

# EVALUATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION IN CO-OPERATION ACTIVITIES

Management Response and Action plan



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

<b>Name of Evaluation Report:</b>	<b>Evaluation of civil society participation in co-operation activities</b>		
<b>Date of Evaluation Report:</b>	<b>2 June 2023</b>	<b>Date of the Action Plan:</b>	<b>26 September 2023</b>

**Overall management response to the evaluation:**

Civil society plays a key role in assisting the national authorities of our 46 member States to implement the Council of Europe’s standards and recommendations of the monitoring bodies. The Secretary General has identified the need to strengthen the protection and promotion of civil society space in Europe as one of the Organisation’s priorities. In response to the decisions taken at the Helsinki Ministerial Session in 2019, the Secretary General issued her proposals ([SG/Inf\(2020\)8](#)), where it was also demonstrated that, with the exception of specific activities restricted to member states, nearly all of the Council of Europe’s standard setting, monitoring and co-operation activities involve some level of engagement with civil society (see in particular appendix to SG/Inf(2020)8). The implementation measures as presented in the Secretary General’s final report [SG/Inf\(2022\)13](#) (notably, the launch of a handbook and a civil society portal on the co-operation with the Council of Europe; the interaction with our structures, such as the informal exchanges of views with CM Rapporteur Groups and the enhanced participation in steering and ad hoc committees) have been welcomed by the Turin Ministerial Session (May 2022). In view of the call in the Turin Ministerial for the work to be enhanced and in light of the Reykjavík Declaration, the SG’s Roadmap on the Council of Europe’s engagement with civil society ([SG/Inf\(2023\)28](#)), with specific policy proposals aimed at shaping a meaningful engagement with civil society as a whole, including youth civil society, in all aspects of work (standard-setting, monitoring and co-operation activities) was distributed on 13 September. The proposals concern the following three dimensions: awareness, knowledge and understanding of the Organisation by non-governmental organisations, through participation, contribution and sharing of perspective.

Against this background, the input of the present evaluation is timely. The primary recommendation (1) is already being implemented. The remaining recommendations are considered below in view of the above and taking also into account:

- the narrow scope of the present evaluation, namely civil society participation in co-operation activities funded by extra-budgetary resources, which does not necessary reflect the engagement of CSOs throughout the Organisation;
- the intergovernmental nature of the Organisation assisting member states in improving the implementation of standards. This is also the underlying frame of the Council of Europe’s co-operation with CSOs, which does not focus on provision of funding. However, within co-operation projects, small grants can be provided to CSOs for the implementation of projects developed by them, when considered instrumental in achieving project objectives.
- DPC is identified as the entity in charge of the implementation of certain recommendations as far as co-operation activities are concerned. In the context of the above-mentioned SG’s Roadmap, other MAEs may be involved in areas within their remit.

## ACTION PLAN

Management decision <sup>1</sup>	Entity in charge	Planned actions <sup>2</sup> (determined by Entity)	Justification for non-acceptance <sup>3</sup>	Target date for action	Person responsible for action
<b>Recommendation 1: The upcoming policy/strategy for civil society participation should include a section on civil society participation in co-operation activities. This should clarify how civil society participation in co-operation activities should contribute to the Organisation's overall policy/strategy for civil society participation and include concrete measures to fully benefit from the opportunities co-operation activities provide to connect with local and national civil society and strengthen civil society's role in contributing to the fulfilment of, lobbying and advocating for, and monitoring the fulfilment of standards and conventions. (High<sup>4</sup>)</b>					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input type="checkbox"/> Under consideration	PO with DPC and DGI+DGII	The proposals in the Secretary General's Roadmap also cover co-operation activities.		31/12/2024	Director of Private Office
<b>Recommendation 2: CSOs should be more informed on a regular basis on how they can be involved in Council of Europe work beyond projects (including making use of the specific section on co-operation activities of the policy/strategy for civil society participation once it is available) through concrete means such as newsletters, group emails, communiques, etc. (High)</b>					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input type="checkbox"/> Under consideration	PO	Specific proposals on provision of information on various areas to civil society are contained in the SG's above-mentioned Roadmap and are aimed to strengthen the systematic communication with CSOs.		31/12/2024	Director of Private Office
<b>Recommendation 3: DPC should develop the stakeholder module of the PMM IT tool to act as a CSO database to better collect and update information about civil society information in all the geographic areas in which co-operation activities are taking place. (High)</b>					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input type="checkbox"/> Under consideration	DPC	Within the implementation of the Roadmap, opportunities for an organisation-wide database will be considered, provided that adequate safeguards, in particular for the protection of privacy, can be put in place.		31/12/2024	Director of DPC

1. The Management decision concerns the Recommendation (Accepted, Rejected, Under consideration).

2. For implementing accepted recommendations.

3. For recommendations that are rejected or under consideration

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

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<b>Recommendation 4: DPC should build Council of Europe project staff capacity to engage CSOs in co-operation activities and in also a wider sense than participation in individual projects to build stronger connections with civil society and contribute to the Organisation's overall policy/strategy for civil society participation. This should include guidance on dealing with national authorities that are restrictive towards civil society. (High)</b>					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input type="checkbox"/> Under consideration	DPC	The need to enhance and streamline the capacity of the Council of Europe staff in engaging with civil society organisations within standard setting, monitoring and co-operation activities is envisaged within the above-mentioned Roadmap (see in particular §19). The advisability for more specific trainings will be assessed within the mid-term review exercise.		31/12/2024	Director of DPC
<b>Recommendation 5: PO, together with relevant MAEs, should explore alternative procedures that better enable a wider range of civil society participation, particularly those in precarious situations. These more flexible alternatives to existing procedures should encompass invitations, participant registration, translation and interpreting, travel and per diems, consultancy, and grants. (High)</b>					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input type="checkbox"/> Under consideration	PO (in consultation with relevant MAEs)	As stated in the managerial response, provision of funding is not the focus of the Organisation's co-operation with CSOs. However, within co-operation projects, small grants can be provided to CSOs for the implementation of projects developed by them, when considered instrumental in achieving project objectives. Building on previous experiences, possible new avenues will be examined within the implementation of the SG's Roadmap.		31/12/2024	Director of PO
<b>Recommendation 6: DPC or MAEs responsible should include resources for support to civil society in all country and thematic action plans and programmes whenever possible, either through standalone projects or specific budgetary allocations across programmes. This funding would provide for concrete measures to be implemented in countries where there are external offices, more communication with CSOs, and greater analysis of civil society in countries where there are co-operation activities (see relevant complementary recommendations 2, 4, 7 and 8). (High)</b>					
<input type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input type="checkbox"/> Under consideration	DPC and other MAEs		Within the implementation of the SG's Roadmap, it is not foreseen to expand the scope of financial support in all country and thematic action plans and programmes.	31/12/2024	Director of DPC (with other MAEs as appropriate)



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<b>Recommendation 7: DPC, together with MAEs, and involving external offices where relevant, should develop concrete measures to increase synergies among CSOs in countries where co-operation activities take place, and prioritise working with CSOs collectively rather than isolated CSOs/civil society experts. Such aims should be explicitly explained in the policy/strategy for civil society participation. (High)</b>					
<input type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input type="checkbox"/> Under consideration	DPC (in consultation with relevant MAEs)		The various actions for the attention of civil society envisaged in the SG's Roadmap aim at creating transversal synergies within the CSOs involved in the Organisation's standard setting, monitoring and co-operation activities.	31/12/2024	The Director of DPC
<b>Recommendation 8: DPC, together with MAEs, should integrate goals and indicators for civil society participation into individual project and programme design and include a section on civil society participation in co-operation activities in annual reports, including country action plan progress and final reports and evaluation reports. (High)</b>					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input type="checkbox"/> Under consideration	PO with DPC	<p>The current planning and reporting practices (both at project and action plan level) foresee a section on the Human Rights Approach whereby relevant information concerning the expected/actual co-operation with CSOs is included.</p> <p>Further streamlining, including amendment of forthcoming versions of the project guidelines will be considered transversally within the framework of the implementation of the above-mentioned SG Roadmap.</p>		31/12/2024	The Director of PO with the Director of DPC

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<b>Recommendation 9: DPC, through its external offices, should meet with other international organisations and donors on a regular basis to exchange good practices on civil society participation in co-operation activities. These meetings should be used by the Council of Europe to emphasise its added value and unique approach to complement other approaches and harness support from the international organisations and donors. (Medium)</b>					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input type="checkbox"/> Under consideration	DPC	The Heads and Deputy Heads of Council of Europe offices responsible for co-operation activities will take a proactive approach among the donor community in their respective countries and facilitate sharing of good practices on civil society participation in co-operation activities, with a view to enhance the overall support to CSOs provided by international organisations and donors and increase donors' contributions to Council of Europe co-operation activities with/for CSOs. The advisability of a guidance document specifically devoted to the Council of Europe's offices will be considered within the implementation of the SG's Roadmap (see in particular §19).		31/12/2024	The Director of DPC

Abbreviations	
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DPC	Directorate of Programme Co-ordination
DGI	Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law
DGII	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity
MAEs	Main Administrative Entity
PMM	Project Management Methodology
PO	Private Office of the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General
SG	Secretary General