

Management Response and Action Plan

Name of Evaluation Report:	Evaluation of the Project: Horizontal Facility II “HELP in the Western Balkans”		
Date of Evaluation Report:	31 January 2023	Date of Action Plan:	20 April 2023

Overall management response to the evaluation:

The final project evaluation has been carried out at the request of the regional action “Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) in the Western Balkans” implemented within the framework of the EU/CoE Joint Programme “Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey – Phase II. The final evaluation report is comprehensive and provides a systematic and impartial assessment of the project outcomes and impact. The findings and recommendations made by the evaluators highlight the efficiency of the activities, the added value of the project and its real impact in the context of the Western Balkans. The evaluators took into consideration the fact that the Council of Europe is implementing a follow up project and framed under the broader Strategy and Logframe of the HELP Programme and provided a series of useful recommendations for the next phase. Most of these are relevant, and confirm the main project aims of providing e-learning courses on human rights for legal professionals, and to integrate these courses as far as possible into the formal training through bar associations, judicial training academies, and other such institutions. It has to be mentioned though that this follow-up project, funded by the HRTF thanks to outreach efforts of DPC, is of 500,000 EUR when the total budget of the previous EU-funded HELP in the Western Balkans project was of 800,000 EUR.

[FOR DECENTRALISED EVALUATIONS] Dissemination plan for the evaluation: please briefly explain how the report will be shared (internally, other CoE entities, donors, beneficiaries etc.), methods (email, events, website etc.), resources, timeframe and person responsible.

The report was already presented at the 1st Steering Committee meeting of the new phase of the project held in February 2023. The members of the Steering Committee are contact points of the partners/justice training institutions (JTI) and Bar associations (BA) in the project, so-called HELP focal (JTI) and info (BA) points respectively. The hybrid meeting was also attended by a Finish representative (being Finland one of the key contributors of the Human Rights Trust Fund/HRTF that funds the current project) as well as representatives from DG NEAR and DG JUST s as the Horizontal Facility II “HELP in the Western Balkans” action was funded jointly by EU and CoE.

This evaluation report will be also disseminated not only throughout the Justice and Human Rights Training Division (that hosts the HELP Programme) but also to relevant Department colleagues and other DGI and DGII colleagues active in the Western Balkans and that may be interested in the impact of HELP in their respective fields, including for future implementation of their respective cooperation actions using HELP courses.

Management Decision ¹	Entity in Charge	Planned Actions ² (determined by Entity)	Justification ³ for Non-Acceptance	Target Date for Action	Person Responsible for Action
Recommendation 1: Focus enabling a fuller integration of HELP into local judicial training. This includes facilitating expertise on ways on how to integrate the HELP adult learning methodology and how to further update training materials and is closely linked to recommendations 2 and 3.					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input type="checkbox"/> Under consideration		The integration of HELP courses into judicial and other legal training is always an ultimate objective of the project but depends very much on the (legal and political) context under which each JTI or BA operates. The next phase of the project is working closely with Bar associations and judicial academies to promote the benefits of the course for participants and tutors, and to support the offering -if not yet possible permanent integration- of the courses into initial and continuous training of the partner JTI and BA.		Continuous through 2023-2024	HELP Project Coordinator
Recommendation 2: Develop jointly with Focal points and Info points communication on the benefits of HELP courses in terms of EU accession, ongoing justice reforms and e-learning and disseminate this among legal professionals					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input type="checkbox"/> Under consideration		The promotion of the benefits of HELP courses is an integral part of the project workplan for the 2023-24 phase. Most topical HELP courses are developed		Continuous through 2023-2024	HELP Project Coordinator

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

² For implementing accepted recommendations.

³ For recommendations that are rejected or under consideration.

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		covering both the CoE and EU legal frameworks. The main message in the communication with the partners of the project is that all HELP courses comprise both legal frameworks, particularly EU Law and CoE Conventions and standards.			
Recommendation 3: Update, refine and adapt existing HELP tutored courses in the region. Benefit from the expertise of local HELP tutors to consolidate and refine the existing locally adapted HELP courses.					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input type="checkbox"/> Under consideration		<p>This is in line with the methodology whereby the so-called HELP 'model' course is originally developed in English and responsibility of the CoE and the subsequent national adaptation is developed by the national/beneficiary tutor (previously trained by HELP).</p> <p>The overall concept of the HELP tutored courses and is a key part of the project design and implementation in regional projects like the HELP in the Western Balkans (but also other regions like EU, South Med, etc).</p>		Continuous through 2023-2024	HELP Project Coordinator
Recommendation 4: Continue to link with the wider context in the region like the move towards digitalisation, governing rules of compulsory continuous training and ongoing judicial reforms.					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input type="checkbox"/> Under consideration		<p>The project is already working to support digitalisation where it is taking place, e.g. Kosovo*, and will continue to provide support to such initiatives as they arise.</p>		Continuous through 2023-2024	HELP Project Coordinator

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		Lessons learnt from other projects overseen by the Justice and HR Training Division dealing with upgrade of digitalisation of JTI for better training (e.g. DG-Reform project with the Croatian JTI) can be beneficial.			
Recommendation 5: Encourage and advocate for follow-up discussions and activities with HELP alumni aiming on the effective and coherent application of European standards for the protection of fundamental human rights in their daily work.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input type="checkbox"/> Under consideration			Apart from ad hoc ex-post evaluation, the current staff capacity of the Division and the team in charge of the HELP in the Western Balkans projects is insufficient to apply this recommendation. It would then lie outside the scope of the current project. The effective and coherent application of European standards for the protection of fundamental human		

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			rights in daily work of legal professionals also lies with the national institutions and concerned individuals. What is true is that more and more HELP alumni show a certain degree of “recidivism” and are eager to participate in further HELP courses.		
Recommendation 6: Revive the practice of assessing longer-term effects and use of skills obtained through HELP courses					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input type="checkbox"/> Under consideration		This recommendation is best addressed to the Justice and Human Rights Training Division as a whole. Modalities to embed a more systematic approach to measure this longer-term and use of skills obtained through HELP will be discussed within the Division. A first good attempt is, at the level of self-learners, the inclusion of the assessment of the HELP course just before the obtention of the ‘assessment of accomplishment’.		2023	Head of Division, Deputy Head of Division
Recommendation 7: Strengthen the analytical capability of the HELP platform for issues cutting across several courses.					

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<input type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Under consideration		This recommendation is best addressed to the HELP Division as a whole to be dealt with systemically. For discussion within the HELP division.			Head of Division, Deputy Head of Division
Recommendation 8: Optimise the planning for future evaluations					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input type="checkbox"/> Under consideration		<p>The Justice and Human Rights Training Division will consider this recommendation ahead of any future HELP evaluation. Concerning HELP it is relevant to say that monitoring and evaluation is considered from the early stages of implementation with the obligation of HELP coordinators to encode information systematically in the HELP matrix table of courses launched (by country/beneficiary/topic/gender) and the success rate.</p> <p>Still, any future evaluation depends on the (re)sources being available at any given time. It has to be considered that for final evaluations there is always a tension between (i) compiling final data after a project ends and (ii) the end of staff contracts upon project completion. If luckily, the same project team remains as it was the case for this concrete evaluation, we need to consider that this same team would be also overloaded</p>			HELP Project Coordinator, Head of Division, Deputy Head of Division

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		with the inception phase of the follow-up project. So, triple tension.			