programme for general offenders is developed and will be piloted in 2022 - Training course for judges on probation will become part of the annual training programme of the Academy of Justice in Armenia in 2022 - 140 advocates increased their knowledge on the role of Probation in the criminal process. The online training with the aim to raise awareness on the probation service was held in cooperation with the Chamber of Advocates of Armenia within their continuous legal education programme. As result, the advocates who attended the training received credits. <p>Adopting Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The RNA tool for adult and juvenile probationers was piloted in all Probation units, feedback collected and analysed in a report <p>Public awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The awareness about role of the Probation Service among general public was raised through the animation video on the role of the Probation Service that was developed and disseminated. - An information leaflet on the rights and obligations of the probation beneficiaries and the functions of the Probation service was developed and 600 copies printed 	
Relevant Action Plan Sector outcomes	Relevant Sector indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regulatory and operational frameworks for the provision of health care are adopted and implemented in line with European standards. - Inmates, including persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, enjoy better conditions and provision of health care in prisons. - Medical independence within the prison system is strengthened. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extent to which regulatory and self-regulatory frameworks are in place and implemented in line with European standards. - Quality of health care provided to inmates. - Extent to which the Penitentiary Medicine Centre is operational.
<p><i>Sampled project: Enhancing health care and human rights protection in prisons in Armenia</i></p>	<p>Progress: Created a more coordinated work in penitentiary healthcare. Several legal amendments are pending approval. Knowledge and skill of penitentiary staff and health care staff has been improved & preparations for an e-medical case file system started.</p>

Several decrees on how to document ill-treatment were adopted. Tools to detect mental health and suicide and self-harm risk were piloted. High potential that new practices are rolled out. The situations of the right holders has improved as no restriction or punishment should anymore be applied to prisoners who attempted suicide or inflicted self-harm.

Facilitating Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue

- creating a more coordinated approach in the area of penitentiary healthcare and to building the capacities of the PMC

Legislation and Policies

- Recommendations for legal amendments required for the introduction of telemedicine were developed under the project and submitted to the MoJ with the view of further adoption
- Legal analysis and follow-up recommendations on legislative amendments related to examination of complaints from persons deprived of their liberty in the penitentiary institutions in Armenia were drafted, discussed, and will be circulated by the MoJ for suggestions and recommendations from other state bodies
- Legal analysis and recommendations on informed consent to inpatient treatment for the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty were developed and proposed to the MoJ; they are pending formal approval in 2022
- The Strategy on suicide prevention and its Action Plan developed under the project entered into force in 2021 outlining the national policy and operational priorities.

Knowledge and strengthening of institutions

- 156 prison medical staff increased their knowledge and skills on examination and reporting of ill treatment cases
- 69 participants from 12 prisons enhancing their knowledge on infection control, prevention of health care-associated infections in health care facilities of prisons
- a programme for prevention and control of infection in prison health facilities was developed based on the recommendations of an assessment report undertaken within the framework of the project. It is pending formal approval by the authorities in 2022
- 54 nurses and caregivers strengthened their skills on hunger strike management, prevention of suicide, medical control, psychiatric assistance, and care for patients at self-harm risk, as well as medical ethics in penitentiary facilities.
- the training manual and methodology on specialized skills and knowledge for nurses and caregivers was published and 100 copies disseminated among prison medical staff.
- A tender for the procurement was launched for IT equipment and development of the medical case file management system together with a small pilot project on telemedicine for the prison healthcare
- recommendations on required medical equipment is also in process and support the capacities of the prison healthcare
- the Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) online course on the standards of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), was piloted for two groups of 38 medical and legal professionals

Adopting Practice

- Mental health screening and risk and needs in-depth assessment methodology were developed and piloted in selected prison facilities
- Suicide and self-harm behaviour screening and in-depth assessment tools were developed and piloted in penitentiary institutions
- official guidelines on documentation and reporting on indications of ill-treatment were formally adopted by a decree of MoJ on 21 April 2021.
- a new chapter on requirements for examination and reporting on allegation of ill-treatment cases was introduced to the MoJ Decision No 825-N "On procedure for organising medical, sanitary and medical-preventive assistance to detained and convicted persons" in line with recommendations provided by the project.
- a MoJ Decree of 8 September 2021 took into account Council of Europe recommendations and states that no restriction or punishment are applied to prisoners who attempted suicide or inflicted self-harm.

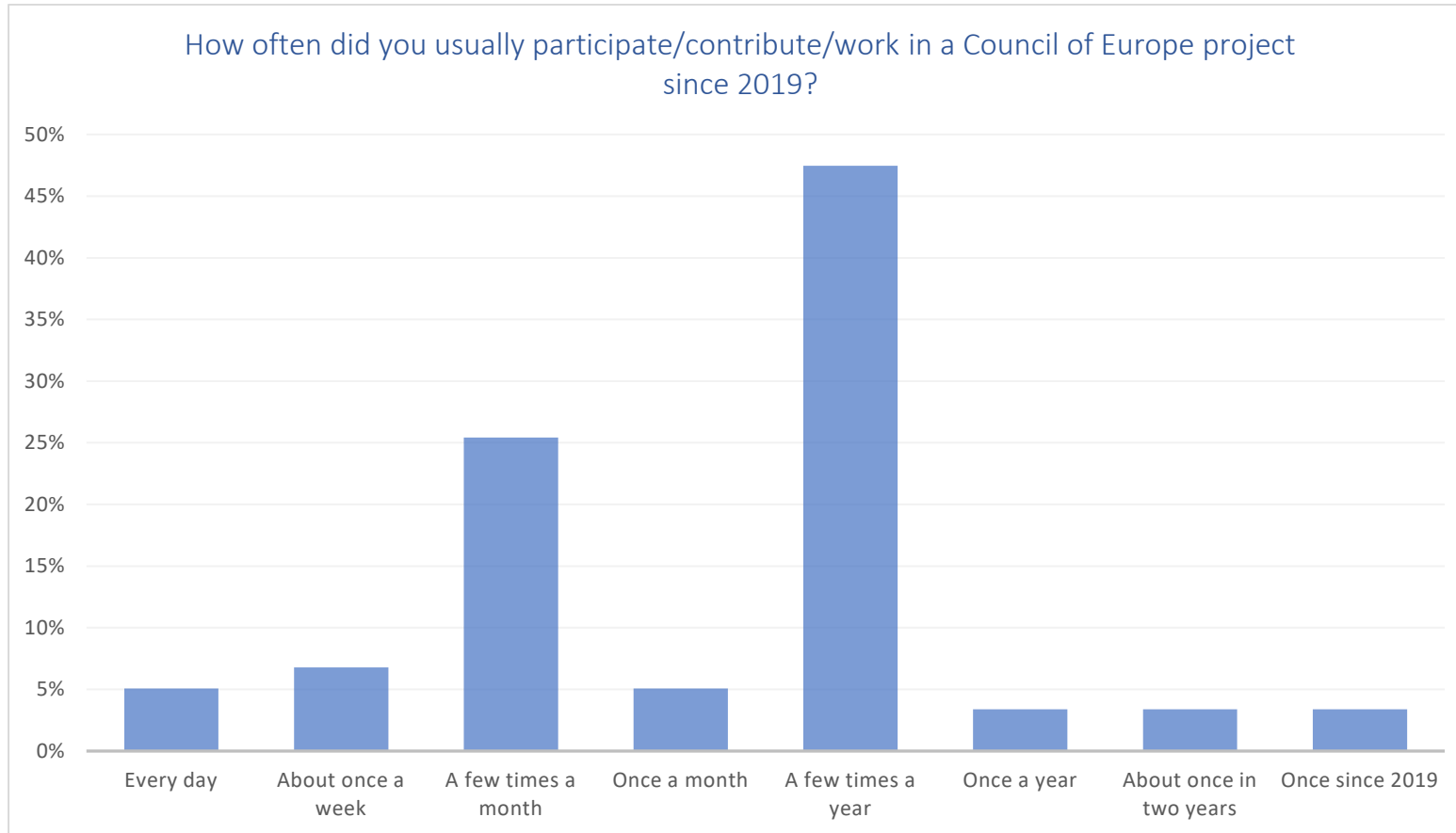
Annex 2 - Results of sampled projects summary mapped against model chain of results

Title	Facilitating Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue	Legislation and Policies	Strengthening of institutions	Adopting Practice	Public awareness	Rights holders enjoy Council of Europe standards
Enhancing the Application of Human Rights in the Armed Forces and Strengthening the Rights and Role of Women in the Military Service in Armenia phase I and phase II				Could not be verified & not sufficient data in progress reports	not sufficient data in progress reports	No data available
Protection of Human Rights in the Field of Biomedicine				Could not be verified & not sufficient data in progress reports	not sufficient data in progress reports	No data available
PGG II: Support to the judicial reform – enhancing the independence and professionalism of the judiciary in Armenia						No data available
PGG II: Supporting the criminal justice reform in Armenia and harmonising the application of European standards				To be verified when new law implemented as of Summer 2022	not sufficient data in progress reports	No data available
Enhancing Health Care and Human Rights Protection in Prisons in Armenia				Could not be verified & not sufficient data in progress reports		No data available
Support the scaling-up of the probation service in Armenia					not sufficient data in progress reports	No data available

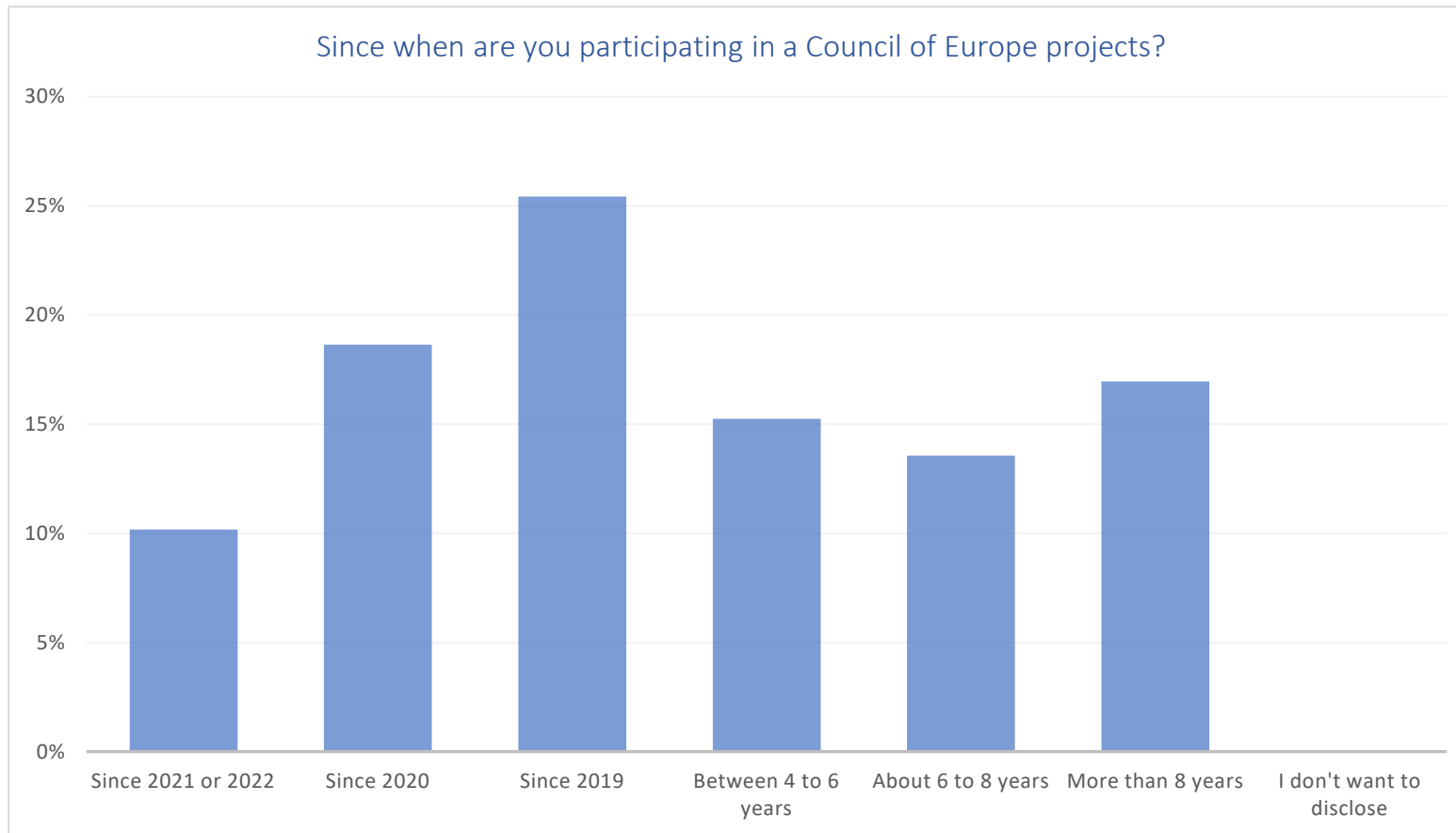
	No activities
	Activities and results

Annex 3 - Survey results

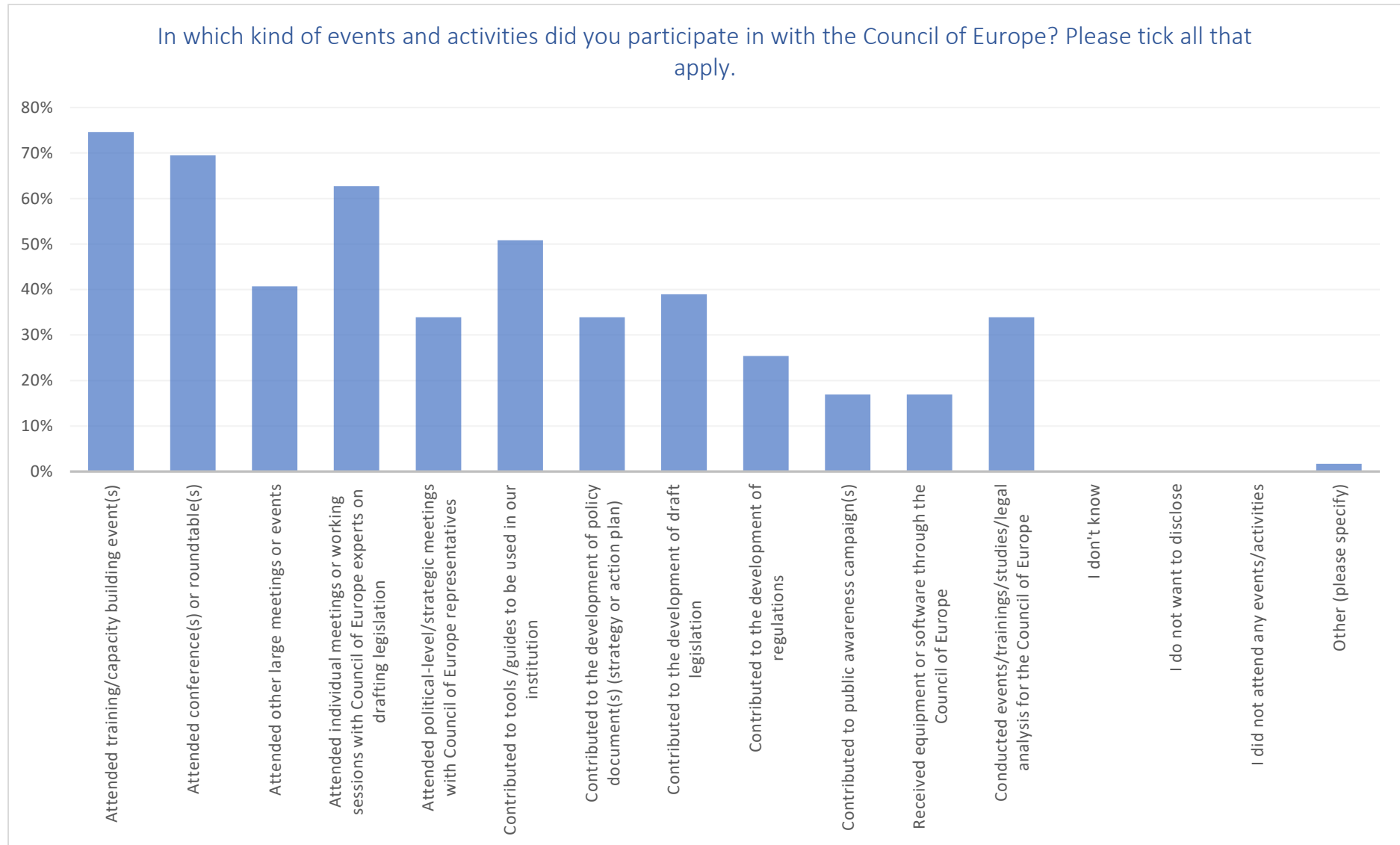
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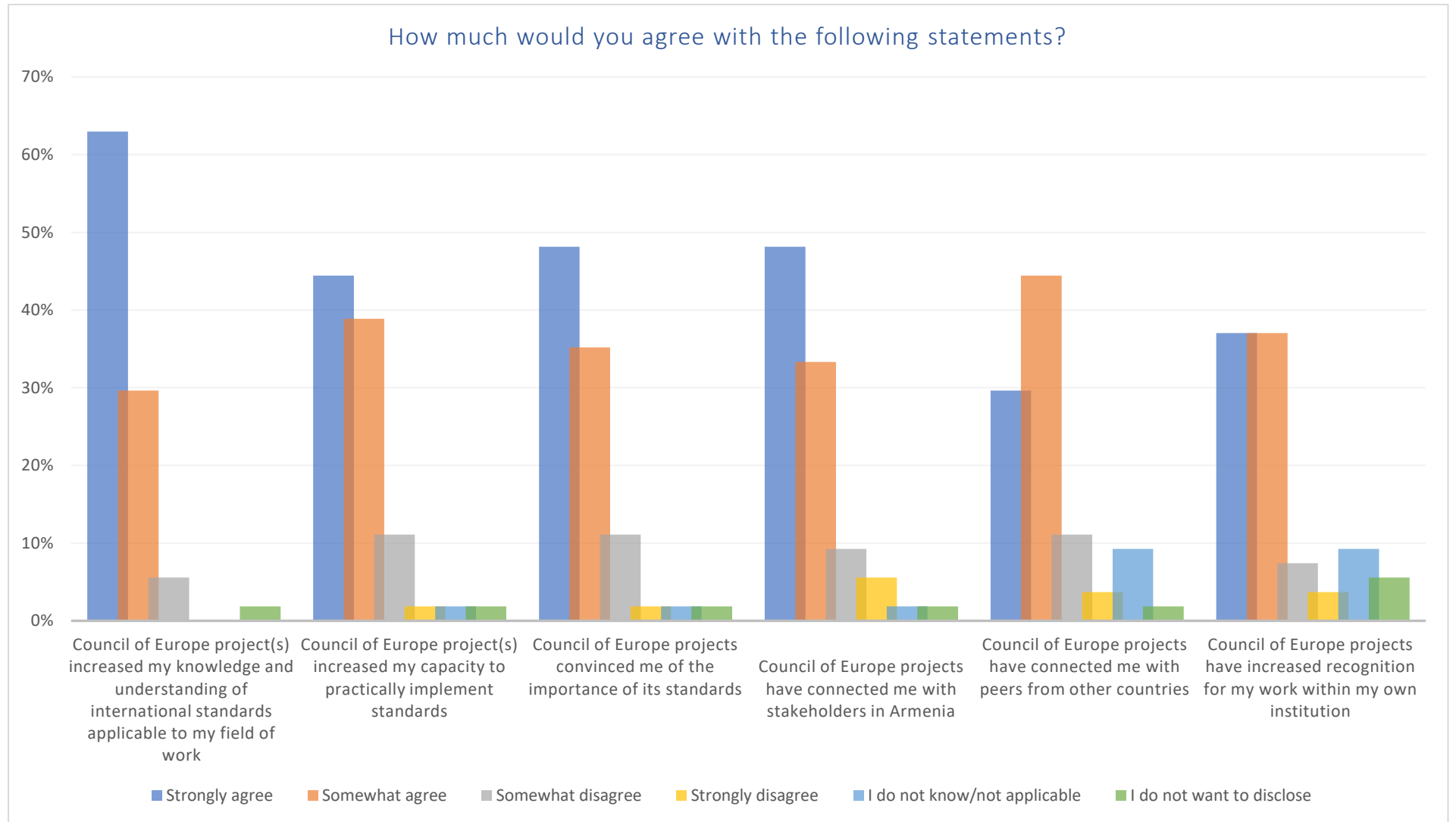
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Question 3



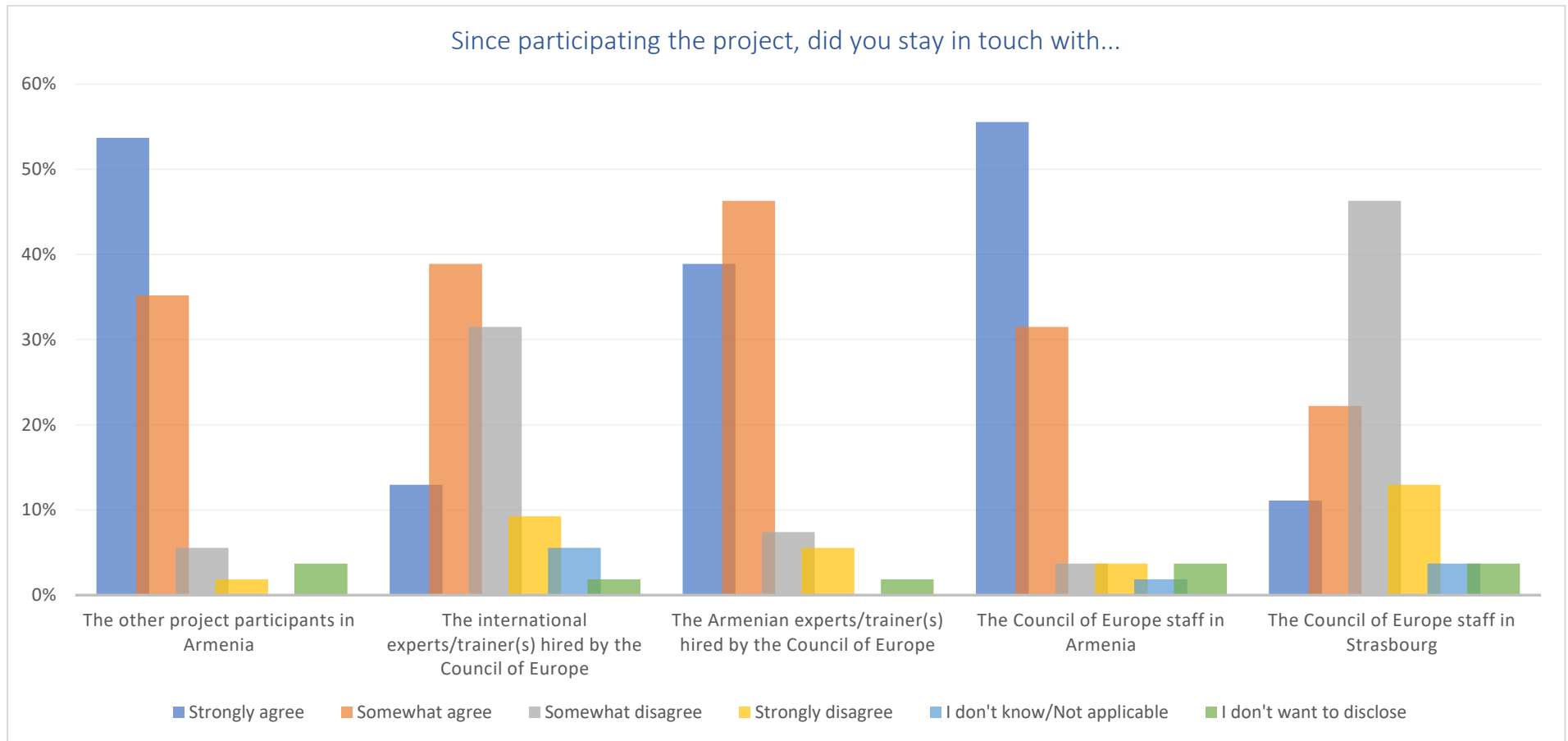
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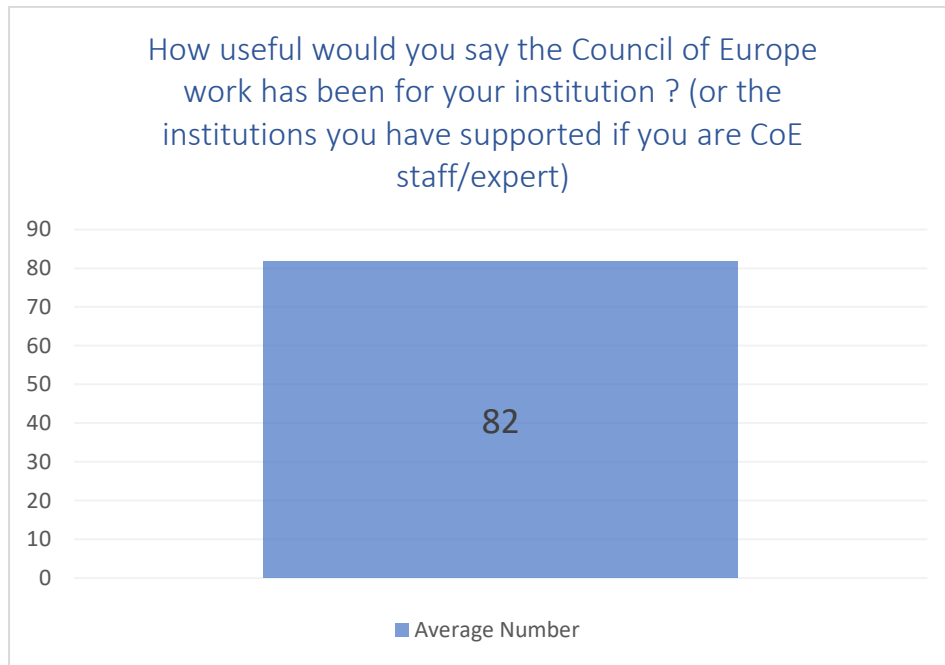
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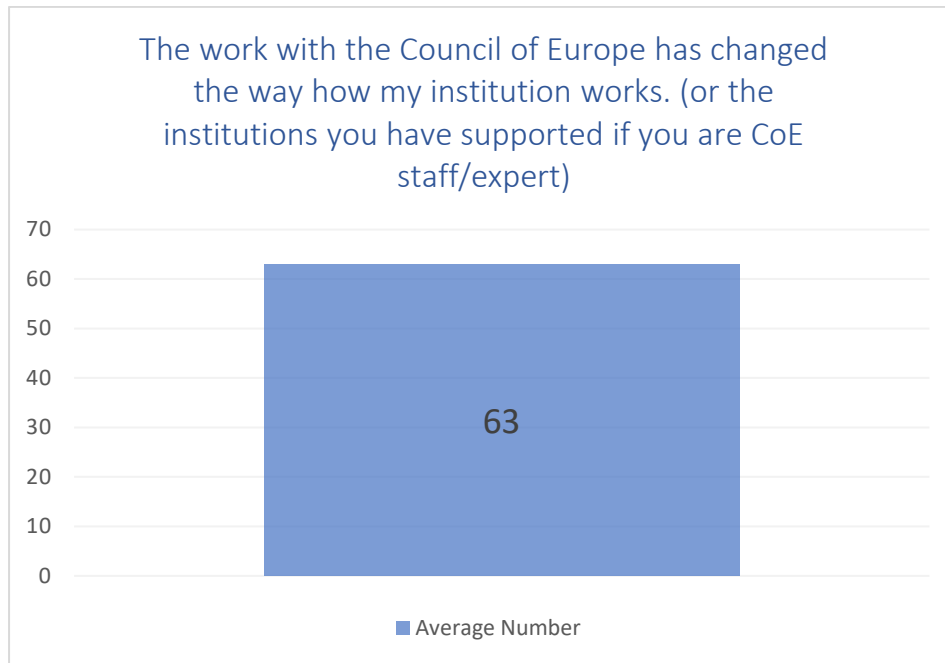
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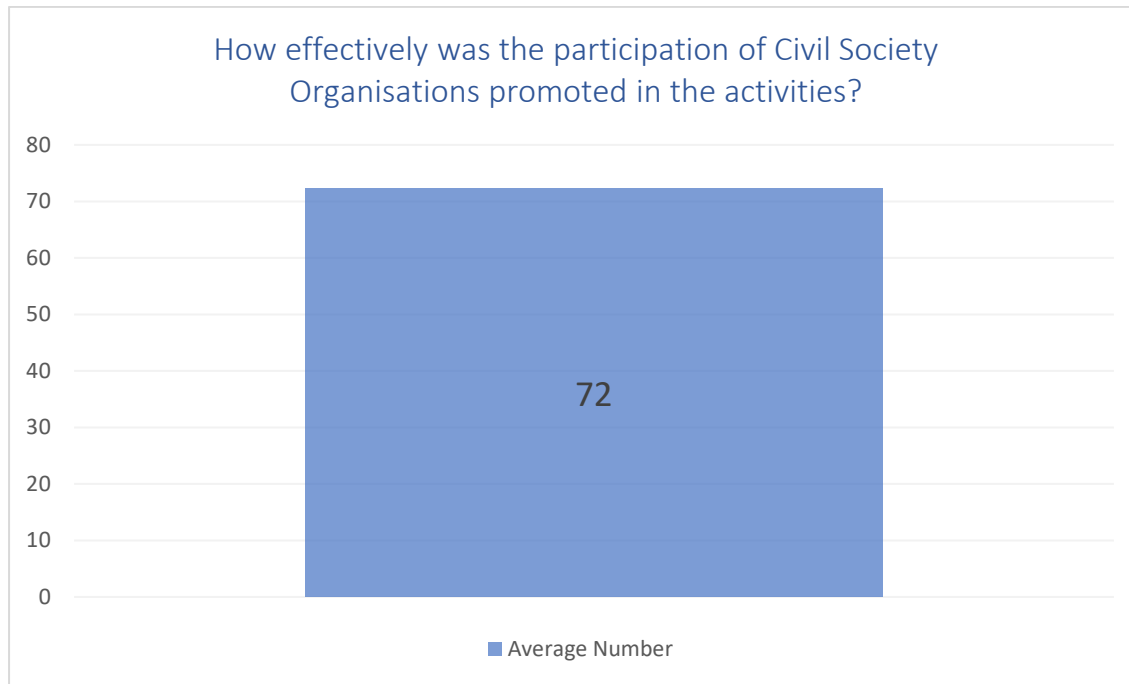
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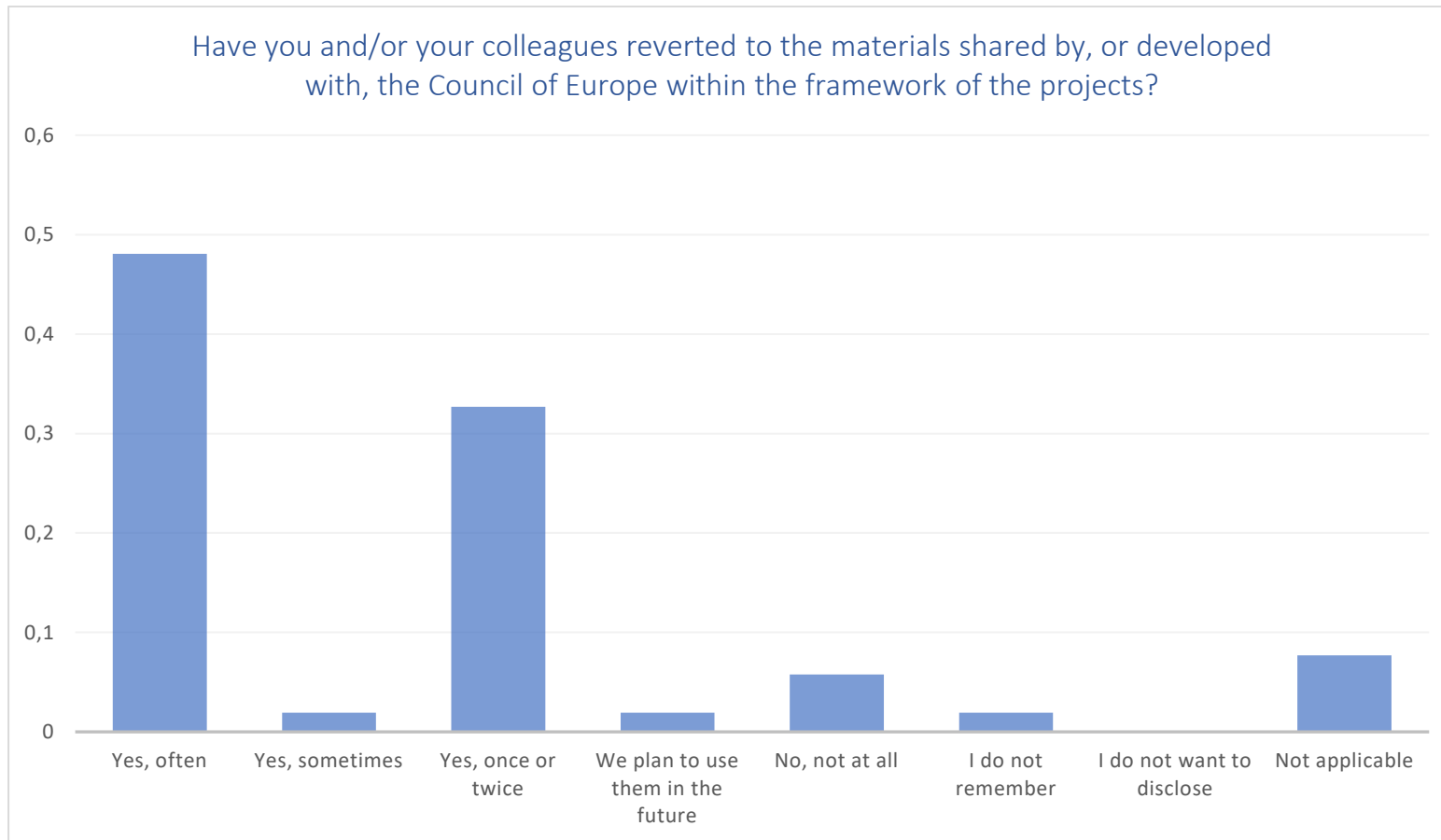
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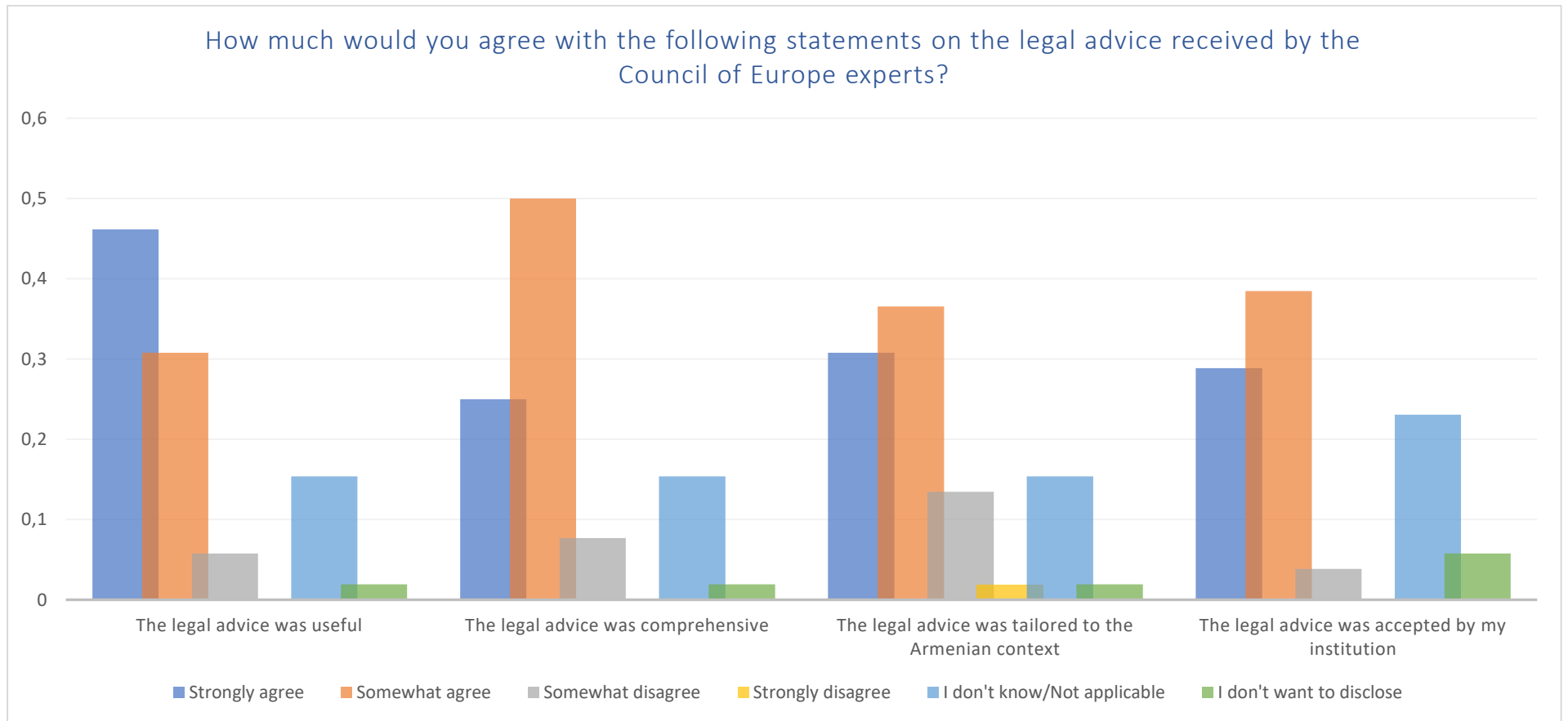
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Question 11



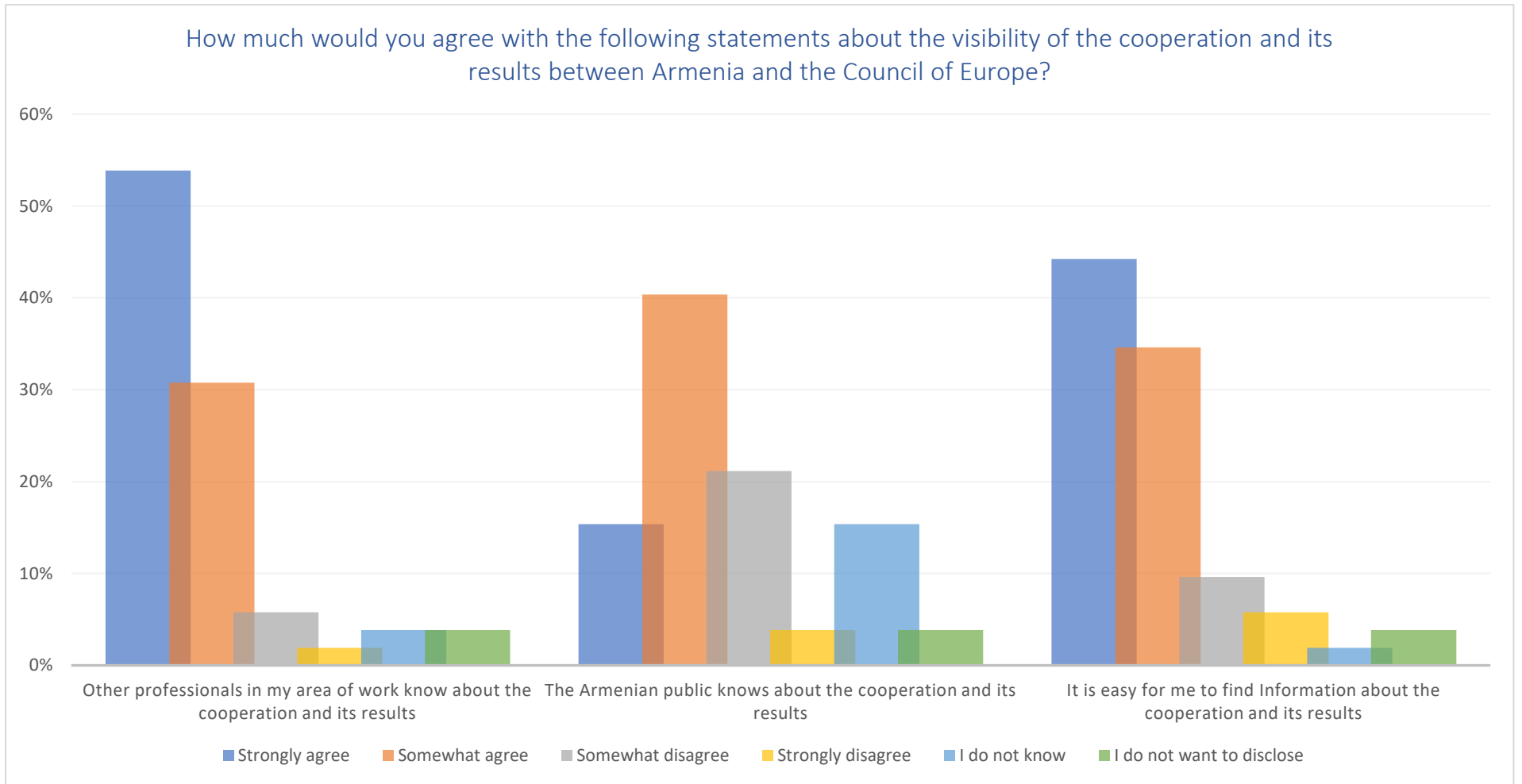
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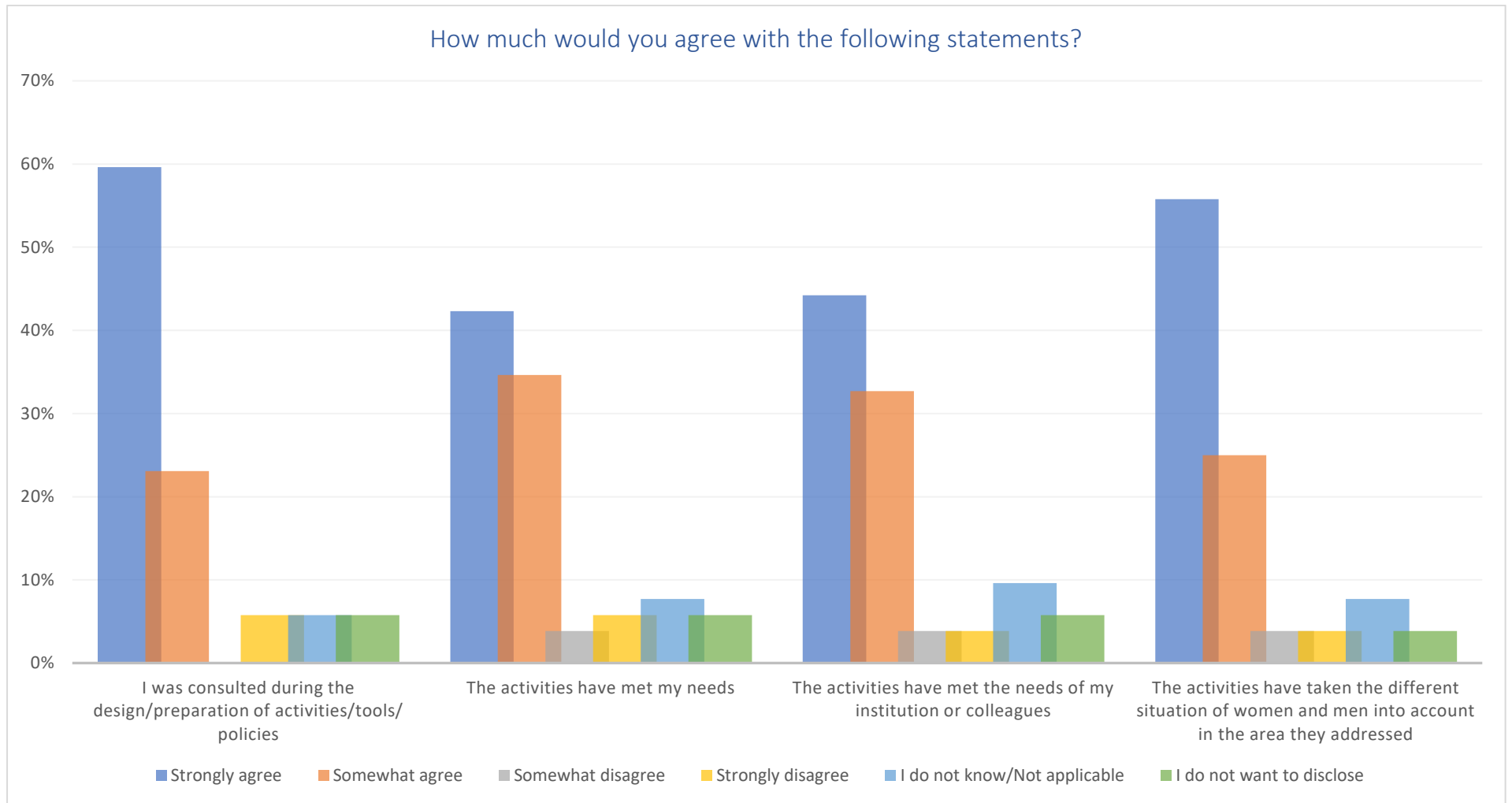
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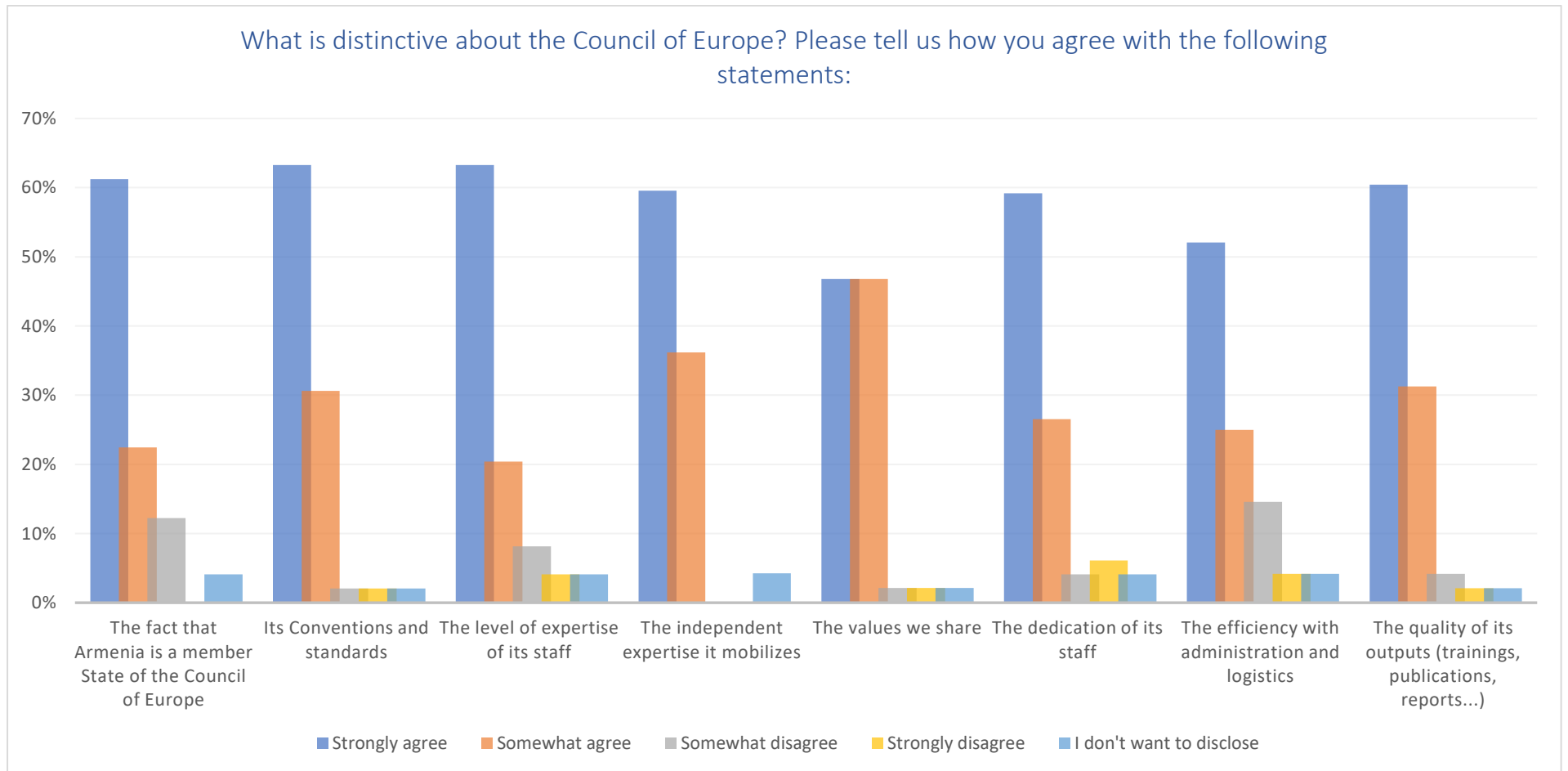
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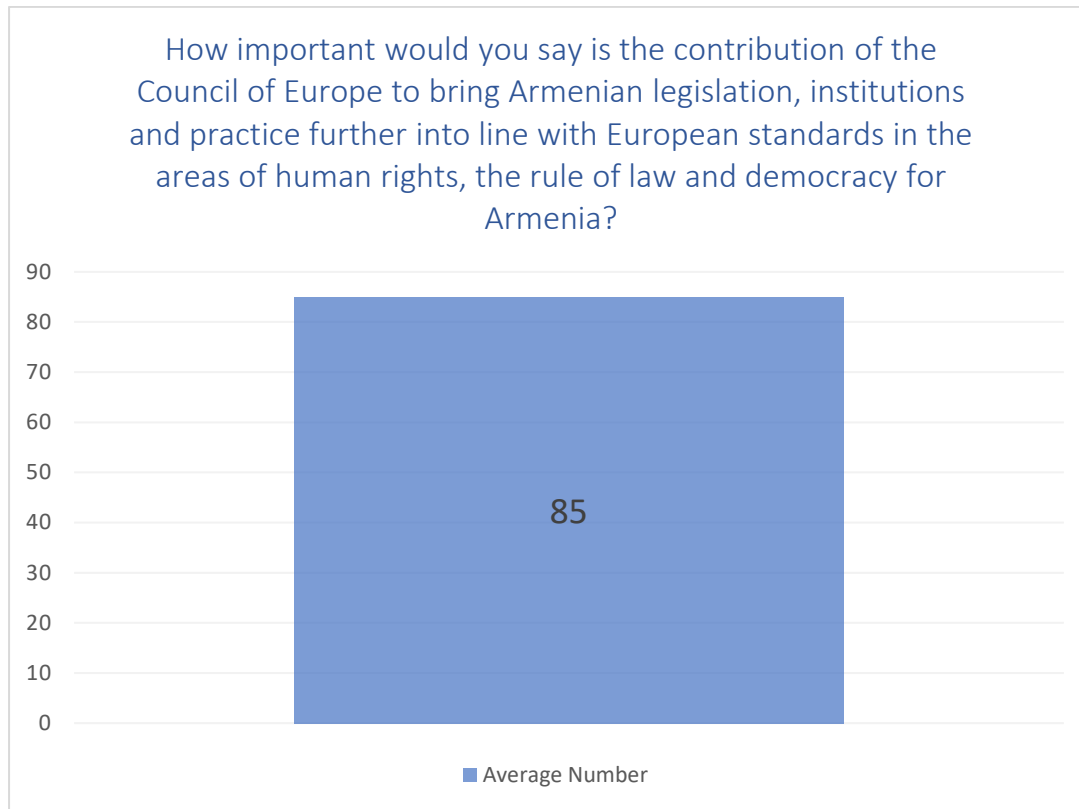
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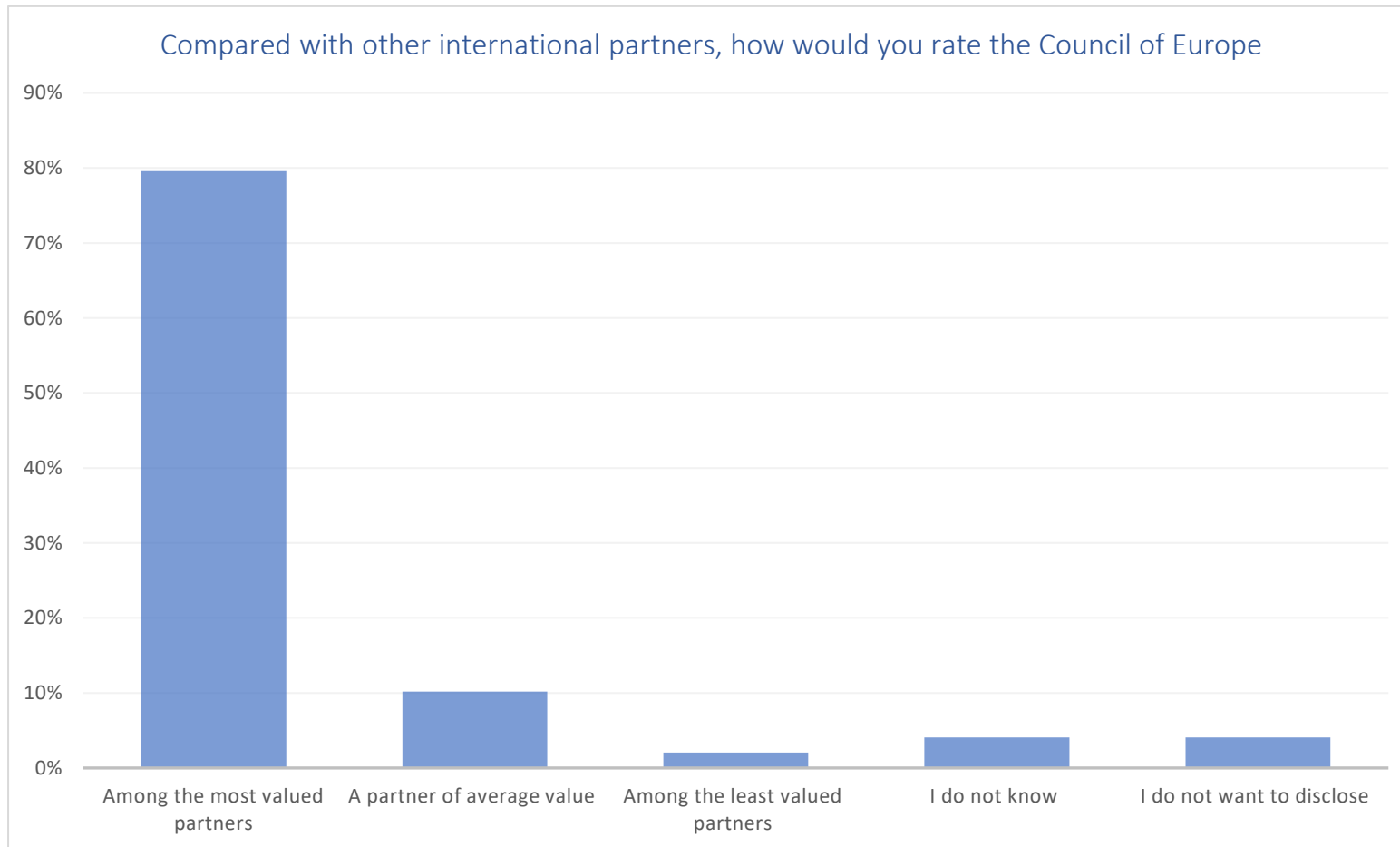
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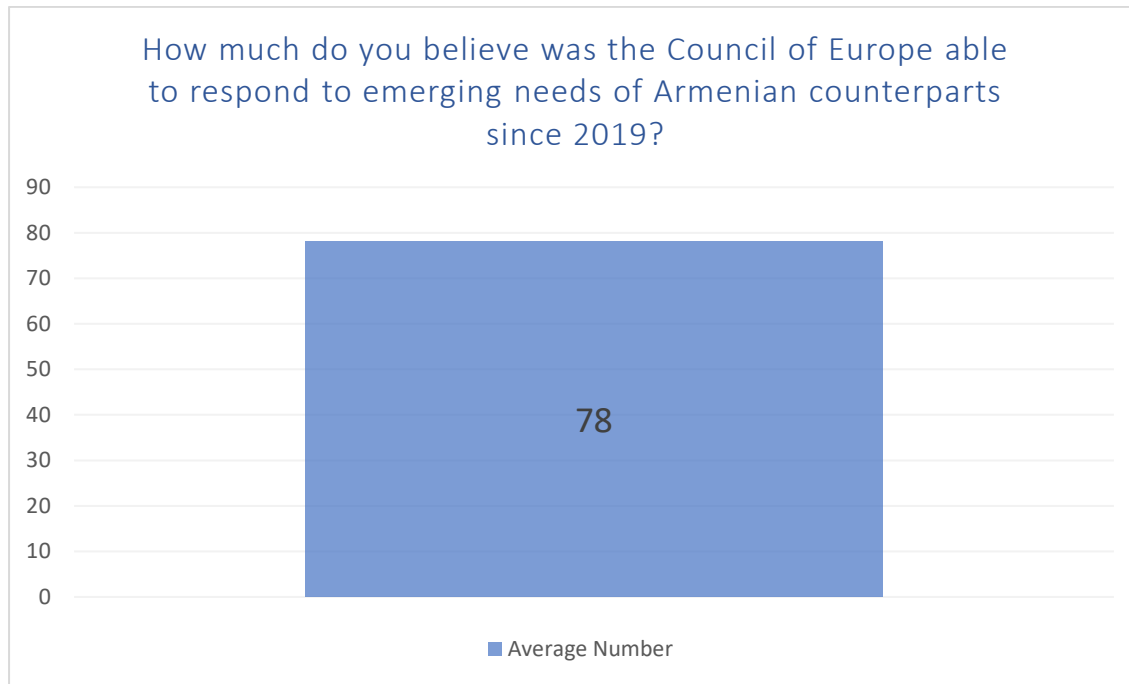
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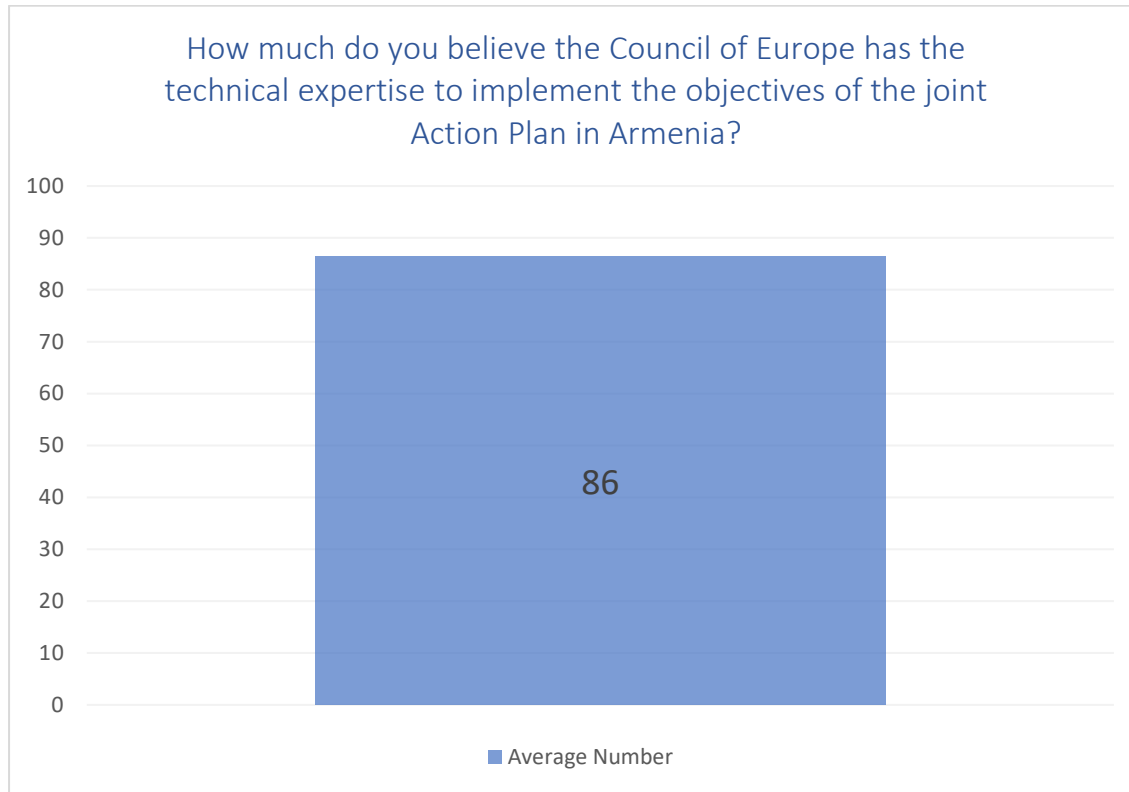
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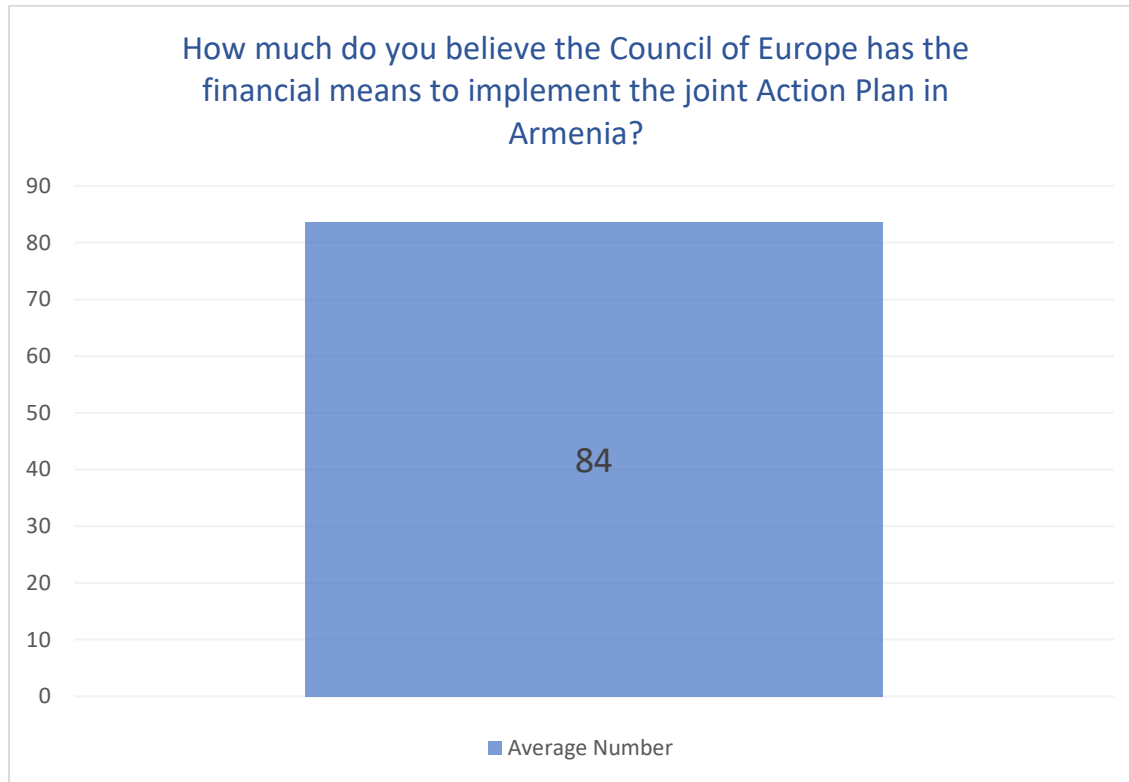
Question 19



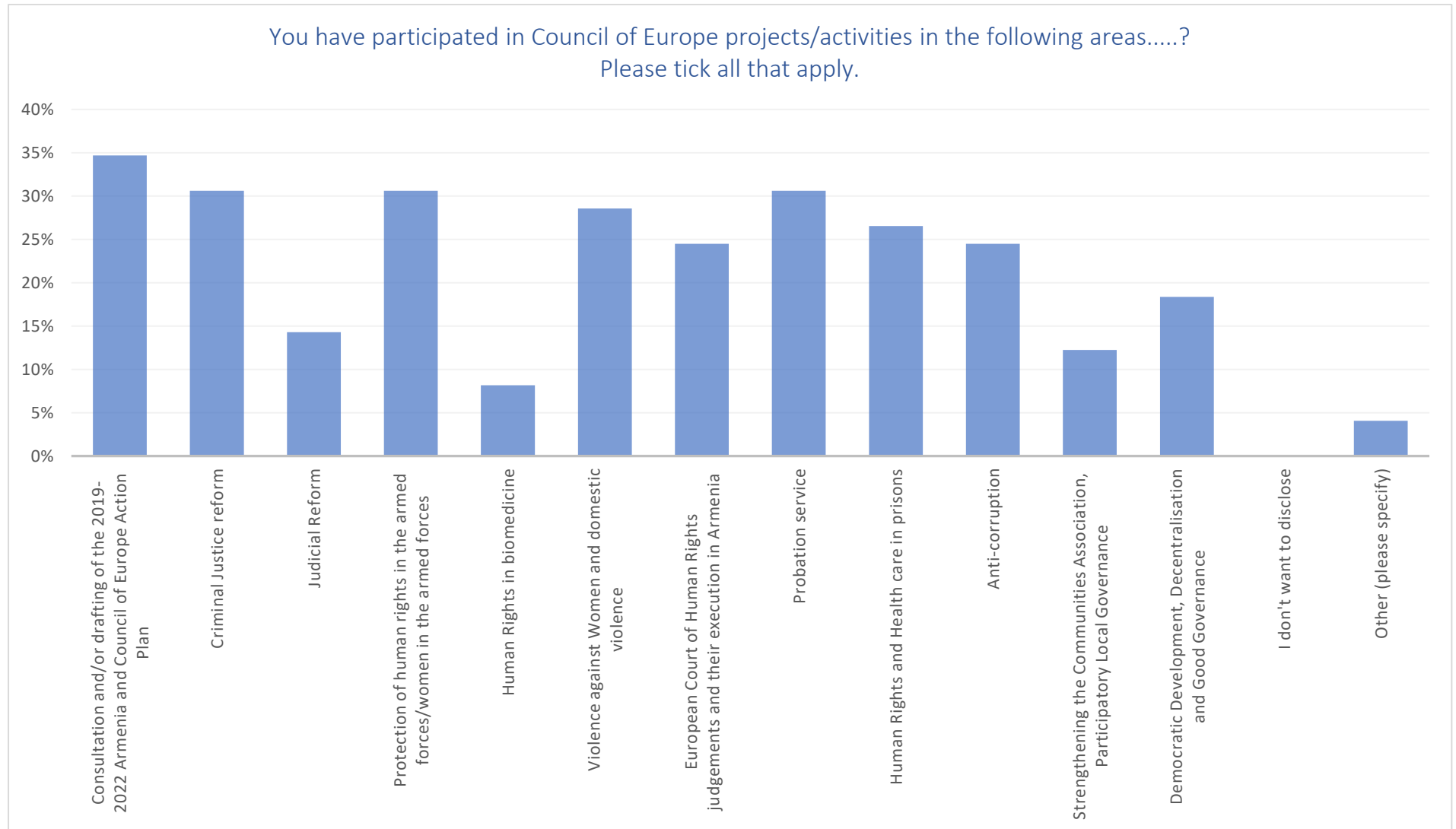
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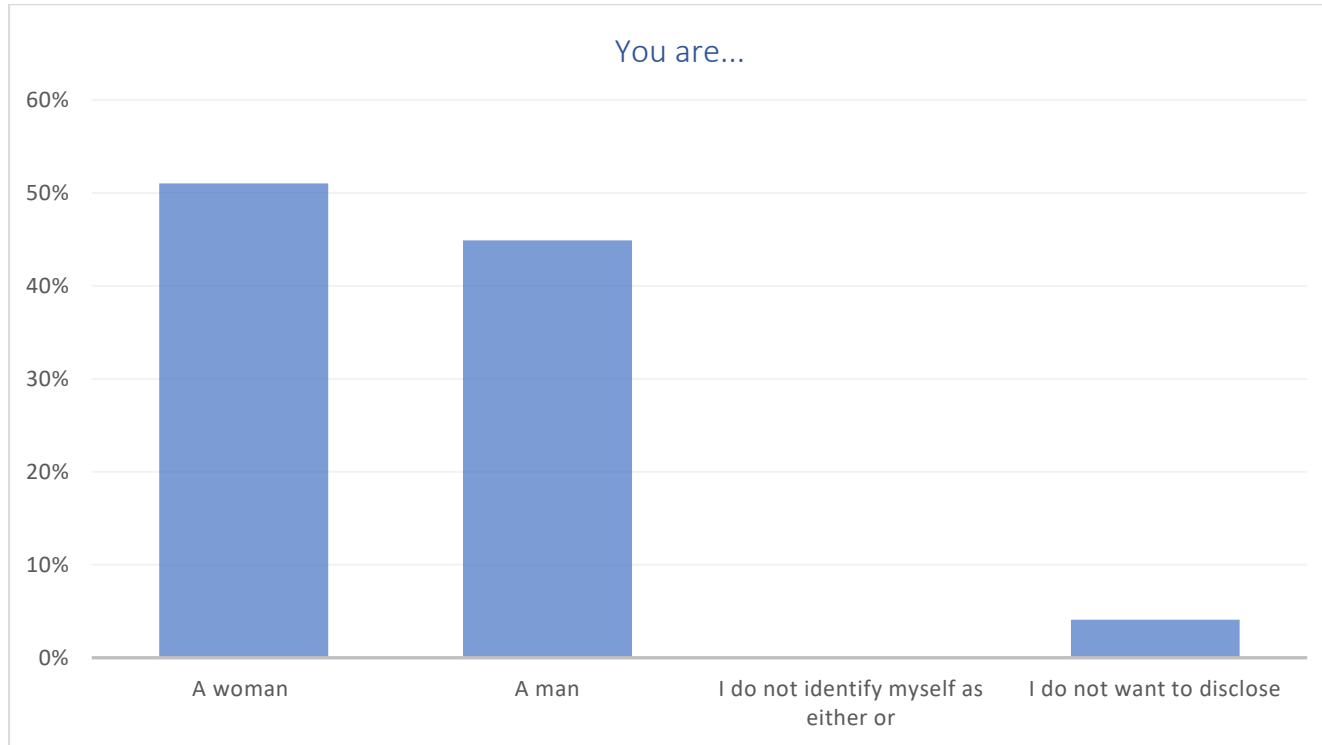
Question 21



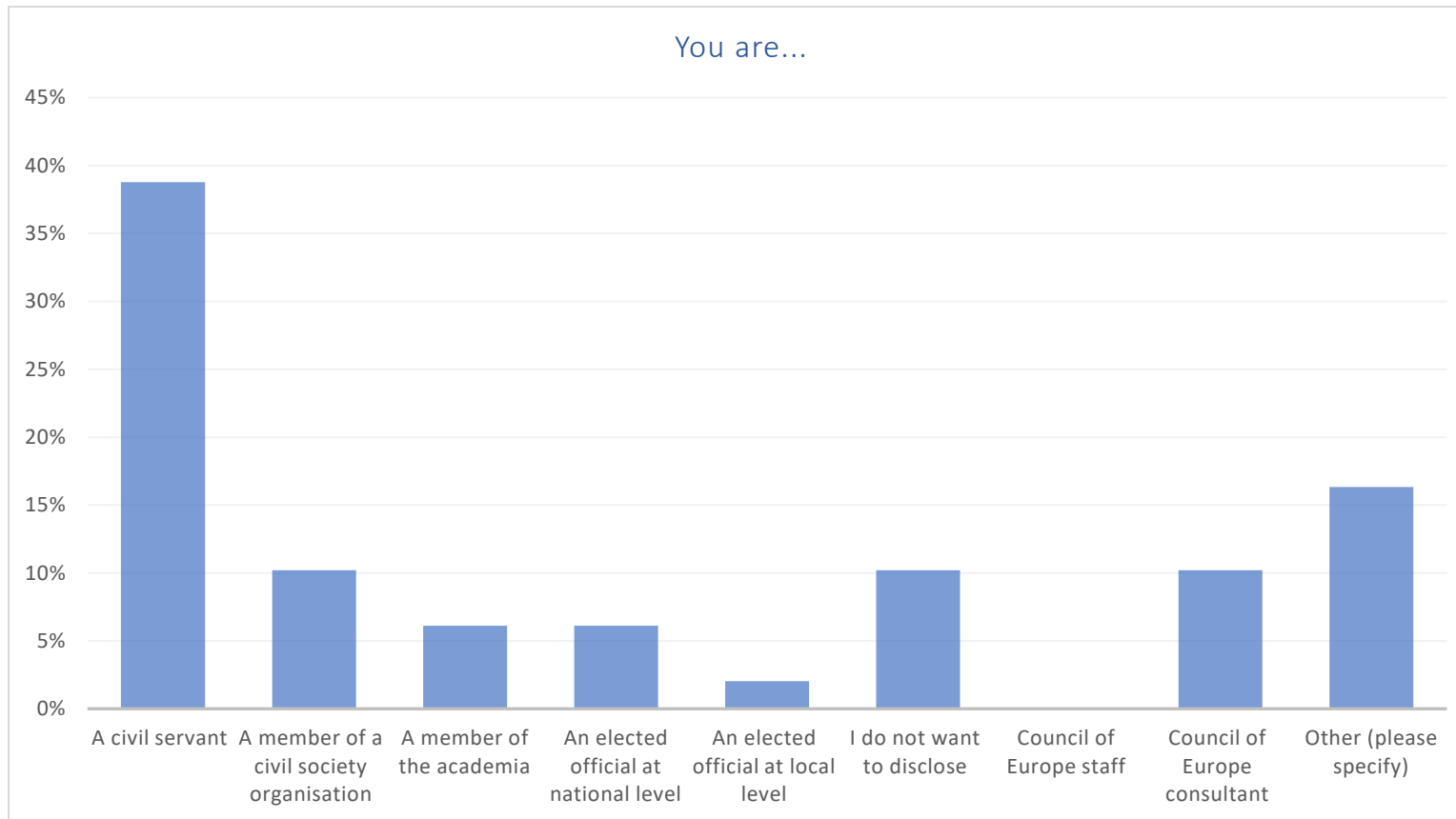
Question 22



Question 23



Question 24

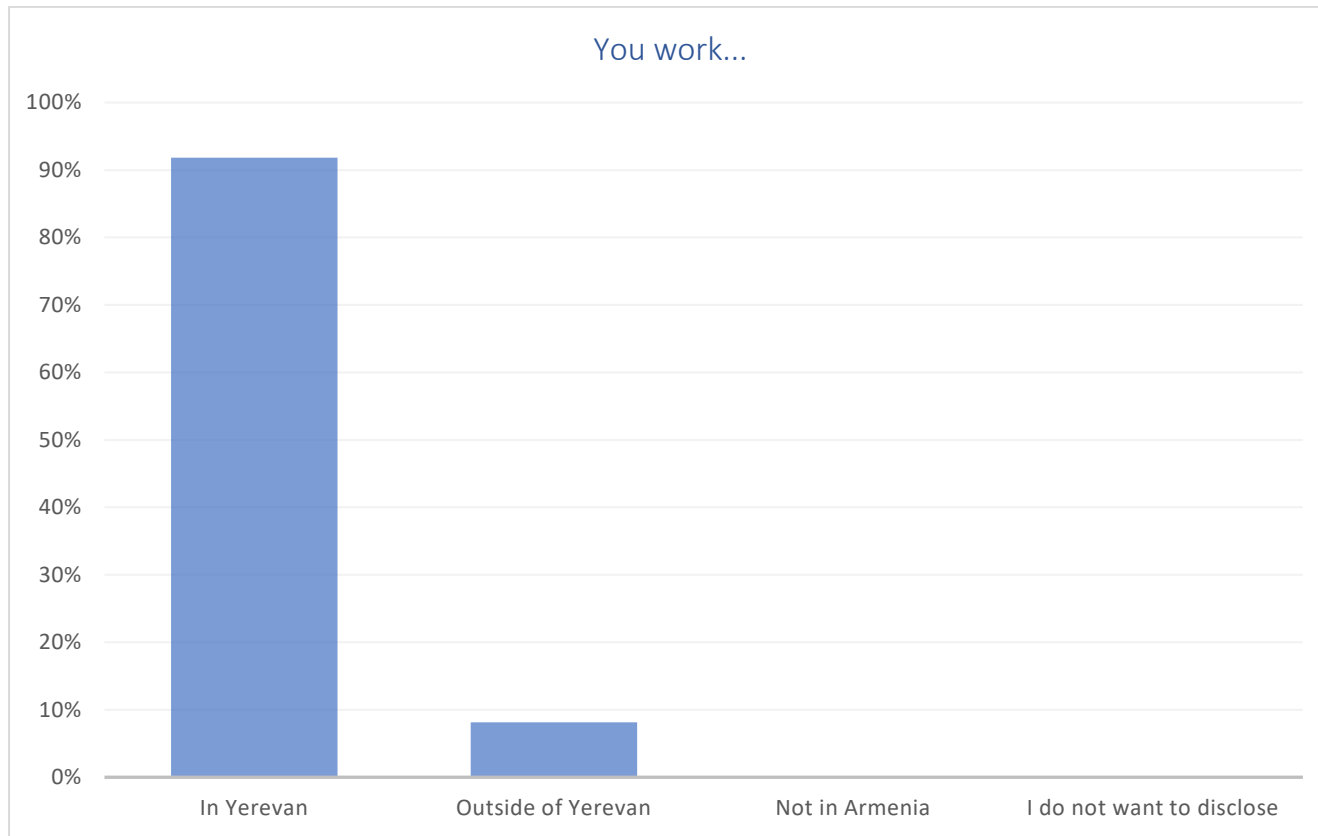


Other: Worker of local administration body; military person; administrative position: Head of the "Penitentiary Medicine Center"; SNCO Department of the RA Ministry of Justice: Lawyer, Council of Europe National Expert: Health worker; Judicial officer & scientist; I am an official elected by law

Question 25



Question 26



Annex 4 - Derivations from the median

This annex shows the derivations of the responses in the survey per sector from the average for the questions in which participants could give a rating. For two sectors the number of respondees is low (Strengthening Democratic Governance and Fostering Innovation with 10 respondees and Countering Threats to the Rule of Law with 12 respondees). Therefore, the data for this sector can only be interpreted as a trend, as no projects were sampled in these two sectors and no interviews with beneficiaries were conducted.

Question 7

How useful would you say the Council of Europe work has been for your institution? (or the institutions you have supported if you are Council of Europe staff/expert)

HUMAN RIGHTS	
Protecting Human Rights	84
Promoting Human Rights and Dignity	88
RULE OF LAW	
Ensuring Justice	90
Countering Threats to the Rule of Law	80
DEMOCRACY	
Strengthening Democratic Governance and Fostering Innovation	69
Consultation and/or drafting of the 2019-2022 Armenia and Council of Europe Action Plan	86
Average of all respondents	82

Question 8

The work with the Council of Europe has changed the way how my institution works (or the institutions you have supported if you are Council of Europe staff/expert)

HUMAN RIGHTS	
Protecting Human Rights	64
Promoting Human Rights and Dignity	66
RULE OF LAW	
Ensuring Justice	76
Countering Threats to the Rule of Law	63
DEMOCRACY	
Strengthening Democratic Governance and Fostering Innovation	38
Consultation and/or drafting of the 2019-2022 Armenia and Council of Europe Action Plan	68
Average of all respondents	63

Question 9

How effectively was the participation of CSOs promoted in the activities?

HUMAN RIGHTS	
Protecting Human Rights	75
Promoting Human Rights and Dignity	77
RULE OF LAW	
Ensuring Justice	82
Countering Threats to the Rule of Law	74
DEMOCRACY	
Strengthening Democratic Governance and Fostering Innovation	56
Consultation and/or drafting of the 2019-2022 Armenia and Council of Europe Action Plan	79
average of all respondents	72

Question 17

How important would you say is the contribution of the Council of Europe to bring Armenian legislation, institutions and practice further into line with European standards in the areas of human rights, the rule of law and democracy for Armenia?

HUMAN RIGHTS	
Protecting Human Rights	86
Promoting Human Rights and Dignity	88
RULE OF LAW	
Ensuring Justice	91
Countering Threats to the Rule of Law	87
DEMOCRACY	
Strengthening Democratic Governance and Fostering Innovation	78
Consultation and/or drafting of the 2019-2022 Armenia and Council of Europe Action Plan	87
Average of all respondents	85

Question 19

How much do you believe was the Council of Europe able to respond to emerging needs of Armenian counterparts since 2019?

HUMAN RIGHTS	
Protecting Human Rights	79
Promoting Human Rights and Dignity	77
RULE OF LAW	
Ensuring Justice	86
Countering Threats to the Rule of Law	76
DEMOCRACY	
Strengthening Democratic Governance and Fostering Innovation	59
Consultation and/or drafting of the 2019-2022 Armenia and Council of Europe Action Plan	81
Average of all respondents	78

Question 20

How much do you believe the Council of Europe has the technical expertise to implement the objectives of the joint Action Plan in Armenia?

HUMAN RIGHTS	
Protecting Human Rights	87
Promoting Human Rights and Dignity	83
RULE OF LAW	
Ensuring justice	94
Countering Threats to the Rule of Law	79
DEMOCRACY	
Strengthening Democratic Governance and Fostering Innovation	72
Consultation and/or drafting of the 2019-2022 Armenia and Council of Europe Action Plan	88
Average of all respondents	86

Question 21

How much do you believe the Council of Europe has the financial means to implement the joint Action Plan in Armenia?

HUMAN RIGHTS	
Protecting Human Rights	85
Promoting Human Rights and Dignity	73
RULE OF LAW	
Ensuring Justice	90
Countering Threats to the Rule of Law	72
DEMOCRACY	
Strengthening Democratic Governance and Fostering Innovation	64
Consultation and/or drafting of the 2019-2022 Armenia and Council of Europe Action Plan	84
Average of all respondents	84

Annex 5 - Mapping of funded actions

Sectors	Initial actions planned	Actions not covered	Implemented projects	Planned actions/implemented
Human rights				
1. Protecting Human Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhancing the effective implementation of the ECHR and the ECtHR case-law at national level - Supporting criminal justice reform - Strengthening the application of human rights standards in the armed forces and strengthening the rights and role of women in the military service in Armenia 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support for the execution by Armenia of judgments in respect of Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights - Supporting Criminal Justice Reform - Strengthening the Rights and Role of Women in the Military Service in Armenia phase I and phase II 	3 actions/ 3 funded
2. Promoting Human Rights and Dignity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender Equality, Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, and Improving Access to Justice - Antidiscrimination - National Minorities, Regional or Minority Languages - Children's Rights - Protection of Human Rights in the Field of Biomedicine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anti-Discrimination and Minorities and Minority Languages - Children's rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Path towards Armenia's Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence - Protection of Human Rights in the Field of Biomedicine 	4 actions/ 2 funded
3. Ensuring Social Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring Respect for Social Rights in Armenia in line with the revised European Social Charter (revised ESC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring Respect for Social Rights in Armenia in line with the revised European Social Charter (revised ESC) 	Not implemented due to lack of funding	1 action/ 0 funded
Regional projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - End online child sexual exploitation and abuse@Europe 	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PGG II Regional: Women’s Access to Justice: delivering on the Istanbul Convention and other European gender equality standards - PGG II Regional Strengthening the access to justice through non-judiciary redress mechanisms for victims of discrimination. Hate crime and hate speech EEP countries 	
Rule of Law				
1. Ensuring Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Independence and Efficiency of Justice - Prisons and Police 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support for police reform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PGG II: Support to the judicial reform – enhancing the independence and professionalism of the judiciary in Armenia - Enhancing Health Care and Human Rights Protection in Prisons in Armenia - Support the scaling-up of the probation service in Armenia 	2 actions/ 1,5 funded
2. Strengthening the Rule of Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Constitutional justice; Strengthening Data Protection in Armenia - Information Society and Internet governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Constitutional justice; Strengthening Data Protection in Armenia - Information Society and Internet governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not implemented due to lack of funding except for a needs assessment for the Media sector 	3 actions/ 0 funded
3. Countering Threats to the Rule of Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fighting corruption and money laundering - Cybercrime 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cybercrime - <i>Anti-money -Laundering (partly covered)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PGG II: Strengthening institutional capacities to fight and prevent corruption in Armenia including smaller activities on anti-money laundering 	2 actions/ 1 funded
Regional projects	NA	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support for a better evaluation of the result of judicial reform efforts in the Eastern Partnership ‘Justice Dashboard EaP’ 	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PGG II Regional: Strengthening the profession of lawyer in line with European standards in the Eastern Partnership countries - PGG II Regional: Strengthening measures to prevent and combat economic crime - Cyber East - Action on Cybercrime for Cyber Resilience in the Eastern Partnership region 	
Democracy				
1. Strengthening Democratic Governance and Fostering Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elections - Local Democracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthening the Communities Association of Armenia and transparent, participatory local governance in Armenia - Democratic Development, Decentralisation and Good Governance in Armenia 	2 actions/ 1 funded
2. Promoting Participation and Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education for Democracy - Youth for Democracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education for Democracy - Youth for Democracy 	Not implemented due to lack of funding	2 actions/ 0 funded
Total				21 actions/ 11 funded

Annex 6 - Alignment with SDGs

SDG Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Targets	Sampled projects
<i>16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing Health Care and Human Rights Protection in Prisons in Armenia
<i>16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> End online child sexual exploitation and abuse@Europe
<i>16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PGG II: Supporting the civil justice reforms - enhancing independence, efficiency and quality of the judiciary PGG II: Supporting the criminal justice reform in Armenia - tackling criminal aspects of the judicial reform and harmonising the application of European standards Support for the execution by Armenia of judgments in respect of Article 6 of the ECHR
<i>16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PGG II: Strengthening institutional capacities to fight and prevent corruption in Armenia

16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

Contributing to the strengthening of more effective, accountable and transparent institutions is at the core of Council of Europe's mandate.

- Enhancing Health Care and Human Rights Protection in Prisons in Armenia
- Support the scaling-up of the probation service in Armenia
- PGG II: Supporting the civil justice reforms - enhancing independence, efficiency and quality of the judiciary
- PGG II: Supporting the criminal justice reform in Armenia - tackling criminal aspects of the judicial reform and harmonising the application of European standards
- Democratic Development, Decentralisation and Good Governance in Armenia
- Institutional Support to the Communities Association of Armenia (CAA)/ Strengthening decentralised governance in Armenia
- Support for a better evaluation of the result of judicial reform efforts in the Eastern Partnership 'Justice Dashboard EaP
- Support for the execution by Armenia of judgments in respect of Article 6 of the ECHR
- PGG II: Strengthening institutional capacities to fight and prevent corruption in Armenia

16.b: Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development

- Strengthening the application of human rights standards in the armed forces and strengthening the rights and role of women in the military service in Armenia
- Protection of human rights in biomedicine I

SDG Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Targets	Alignment of projects
<p><i>5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening the application of human rights standards in the armed forces and strengthening the rights and role of women in the military service in Armenia • Gender Equality, Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, and Improving Access to Justice
<p><i>5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender Equality, Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, and Improving Access to Justice
<p><i>5 Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PGG II: Supporting the civil justice reforms - enhancing independence, efficiency and quality of the judiciary • Democratic Development, Decentralisation and Good Governance in Armenia

Other targets the Action Plan projects are aligned to:

Targets	Projects
<p><i>3.c: Substantially increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries, especially in least developed countries and small island developing States</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing Health Care and Human Rights Protection in Prisons in Armenia • Protection of human rights in biomedicine I
<p><i>4.3: By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university political, economic and public life</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the scaling-up of the probation service in Armenia
<p><i>11.3: By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic Development, Decentralisation and Good Governance in Armenia • Institutional Support to the Communities Association of Armenia (CAA)/ Strengthening decentralised governance in Armenia

Annex 7 - List of interviewees

Total: 47

Female: 28

Male: 19

Project staff

1. Ms Bozhena Malanchuk, Project Coordinator
2. Mr Tigran Karapetyan, Project Supervisor
3. Ms Raluca Ivan, Project coordinator
4. Ms Laurence Lwoff, Project Supervisor
5. Ms Sophio Tsakadze, Project Coordinator
6. Ms Tanja Rakusic-Hadzic, Project Supervisor
7. Ms Larisa Bykova, Project Manager
8. Mr Niall Sheerin, Project Manager
9. Mr Evgeni Evgeniev, Project Supervisor
10. Mr Svetislav Paunovic, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Project Co-ordinator Co-operation Activities Unit

11. Ms Martina Schmidt, Head of Council of Europe Office in Yerevan
12. Ms Diana Ghazaryan, Project Manager, Council of Europe Office in Yerevan
13. Ms Meri Katvallyan, Project Manager, Council of Europe Office in Yerevan
14. Ms Narine Gasparyan, Project Manager, Council of Europe Office in Yerevan
15. Ms Tamara Barbakadze, Project Manager, Council of Europe Office in Yerevan
16. Ms Gayane Hovhannisyanyan, Project Manager, Council of Europe Office in Yerevan
17. Mr Arman Poghosyan, Project Manager, Council of Europe Office in Yerevan

Office of the Directorate General of Programmes

18. Ms Verena Taylor, Director of ODGP and in charge of the resource Mobilisation since the departure of the former head of division
19. Ms Delphine Freymann, Head of the Programming Department
20. Ms Mervi Patosalmi, Regional Gender Advisor
21. Ms Jennifer Trudeau, Resource Mobilisation and Donor Relations Division
22. Mr Tobia Fiorilli, Policy Advisor Programming Department

PARTNER INSTITUTIONS

Ministry of Justice

23. Ms Arpine Sargsyan, Deputy Minister of Justice
24. Ms Rubina Mkhitaranyan, Assistant to Deputy Minister of Justice

Judicial Academy

25. Ms Anahit Abrahamyan, Deputy head Judicial Academy

Ministry of Health

26. Ms Anna Mkrtumyan, First Deputy Minister of Health
27. Mr Kamo Manukyan, Head of the Prison Medicine Centre

Office of the Representative of Armenia before the ECtHR

28. Ms Anahit Harutyunyan, Head of the Department for Research and Development

Ministry of Defense

29. Colonel Aleksandre Avetisyan, Head of the General Department for Health, Social Protection and Veterans
30. Ms Mane Markosyan, Assistant to Minister of Defense

Supreme Judicial Council

31. Mr David Khachatryan, Member of the Supreme Judicial Council

Human Rights Defender's Office

32. Mr Arman Tatoyan, Former Human Rights Defender (in service during project implementation 2020-2021)
33. Ms Liana Ghazinyan, Acting Head of International Cooperation Department
34. Mr Artyom Sedrakyan, Former Head of Department General for Protection of Human Rights in the Criminal Justice and Armed Forces
35. Ms Nina Pirumyan, Head of Research and Educational Center

Project experts

36. Mr Suren Krmoyan, Independent local expert, Protection of Human Rights in Biomedicine
37. Mr Armen Grigoryan, Independent local expert, Human Rights and Women in the Armed Forces
38. Mr Sasa Jankovich, Independent international expert, Human Rights and Women in the Armed Forces
39. Mr Ara Ghazaryan, Independent local expert, Head of "Rule of Law" NGO
40. Mr Arshak Gasparyan, Independent local expert, Head of Social Justice NGO
41. Mr Sergey Ghazinyan, Independent local expert, Former adviser of the former Human Rights Defender

Local CSOs

42. Ms Sona Ayvazyan, Director Transparency International Anti-corruption Centre
43. Ms Shushan Doydoyan, Head of Freedom of Information Centre in Armenia
44. Ms Araks Melkonyan, Chairperson at Protection of Rights without Borders NGO

INTERNATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

45. Ms Denise Sumpf, Head of UN Resident Coordinator's Office
46. Mr Frank Hesse, Head of Cooperation, EU Delegation to Armenia
47. Mr Werner Thut-Shimo, Regional Director, SC Swiss Development Cooperation

Annex 8 - Mapping to national policies, strategies and action plans

Project	Coherence with national policies, strategies and action plans
Supporting the criminal justice reform project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Council of Europe worked with the Armenian authorities on the implementation of the “Strategy on Legal and Judicial Reform of Armenia for 2019-2023” adopted in October 2019. - The project supports the implementation of recently revised legislation (the Civil Code, Civil Procedure Code, Code of Administrative Offences, the Law on Bankruptcy, the Code of Judicial Conduct). - The project also supports the implementation of judgments of the ECtHR and findings of the Committee for the Prevention of Torture and the Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner.
Support to the judicial reform project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The project is in line with the “2018-2023 Strategy for Judicial Legal Reforms in the Republic of Armenia and the Action Plan Deriving Therefrom”.
Human Rights and Women in the Armed Forces projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The project closely supports implementation of the "Human Rights Strategy of Armenia 2020-2022" and the "Action Plan of the Human Rights Strategy of Armenia 2020-2022". - The project is in line with Armenia’s national priority to fulfill its international commitment in respect of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325).
Protection of human rights in biomedicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The project is in line with the Strategic Action Plan on Human Rights and Technologies in Biomedicine (2020-2025). - The project directly derives from the Council of Europe Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine (Oviedo Convention).
Support the scaling-up of the probation service in Armenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The project is in line with the Government Program adopted in June 2018. - The project is in line with the 2019-2023 Strategy of the penitentiary and probation field and the Government Decision N 1902-L of November 18, 2021 “On approving the program of activities of the Government of the Republic of Armenia for 2021-2026”.
Enhancing Health Care and Human Rights Protection in Prisons in Armenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The project is in line with the 2017–2021 Data Protection Strategy of RA. - The project is in line with the RA Strategy on suicide prevention.

Annex 9 - Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection method	Data sources	Comments
Relevance					
To what extent was the Council of Europe's Action Plan for Armenia relevant to the shared priorities and aspirations of Armenia and the Council of Europe	To what extent is the Council of Europe's Action Plan in line with the needs and priorities of Armenia in the areas of human rights, rule of law and democracy?	Extent to which national policy documents are reflected in the Action Plan priorities and projects.	Document Review Semi-structured interviews Survey	National policies (national development strategy, sector reform policy documents in the areas of human rights, rule of law and democracy. Action Plan Interviews with ODGP, Field Office, Private Office of the Council of Europe SG, Permanent Representation of Armenia to the Council of Europe, Armenian member(s) of PACE, CSOs involved in policy monitoring on human right/rule of law/democracy (ideally platform of CSOs to be suggested by Field Office) Survey results	Entire Action Plan
	To what extent was the Council of Europe's Action Plan for Armenia in line with the standards, strategic guidance and priority of the Council of Europe?	Extent to which recommendations of the Council of Europe monitoring and advisory bodies in respect of Armenia were used in the Action Plan design to bring reforms closer in line with the European standards. Proportion and type of envisaged actions under the Action Plan which were implemented. Level of coherence between the Action Plan and the relevant United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.	Document review Semi-structured interviews	Action Plan Project reports Interviews with ODGP, Field Office, Private Office of the Council of Europe SG	Entire evaluation universe. Qualitative (topics) and quantitative (budgets) comparison between initial Action Plan and implemented parts of the Action Plan

	To what extent did the Action Plan and its implementation mainstream a gender equality approach?	Extent to which gender analysis and gender transformative results were integrated in the Action Plan design and its implementation.	Document review Semi-structured interviews	Action Plan Project documents for sample projects Semi-structured interviews with project staff and project partners for sampled projects Survey results	Sample, generalized with survey
Effectiveness					
To which extent has the Action Plan achieved its objectives and outcomes?	To what extent did the Action Plan contribute to changes in targeted reform sectors?	Proportion of sampled projects' intended results which were realized Extent and nature of outcome monitoring data available for sampled projects Level of satisfaction of stakeholders with projects' results	Document review – mapping towards the Action Plan Logframe Semi-structured interviews Survey	Project documents and project reports Interviews with sampled projects' stakeholders Survey results	Sample
	Which factors have supported and hindered the effectiveness of the projects?	Proportion of adverse factors identified by stakeholders which were met by adaptive strategies Examples of synergies among individual projects Examples of synergies with other actors' projects and initiatives Level of political support as assessed by stakeholders	Document review Semi-structured interviews	Project documents and project reports Interviews with sampled projects' stakeholders	Mostly based on sample, generalized with existing evaluations of non-sampled projects. SWOT analysis of sampled projects
	How effective was the Council of Europe in adapting to the restrictions brought about by the pandemic and in ensuring business continuity?	Proportion of sampled projects' activities kept as planned, amended, delayed, cancelled Examples of adaptations and their results	Document review Semi-structured interviews	Project documents and project reports Interviews with sampled projects' stakeholders	Sample
Added value					

To what extent has the Council of Europe been able to optimize its comparative advantages?	What are the Council of Europe's advantages compared to other international actors in the areas covered by the Action Plan?	Correspondence between the comparative advantages attributed to the Council of Europe by internal stakeholders.	Semi-structured interviews Survey	Interviews with sampled projects' stakeholders, Field Office, Permanent Representation of Armenia to the Council of Europe, Armenian member(s) of PACE, and CSOs involved in policy monitoring on human right/rule of law/democracy (ideally platform of CSOs to be suggested by Field Office) Survey results	
	To what extent were these comparative advantages put to use in the implementation of the Action Plan?	Frequency of sampled projects' visibility actions Level of information on sampled projects' outcomes and Council of Europe's role in Armenia, as perceived by stakeholders Occurrences of mutual reinforcement between sampled projects, corresponding standards, and corresponding monitoring instruments	Document Review Semi-structured interviews Survey	Interviews with sampled projects' stakeholders, Field Office, Permanent Representation of Armenia to the Council of Europe, Armenian member(s) of PACE, and CSOs involved in policy monitoring on human right/rule of law/democracy (ideally platform of CSOs to be suggested by Field Office) Survey results	Mostly sample, corroborated with general data (especially survey)

Annex 10 - Impact of COVID-19/2020 outbreak of hostilities and adjustments made on the sampled projects

Sampled project	Impact of COVID/2020 outbreak of hostilities	Adjustments
Enhancing the Application of Human Rights in the Armed Forces and Strengthening the Rights and Role of Women in the Military Service in Armenia phase I and phase II	<p><i>Phase I</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workshop for investigators and police officers on effective investigation of torture, other forms of ill-treatment and death cases in the armed forces was cancelled; - Events were cancelled or postponed, such as TEDx salon event "Beyond courage"; - Baseline study on the existence of subculture in the armed forces in Armenia was cancelled. <p><i>Phase II:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workshop on International Humanitarian Law and human rights in armed conflict and post-conflict situations was cancelled. <p><i>Postponed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pilot projects in Yerevan and other regions on raising legal awareness on human rights and psychological education support to future conscripts - ToT and one cascade training for judges and prosecutors and one for military investigators and military police; - Study visit to a European country for the personnel of the newly established Unit on the Work with Women Servicepersons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The training material was still disseminated and the module was transferred to training institution; - Final extended SC meeting of the Project was conducted along with the final event in on-line video-conferencing format; - 6-month no-cost extension until end of 2022.
Protection of human rights in biomedicine I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - During hostilities: Desk work; - Delays due to COVID. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initially planned for 14 months – new end date end of 2022. 18-month extension with additional budget until end of 2022.
Support the scaling-up of the probation service in Armenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A significant number of planned project activities were either held online or postponed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Giving priority to activities that can be organised without face-to-face meetings and traveling; - 7 (seven) month no-cost extension of the project until December 2022.
Enhancing Health Care and Human Rights Protection in Prisons in Armenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some activities that needed physical presence (e.g., a study visit) were postponed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Giving priority to activities that could be organised online; - In order to overcome the delay, 8 (eight) month no-cost extension until December 2022.
PGG II: Support to the judicial reform – enhancing the independence and professionalism of the judiciary in Armenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Due to 2020 outbreak of hostilities mainly use of international experts; - With minimum involvement of local actors, who were busy with the crisis resolution activities; - Adjust and postpone the face-to-face activities (round tables, meetings, international travels, "Arbitration days", etc); - The delegation of Armenian women judges was not able to participate in 15th Biennial Conference: "Celebrating Diversity" planned by International Association of Women Judges; - Implementation of the court users' satisfaction survey was delayed; - Development of the Court Management course was delayed; - summer school on arbitration was cancelled. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most of the face-to-face activities were re-designed to be implemented by the means of virtual communication channels.

<p>PGG II: Supporting the criminal justice reform in Armenia - tackling criminal aspects of the judicial reform and harmonising the application of European standards</p>	<p>- No substantial delay occurred because of COVID-19 lockdown.</p>	<p>- Organising planned activities not only in an in-person format, but also through online or hybrid sessions.</p>
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Annex 11 - Projects per Action Plan sector and sampling

Id	Name	Status	Funds	Sample
HUMAN RIGHTS				
Protecting Human Rights				
2650	Support for the execution by Armenia of judgments in respect of Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights	Impl	VC	no
2340	PGG II: 3. Supporting the criminal justice reform and harmonising the application of European standards in Armenia	Impl	EU-JP	yes
25	Strengthening the application of European human rights standards in the armed forces in Armenia	Compl	VC	no
2324	Human Rights and Women in the Armed Forces in Armenia	Closed	VC	yes
2691	Human Rights and Women in the Armed Forces in Armenia - PHASE II	Impl	VC	yes
Promoting Human Rights and Dignity				
2227	The Path towards Armenia's Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence	Impl	VC	no
2073	PGG II: 18. Women's Access to Justice: delivering on the Istanbul Convention and other European gender equality standards in the Eastern Partnership countries	Impl	EU-JP	excluded
2354	PGG II: 17. Strengthening the access to justice through non-judicial redress mechanisms for victims of discrimination, hate crime and hate speech in Eastern Partnership countries	Impl	EU-JP	excluded
1840	End online child sexual exploitation and abuse@Europe	Closed	VC	excluded
2474	Protection of human rights in biomedicine I	Impl	VC	yes
RULE OF LAW				
Ensuring Justice				
2339	PGG II: 2. Support to the judicial reform – enhancing the independence and professionalism of the judiciary in Armenia	Impl	EU-JP	yes
2353	PGG II: 16. Strengthening the profession of lawyer in line with European standards in the Eastern Partnership countries	Impl	EU-JP	excluded
2857	Support for a better evaluation of the result of judicial reform efforts in the Eastern Partnership 'Justice Dashboard EaP'	Impl	EU-JP	excluded
26	Support the scaling-up of the probation service in Armenia	Impl	VC	yes
2400	Enhancing Health Care and Human Rights Protection in Prisons in Armenia	Impl	VC	yes
Strengthening the Rule of Law				
2637	Media sector needs assessment in Armenia	Closed	VC	no
Countering Threats to the Rule of Law				
2338	PGG II: 1. Strengthening institutional capacities to fight and prevent corruption in Armenia	Impl	EU-JP	no
2352	PGG II: 15. Strengthening measures to prevent and combat economic crime in the Eastern Partnership countries	Impl	EU-JP	excluded
2088	CyberEast - Action on Cybercrime for Cyber Resilience in the Eastern Partnership region	Impl	EU-JP	excluded
DEMOCRACY				
Strengthening Democratic Governance and Fostering Innovation				
2019	Democratic Development, Decentralisation and Good Governance in Armenia	Impl	VC	no, evaluation
21	Institutional Support to the Communities Association of Armenia (CAA)	Compl	VC	No, evaluation
2002	Strengthening the Communities Association of Armenia and transparent, participatory local governance in Armenia	Impl	VC	No, evaluation