

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

**EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE
PROJECT “PROMOTING THE EFFECTIVE PROTECTION OF
EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION IN GEORGIA”**

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List of acronyms

CoE	Council of Europe
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations of the European Commission
DGII	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity of the Council of Europe
EU	European Union
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Queer, Intersexual persons and persons belonging to other sexual minorities
MDF	Media Development Foundation
PDO	Public Defender's Office
SOGI	Sexual orientation and gender identity
SRO	School Resource Officers
ToR	Terms of Reference

0. Executive Summary

The Council of Europe (CoE) commissioned an end-of-project evaluation for the initiative "Promoting the effective protection of equality and non-discrimination in Georgia," focusing on enhancing the rights of vulnerable groups against discrimination, hate speech, and hate crime. The evaluation, steered by a directive to address specific components of the project, aimed to analyse results, tackle obstacles, and gauge ownership among national partners, public institutions, and civil society, particularly concerning three key components of the project:

- **Outreach and shared ownership of Equality Week**—examining the coordination, cooperation, and coherence of program messages and follow-ups.
- **Training activities with School Resource Officers (SROs)** —promoting human rights education and engagement with education systems and communities.
- **Capacity-building activities for legal and law enforcement professionals** — focusing on improving the efficiency of investigating hate crimes and the general cooperation with the Prosecutor's Office.

The evaluation encompassed both the current project (2022-2023) and portions of the prior 'Fighting discrimination hate crime and hate speech in Georgia' (2018-2022). It applied a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative (document review, interviews, Focus Group Discussions) and quantitative methods (surveys), underpinned by the OECD/DAC criteria of Relevance, Effectiveness, Impact, Sustainability and Efficiency, integrating the Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) lens as cross-cutting issues. Three focus group discussions and thirteen semi-structured interviews were conducted.

The project is **highly relevant** to Georgia's national reform agenda and aligns with the National Human Rights Strategy for 2022-2030. This strategy sets out a comprehensive framework for advancing human rights in Georgia, making the project a key contributor to the country's broader human rights goals. However, the evaluation findings also reveal a significant challenge in the form of a disconnect between political leadership and the project's objectives, particularly concerning LGBTI rights and non-discrimination. This disconnect highlights the complex dynamics within Georgia's political landscape, where progress in human rights can sometimes face resistance at the policy level and calls for more comprehensive integration of the implementation context analysis in the project design, implementation, and reporting process.

The evaluation also found that project has been relevant in contributing to **gender transformative** changes, but since these were not explicitly reflected in the objectives or indicators, the area remains under-analysed and under-reported, so that an actual degree of contribution to the gender transformative results has proven difficult to establish.

The project's **effectiveness is evident** in its impact on enhancing awareness and capacity to address discrimination and hate crimes. It has successfully reached various target groups, including vulnerable communities and law enforcement personnel. Stakeholder satisfaction is a testament to the project's responsiveness to their needs. However, the variation in impact across communities underscores the importance of tailored approaches. The evaluation also found that the project hardly reaches a critical size to capitalize on advantage generated by beneficiary satisfaction and their willingness to convert CoE

support into their own independent initiatives. The evaluation thus found that the Council's expertise would be better utilised if complemented with more or other financial capacities from Georgia's international development partners.

The beneficiaries testify to the effectiveness of the awareness and capacity building support provided by the project, but evaluators found that the project team could benefit from the improvement of its monitoring and reporting tools, so that it improves the granularity of the analytical conclusions and plans for the follow up accordingly. Similarly, gender transformation aspect of the project, while acknowledged, requires more in-depth analytical exploration to generate knowledge and thus maximize its impact.

The project's **impact** is most pronounced when the CoE uses its strong convening power and expertise, which bring to the same table the parties from various segments of Georgia's society that otherwise have conflictual, if not adversarial, relationship. Initiatives like Equality Week have played a pivotal role in achieving this impact by bringing these actors together. Public awareness of discriminatory risks has also risen, which is a positive step toward addressing such issues proactively. However, the evaluation recognizes that societal change is a complex and long-term process influenced by factors such as political will and societal readiness. Thus, CoE could heighten the impact its projects by enhanced contextual awareness, an improved ability to track the ongoing societal changes, and more consistent application of the monitoring and learning tools to its own activities.

While the project has achieved significant milestones, the issue of **sustainability** looms large. The evaluation highlights concerns about the sustainability of project initiatives without continued support from the CoE. This especially applies in case of training, where the expertise of the Council is, so far, irreplaceable. The CoE's convening power, as demonstrated by events like Equality Week, is also regarded as crucial in the short term to maintain the collaborative nature of the outreach initiatives. Still, national partners express their willingness to allocate resources, indicating their commitment to maintaining the project's outcomes. The transition of ownership of some components of the project from the CoE to national partners, such as the Public Defender's Office, is possible and even advisable, but is a delicate process that requires careful planning to ensure the enduring impact.

When it comes to **efficiency**, resource allocation within the project demonstrates a balance between clear targeting and flexibility, a crucial aspect of efficient project management. The evaluation findings suggest that deeper engagement with civil society organizations (CSOs) could further enhance the project's impact. CSOs often possess valuable expertise and grassroots connections that can contribute significantly to project outcomes. Additionally, the need for strategic resource allocation in response to the evolving political context highlights the dynamic nature of development work. Adaptability and alignment with evolving priorities are vital for optimizing resource utilisation.

When studying the individual elements of the project, the evaluation found that:

- **Equality Week** serves as a vital platform for raising awareness of discrimination and hate crimes. It brings together diverse stakeholders, including state institutions, civil society organizations, and minority groups. The collaborative nature of the event fosters a sense of shared ownership and commitment to combating discrimination. However, to ensure lasting impact, the evaluation recommends enhancing coordination and leveraging the success of Equality Week for

sustained efforts beyond the event itself. This includes reinforcing partnerships and ensuring that the event's outcomes translate into concrete actions and policy changes.

- The training activities with **School Resource Officers (SROs)** represent a crucial component of the project's efforts to promote human rights education within the education system. These activities have had a positive impact on SROs' understanding of discrimination and their ability to address related issues in schools. However, the evaluation findings highlight the need for more comprehensive training, especially in areas such as gender and LGBTI issues and, crucially, stresses need to resolve the persisting conflict between the expectation of the teachers, that want them to keep order at school, and the Ministry and pupils, who would want them to primarily provide psychological and other support to pupils. Strengthening partnerships with educational institutions can further enhance the integration of human rights education within the curriculum, ensuring a broader and more sustained impact.
- The **capacity-building activities** for legal and law enforcement professionals have played a vital role in improving the efficiency of investigating hate crimes and addressing discrimination cases. These activities contribute to a more effective and responsive legal and law enforcement system. However, the evaluation underscores the importance of gearing the project towards supporting further collaboration between different agencies involved in combating hate crimes. Enhanced cooperation and knowledge sharing among these agencies can lead to a more coordinated and comprehensive approach to addressing discrimination and hate crimes in Georgia.

Recommendations:

- Prepare a successor project, that would regularly conduct Implementation Context Analysis (ICA), integrate it with continuous project evaluation.
- Enhance the monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) processes.
- Identify potential Gender-Transformative Results and integrate them to the successor project.
- Explore synergies within CoE and with other development partners.
- Hand over ownership of the Equality Week to PDO, while keeping a coordinating role to focus discussions.
- Continue supporting the training of the MIA staff and start working with courts and prosecutor's office on anti-discrimination/hate crime. Focus on managers and on trailing/modelling the "full chain" of response to incidents.
- Continue helping the trained trainers and assist SRO in resolving the "functional duality" between keeping order at school and ensuring support to pupils, within the thematic scope of the successor project.

1. Introduction

This evaluation report, prepared by the Evaluation Team, outlines the findings and recommendations of the evaluation of the Council of Europe (CoE) project: **“Promoting the effective protection of equality and non-discrimination in Georgia.”**

The evaluation was commissioned by the Directorate General for Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII) under the Framework Contract 2021/FC/01 “for the provision of consultancy services on evaluation/evaluation-related assignments”.

Context and background of the project

The project is funded by, and implemented in the framework of, the **Council of Europe Action Plan for Georgia 2020-2023** in cooperation with the Public Defender’s Office (PDO) which is the National Human Rights Institution of Georgia, and other key stakeholders (businesses, ethnic, religious and other minority communities, and School Resources Officers) aiming to ensure their engagement in promoting equality and countering hate speech. The project also works with law enforcement services, through the Ministry of Interior, and the General Prosecutor’s Office to ensure effective investigation and prosecution of hate crimes.

According to the Terms of Reference (ToR), the objectives of the action were to contribute to strengthen the promotion and protection of the rights of vulnerable groups, including LGBTI people, ethnic and religious minorities, in Georgia against discrimination, hate speech and hate crime. The specific objectives of the project were:

- For the key stakeholders (PDO, businesses, vulnerable and minority groups and SROs) to engage in promoting equality and countering hate speech.
- For Law enforcement services to effectively investigate and prosecute discrimination and hate crimes.

The project’s impact was envisaged in two areas: **a) the level of capacity of public institutions** to counter discrimination and promote equality, and **b) the level of outreach to the wider community**, aiming to engage potentially new multipliers who would stand for human rights and equality.

In part, the project builds on the progress achieved by the 4-year project **‘Fighting discrimination, hate crime and hate speech in Georgia’ in 2018-2022** funded by the Danish Neighbourhood programme (DANEP). In particular, the public awareness raising activities such as the Equality Week under the ‘I Choose Equality’ campaign, the work with SROs, and capacity building of investigators commenced under this 4-year project.

2. Object, purpose and aims of the of the evaluation

2.1. Evaluation Purpose and objectives

This evaluation is an end-of-project evaluation commissioned by the CoE, and its purpose as described in the ToRs was to address three specific components of the project and provide conclusions on the following:

- **Results** achieved by the project in relation to the three components covered by this evaluation?
- What **obstacles** were faced in the implementation of the three project components, and how were they addressed?
- To what extent did the national partners, public institutions and civil society, took **ownership** of the project and its results, in particular, for the three components?

As specified in the ToRs, the evaluation identified key lessons from the implementation of the project for potential follow-up, and beyond, for institutional learning within the Council of Europe's No Hate Speech and Co-operation Unit. This evaluation was, therefore, project-centred and mostly **formative**: it derives lessons learned, good practices and recommendations for decision making. It responds to the need to inform the preparation and prioritisation of follow up activities.

2.2. Evaluation scope

Temporal scope: The evaluation covers the activities starting in 2018 to the present day, therefore including the project "**Promoting the effective protection of equality and non-discrimination in Georgia**" (2022-2023) and partially drawing on experiences and outcomes of the project '**Fighting discrimination, hate crime and hate speech in Georgia**' (2018- 2022).

Programmatic scope: The scope of the evaluation, according to ToRs, is limited to three elements of the projects, namely:

1. Component 1: The outreach and shared ownership of the **Equality Week** including the coordination and cooperation between partners, the added value to their work as well as an in-depth reflection on some activities of the Equality Week aiming to conclude on the coherence of the programmes, messages, coordination, and follow-up.
2. Component 2: The **training** activities of and follow-up initiatives with **the SROs for educational institutions** in promoting human rights education and their engagement with education systems and wider communities in the regions outside of Tbilisi, notably also with members of ethnic and religious minorities, and LGBTI people.
3. Component 3: The impact of the **capacity building activities for prosecutors** and other judiciary and law enforcement professionals, the general cooperation with the Prosecutors Office and the extent of preparation to improve the efficiency of investigation of hate crimes. This should also include potential follow-up and further needs for development or support.

Geographic scope: the evaluation covers the territory of Georgia effectively controlled by Georgian authorities. It covers data collected at national and, to the extent possible, at local level in Gori.

3. Evaluation methodology

3.1. Evaluation approach

The evaluation takes place in the following context:

- In financial terms, CoE is a relatively minor contributor to work in the field of equality and non-discrimination. Yet, it is the major standard-setting, monitoring, and expert body in the area.
- The field of non-discrimination is in flux: while the opinion research¹ indicates notable improvement in terms of tolerance towards ethnic and religious minorities, Georgia has seen several high-profile incidents and hardening of the political discourse related to LGBTI community. In addition, aspects of economic and social participation and discrimination have come increasingly to the fore.

This evaluation was conducted in a relatively modest timeframe (Mid-September-December) and with a budget of 15.000 EUR. The evaluation therefore sought to optimise its efficiency, through sampling, choice of data collection methods, and distribution of work. The key elements of methodological framework were handled remotely, while the interviews and focus groups were conducted locally, limiting the use of interpretation and translation.

Bearing this in mind, this evaluation was **utility-oriented**, in that it sought to prioritise lessons learned, identify promising impact (or plausibility thereof) and possible avenues for reconfiguration of future programmatic endeavours (e.g. follow-up, exit strategies, investment in new opportunities). For this reason, this evaluation focused on the three components which the CoE deems to be most likely to yield learning: the evaluation therefore draws on **the stories of these three components**. The evaluation used **mixed methods approach** (qualitative and quantitative), aiming to retain a high level of quality and reliability, while maintaining efficiency given the timeframe and budgetary constraints.

The evaluation followed the Council of Europe evaluation policy and guidelines. Consultants followed the CoE Code of Conduct for Evaluation. The final deliverable (evaluation reports) corresponds, to the highest extent possible, to the checklist for evaluation reports of the Council of Europe.

Limitations:

Bias: Both interviewees and survey respondents, in their majority, clearly value the CoE's support and they want it to continue – not for the purpose of funding their activities, but because this exposure to the CoE's impartial, authoritative expertise and support is important to them, in a fluid and sensitive environment. They also realise that the outcomes of an evaluation are likely to influence future funding and programming within the CoE. This introduces a slight bias, as these respondents are unlikely to be very critical of the CoE as such, for fear that this may lead to discontinuation of this line of work under the CoE Action Plan. However, this bias is unlikely to have more than a marginal effect. Its very existence is coherent with findings on relevance, effectiveness and sustainability. Therefore, controlling for this bias does not affect the evaluation findings significantly.

¹ Hate Crime, Hate Speech and Discrimination in Georgia: Attitudes and Awareness, Council of Europe/CRRC, 2022

Robustness: The survey to international cooperation partners received a very low response rate. This is likely due to the timing of the evaluation that reduces the availability of these respondents (just preceding the winter recess, which is a closure time for most international partners). These results were therefore not used as key data source, and they are not quoted in this report. However, they were reviewed to check for any contradiction with the other data sources: as the results of this survey do not contradict any of the other sources, nor any of the findings, they were used as a control tool only.

Evaluation team:

The evaluation team included three experts:

- Jaba Devdariani, Team Leader/Evaluator
- Sopho Omanadze, Data Collection Expert
- Camille Massey, Quality Assurance Expert

3.2. Evaluation criteria and questions

The evaluation drew on revised OECD/DAC criteria.² Given the practical objectives set in the evaluation's ToR, and scoping interviews with the CoE, as well as the limitations of time and scope, the evaluation selected a limited number of evaluation criteria, namely:

- **Relevance:** Do the objectives and design of the three interventions respond to the beneficiaries needs at the country and programmatic levels?
- **Effectiveness:** To what extent did the three components of the intervention achieve the desired objectives and results across the beneficiary groups, including when looking through the differential gender/minority lens?
- **Impact:** How do the CoE interventions fit with other interventions in the same field in Georgia (both interventions by same beneficiary stakeholders and other development actors), and what are its comparative characteristics/advantages (added value) in contributing to the overarching impact (e.g. equality better protected and non-discrimination policies effectively applied)?
- **Sustainability:** How likely are the efforts to continue if/after the project ends?
- **Efficiency:** How well were the resources used, with special accent on the sustainability of effort, in terms of the degree of ownership of the initiatives by the stakeholders relevant to each of the three components?

The Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) lens (cross-cutting) was mainstreamed in the Relevance, Effectiveness and Impact Criteria, served by specific indicators. This ensures that GESI is not considered as a separated issue, but rather as a core principle of the project – and indeed of the evaluation. The evaluation team thus examined the considerations given to, and effects (intended and unintended) on Gender equality and social inclusion. The focus group discussions (see below) particularly addressed the impact on structurally disadvantaged groups.

See also the Evaluation matrix in Annex 5 with the proposed indicators and data sources.

² Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use, OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 2019, available online at <<https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/revised-evaluation-criteria-dec-2019.pdf>>.

3.3. Data collection methodology

As per the ToR, the evaluation used a **mixed-methods approach**: it combined qualitative data collection methods (document review, interviews and Focus Group Discussions) and quantitative data collection methods (surveys) to answer the evaluation questions.

The following data collection and sequencing were used based on the ToR and scoping interviews with the CoE project team:

- **Document review:**

CoE-provided documentation: the CoE prepared an *online repository of documents* which the evaluation team then analysed. This repository included several types of documents required, such as:

- **Project's documents and reports.**
- **Training exit questionnaires' results** for the resource officer's trainings and prosecutor trainings (components 2 and 3).
- **Surveys and evaluation** commissioned during the lifetime of the two projects, from 2018 onwards.
- **Relevant judgements of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) and reports by CoE Monitoring Bodies (e.g. ECRI).**

In addition, the evaluation team used external documents including the applicable domestic legal and policy framework, and reports by the PDO and by Georgian or international CSOs.

- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).** The evaluation team held **three FGDs**:
 1. **For the component 2:** Two FGD's with SROs/Mandaturis, one in Tbilisi and one in Gori.
 2. **For the component 3:** one FGD with prosecutors that underwent specialisation in combating hate crimes.
- **Individual semi-structured interviews:**

The evaluation team conducted 13 semi-structured interviews with 16 persons, out of which three with CoE staff and the rest with various stakeholders (see **Annex 4** for details).

- **Online surveys**

The evaluation team developed two online surveys, which were sent out by the CoE Office. The main survey was developed in Georgian, for the maximum number of participants of all three components. To customise the survey to each component, three distinct 'paths' were available to users (in addition to common core questions on demographics and general perception of the project). The survey received a total of 89 responses and the data was extensively used in the report below.

Another survey was prepared in English and targeted international partners that have knowledge of the Equality Week. This survey received only nine responses, and the sample was considered too small to be usable for the report.

4. Findings

4.1. Relevance

Finding 1: The topics covered by the project are well-aligned with the national reform agenda, although there are concerns about the emergence of diverging vision from the government, which affects policy and practices.

Georgia has ratified the Council of Europe’s and other international instruments related to non-discrimination and equal treatment. These commitments are reflected in the Constitution and the special Law on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination adopted in 2014. The CoE project document notes that the legislation creates a “solid basis” for ensuring equality but acknowledges difficulties in achieving the “full and effective” implementation of these guarantees. Some of the identified difficulties relate to the insufficient allocation of resources to the PDO, and the insufficient level of awareness among the public of the role that this office plays as an anti-discrimination mechanism designated by law. Other issues relate to the need to improve the tools for data gathering and analysis on hate crimes, and a growing, but still relatively low level of institutional and personnel preparedness at the Ministry of Interior, Prosecutor’s Office, Courts as well as the Ministry for Education, Science, Culture and Sports.

The key national policy document – the National Human Rights Strategy for 2022-2030 was adopted by the Parliament in March 2023. The document lists the “Reflection of the Constitutional guarantees of equality in State policies, and their implementation and ensuring enjoyments of human rights and liberties without discrimination” as one of its priorities (Priority 3). The relevant chapter stipulates the aim of “strengthening the protection of the rights of minorities and helping establishment of the environment of equality” and lists key tasks including the creation of additional regulatory, institutional and practical means for improving services, upgrading the Georgian language education for ethnic minorities, improving minority participation, and improving the response of the state agencies to crimes aggravated by intolerance. Specific provisions are related to the rights of women, children, ethnic and religious minorities, persons with disabilities, the elderly, as well as people under international protection, persons without nationality, migrants, IDPs and refugees. Notably, the passages related to LGBTI rights and non-discrimination, present in the previous National Human Rights Strategy and Action Plan were omitted from 2023-2030 HR Strategy. These issues were also absent from the Action Plan covering the period of 2024-2026³, leading to criticism from civil society groups.

Many of these provisions in the new HR Strategy respond directly to the gaps identified by the latest Report of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), published in March 2023.⁴ These are also correlated with the areas identified in the Action Plan for Georgia 2020-2023.

The project document directly addresses most of these topics, and this sense of alignment with the priorities of Georgia was shared by the interviewees both from the state agencies and civil society. This is echoed by the quantitative study, where respondents believe that CoE activities and programs tackling anti-discrimination fulfil the current requirements faced by Georgia (88 on a scale of 100) are well-

³ [Civil Georgia | “Selective National Human Rights Action Plan” – Tbilisi Pride Statement](#), 12 November, 2023.

⁴ ECRI Report on Georgia, (sixth monitoring cycle), Adopted on 28 March 2023

matched with their organisational needs (91 on a scale of 100). When questioned about word associations with the CoE, respondents frequently link the organisation to descriptors such as "useful" (mentioned by 11 respondents), "necessary" (mentioned by 8), "essential" (mentioned by 7), "important" (mentioned by 6), "timely" (mentioned by 4), and "fruitful" (mentioned by 8).

Yet, the interviews have revealed uncertainty and worries regarding the perceived divergence of the political leadership from the legal and policy objectives. In the evaluation survey, where the bias towards giving "correct" answers could be strong, still 20% named "lack of political will" as one of the problems impeding anti-discrimination work. Cross-tabulation reveals that some of these answers came from civil servants, equally to civil society.

This uncertainty especially expressed in the interviews when it comes to the human rights of LGBTI persons. Special concerns about the increase of hate speech and the limited response to violence against this community was noted in the latest ECRI report.⁵ The year 2023 was also marred by the failure of the authorities to protect the Tbilisi Pride gathering (PrideFest) at a private venue from a violent attack.⁶ Apart from strong condemnation from the President and Public Defender, the ruling party reactions were measured.⁷ Echoing the perception of the civil society actors that the radicals vocally advocating for violence were not brought to justice, the decision of the Committee of Ministers on supervision of execution of the ECHtR Judgements called on the Government of Georgia to "urgently take all reasonable steps to establish criminal liability of those responsible" in its December 2023 decision.⁸ These incidents were referred to during the interviews by civil society representatives. More fundamentally, the counterparts noted in the interviews that the passages related to LGBTI rights and non-discrimination, were omitted from the HR Strategy 2023.

In the interviews, interlocutors working for the government shared uncertainty regarding the political commitment to non-discrimination and elimination of hate speech directed at the LGBTI community, but also towards national, ethnic and religious minorities.

Quote: Things are progressing, but what may affect it is that, for example, anti-discrimination law is withdrawn, policy approach changes dramatically. Many crucial achievements were already made and it would be hard to reverse them, but the risk is still there.

Civil society representatives also expressed concern that that homophobic and xenophobic narratives would accelerate in the coming election year from various quarters of the political spectrum. Some secondary research suggests that the rise in homophobic discourse was accompanied by a – less pronounced – trend towards increase in sexist and gender-based stereotyping.⁹ Several legislative initiatives were submitted to the parliament by ultra-conservative groups, including those aligned with the ruling majority, calling for exclusion of the norm of protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender, restriction of the rights of assembly, employment and the freedom of

⁵ ECRI Report on Georgia, (sixth monitoring cycle), Adopted on 28 March 2023, p. 5.

⁶ [Civil Georgia | Police Stands by as Far-Right Groups Attack Tbilisi Pride Festival](#), 8 July, 2023.

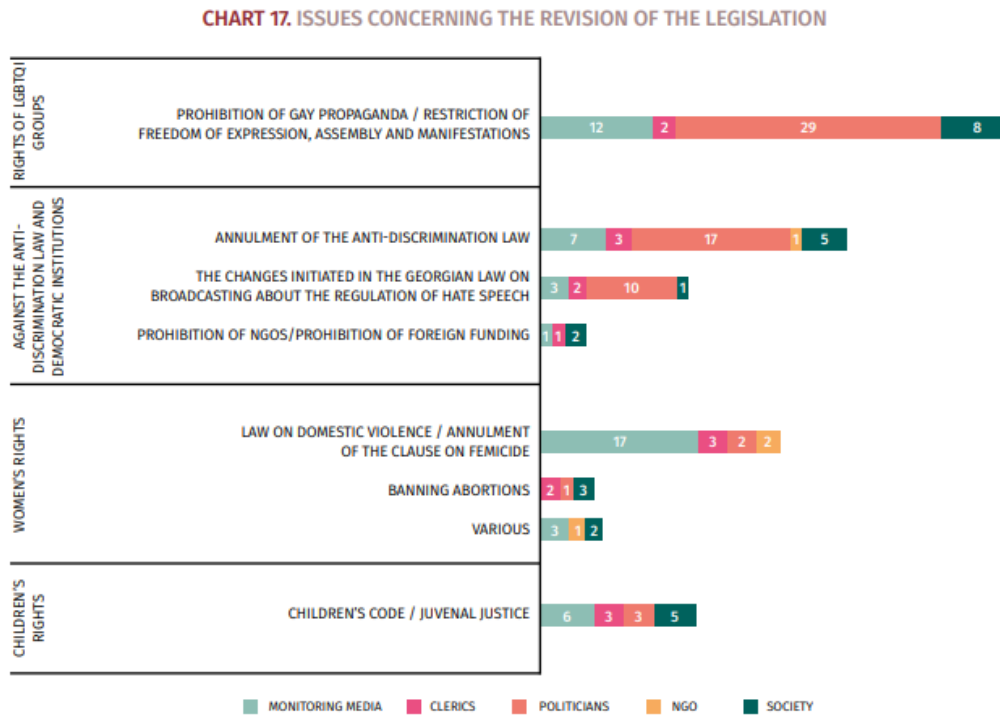
⁷ [Civil Georgia | Reactions to Violence Against Tbilisi Pride](#), 8 July, 2023.

⁸ Decision of the Council of Ministers on Supervision of the Execution of the European Court's Judgements, H46-13 Identoba and Others group v. Georgia (Application No. 73235/12), CM/Del/Dec(2023)1483/H46-13

⁹ [AntiGender and Anti-LGBTQI Mobilization in Georgia](#), Media Development Foundation (MDF), 2023.

expression for LGBTI people. Other initiatives included penalisation of blasphemy, and “offensive” content in broadcasting.¹⁰

Figure 1 Discussions about restriction of rights in Georgian media and politics. Source: MDF



The project document contains a fairly comprehensive Rationale and Justification chapter which includes a policy and programme context sub-chapter. It reflects the most important legislative milestones and changes and draws on the reports of the monitoring bodies to highlight positive and negative changes. Yet, the interim and final reports are mostly focused on outputs and, to a limited extent, outcome levels: they do not treat the subject of shifts in the implementation context, especially in terms of how the non-discrimination field is linked to the context of power distribution and where the counterparts stand in terms of their motivation of being supportive, neutral or opposed to the fields where CoE intends to make an impact. There is also no evidence of the formal internal process of regularly reviewing the implementation context for the purpose of adaptations.

Finding 2: The intervention responds to the needs of the beneficiaries, but the context analysis and learning in programming is too ad hoc.

Beneficiaries overwhelmingly highlight in the interviews that the interventions of the CoE are both responding to the country’s legal commitments and responsibilities, and are in line with the requirements of their institutions. The overall responsiveness to the needs of the CoE’s project and activities to targeted organisation’s requirements was rated at 91 out of 100 points in the quantitative study (N=62). The respondents from the State agencies highlighted repeatedly, that all decisions are

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 61, 66.

taken in close communication and consultation, which ensures the alignment of the activities with the needs.

Quote: It is important to note that CoE is never imposing its products [for training curriculum] – in an obligatory fashion. We have communication, discussion, our interests are taken into account and everything is based on needs. This is a very positive thing [...] we have experience with other organisations where we have to argue a lot [...] they have their own agendas and don't want to budge.

According to the quantitative study conducted in scope of the evaluation, most respondents (N=53, 85%) deemed the CoE's role in combating discrimination, hate crime and hate speech highly useful. Respondents believe that CoE activities and programs tackling anti-discrimination issues fulfil the current requirements faced by Georgia and are well-matched with their organisational needs, as witnessed by the words associated with the CoE (See Finding 1).

The project's responsiveness to the needs can also be seen in the respondents' attitudes. The majority of respondents agree that CoE interventions and events helped them to understand the international norms (N=61, 98%) and national legislation (N=59, 96%) in terms of hate speech, hate crime, and discrimination and other relevant international norms (N=61, 99%) and what is more important, increased their skills to use the international and national norms into practice (N=61, 99%).

While the close alignment with the national and institutional priorities is welcome, the context of insecurity and uncertainty regarding the political commitment to the agenda of non-discrimination should be borne in mind. Both CoE counterparts and civil society representatives noted that this uncertainty affects the institutional attitudes and behaviour, limiting the willingness to engage or even discuss the matters that are considered controversial or politically unacceptable also with international partners. The CoE seems so far immune from deterioration of working relationships, but its ability to perceive the potential shifts is hamstrung by the absence of the fully fledged implementation context analysis in the programming process.

The project document contains a fairly comprehensive Rationale and Justification chapter which includes policy and programme context sub-chapter. It reflects the most important legislative milestones and changes and draws on the reports of the monitoring bodies to highlight positive and negative changes. Yet, the interim and final reports are mostly focused on outputs and, to a limited extent, outcome levels and do not treat the subject of shifts in the implementation context, especially in terms of how the non-discrimination field is linked to the context of power distribution and where the counterparts stand in terms of their motivation of being supportive, neutral or opposed to the fields, where CoE intends to make an impact. There is also no evidence of the formal internal process of regularly reviewing the implementation context in view of adaptations. Several civil society interlocutors noted that prioritising relations with the state may affect the ability of the CoE to conduct a comprehensive context analysis in a formal way, as a part of the programming cycle. **Quote:** One regret that we have is the approach of CoE that it prioritises strengthening of the state institutions and are less involved with CSOs. We would like there to be less exclusive focus on state institutions... especially as [certain institutions] are now becoming more closed and there is less cooperation [of CSOs] with them.

Finding 3: The project targets a field that is potentially gender transformative, yet this is not explicitly reflected in programming.

The topical area of the project has a potential to be gender transformative – i.e. to address the root causes of gender equality by examining challenges and transforming the underlying causes of inequitable social structures, such as, in this particular case, laws and institutions, as well as gender perceptions among civil servants, judicial officials, school students, and the general public. Gender is a multi-faceted phenomenon that cannot be subsumed to women participation. Many of the concerns in the ECRI report, for example, relate to the condition of the LGBTI community, and the existing reluctance of the duty-bearers to address those concerns was repeatedly mentioned and alluded to in the interviews.

These aspects of the project's scope are under-analysed and under-programmed. The project document frames gender in the context of "gender mainstreaming" and even there mostly refers to "gender-balanced participation." This is also the prism through which the reporting is done. The project partners also focus on the participation, and some feel more could be done.

Quote: Gender has not been accented, at least I did not perceive it, and I would have liked for it to be there. [...] It is a sensitive topic and its importance is understood, so one could even start with gender and follow with other topics of equality, and people would follow.

Document analysis showed that some gender sensitive and gender responsive objectives at the outcome and output levels were present in the logical framework in the first iteration of the project in 2018-2022. They were not carried over in the second cycle, where gender is missing from the log-frame, which suggests that gender-related outcomes are not being explicitly monitored. Those interlocutors that are less professionally or personally concerned about the topic, speak of it as secondary and also in terms of equal participation.

Quote: I don't know to what extent the gender issues were addressed, but they seemed inclusive enough. No idea if any specific effort was made, CoE would know better.

Simultaneously to the evaluated project and its predecessor, the CoE implemented two other successive projects¹¹ in Georgia on violence against women and domestic violence within the frame of the Istanbul Convention,¹² which partly explains the evaluated project's limitations in explicitly targeting gender transformative results. However, while combating violence against women and enhancing gender equality, and promoting equality and non-discrimination do strongly overlap, they do not exactly equate, specifically on prevention of, and remedies to discrimination. Besides, projects on violence against women typically lag on the prevention and promotion aspects, as opposed to protection and

¹¹ Promoting an integrated approach to end violence against women and enhancing gender equality in Georgia (2020-2023): <https://www.coe.int/en/web/tbilisi/promoting-an-integrated-approach-to-end-violence-against-women-and-enhancing-gender-equality-in-georgia>

Preventing and Combating Violence against Women in Georgia (2018-2019):

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/preventing-and-combating-violence-against-women-in-georgia>

¹² Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CETS No. 210)

prosecution¹³. The review of project documentation and interviews with partners show that these two strands of work of the CoE achieved a sound division of labour, but that it is not explicit in the documentation; in addition, there is no evidence of synergies that might have had a catalytic effect on the gender transformative results of both projects.

4.2. Effectiveness

Finding 4: The project has triggered tangible improvement in awareness and a capacity to handle discrimination and hate crime, but the effects are spread unevenly.

The majority of participants in training activities implemented by the project reported tangible improvements in their knowledge and the capacity to address the discrimination- and hate crimes. 29% of the participants in the quantitative study (N=62) fully agreed and 46.7% agreed with the statement that the CoE-supported trainings have induced them to implement concrete actions against discrimination, hate crimes, or hate speech that they were not doing before. Usefulness of the CoE work for their organisation or agency was rated with 94 points out of 100 (N=62). 95% (N=64) say their ability to respond to discrimination and related crimes has improved since the training, and responses to the relevant questions indicate that their self-assessed knowledge about discrimination and related issues/crimes rose from “average” to “high” level. While 29% (N=64) said their ability to help discrimination victims was “insufficient” before the trainings, more than 90% said they could be able to help “well” or “very well” afterwards.

While these results could be affected by a bias (the implicit desire to provide a positive answer), they were confirmed by control questions within the survey, which record same improvement. For example, a third reported that they realised after the trainings that they had witnessed discrimination in the past and did not consider it as such previously, while 41% said they had realised having themselves been victims of discrimination before.

The interviews and focus group discussions also confirmed that the outputs evaluated in this report are perceived to lead to improvement in both awareness and the capacity to address discrimination among duty bearers. In particular, the training participants and coordinators have reported significant increase in their own awareness, and the ability to identify and address discrimination, hate crimes and hate speech.

Quote: we have trained 46 investigators out of 50 on hate-crimes. This means near-full coverage and the improvement can clearly be seen in statistics of investigation.

It was frequently mentioned though, that improvements are more tangible towards some groups than others. For example, the discrimination and, especially, hate-motivated crimes towards women were mentioned as something that the public opinion has shifted on, and the investigators and police officers feel more empowered by their supervisors to work on. The interviews echoed the ECRI findings in claiming that discrimination and hate against LGBTI community is still something that both official agencies and civic actors are struggling with. The matter is present in public discourse, including at schools, and is amplified through polarised political debate that is fostering negative public attitudes as

¹³ Evaluation of the Council of Europe’s work under the sub-programme “Violence against women and domestic violence” 2016-2020: <https://rm.coe.int/dio-2022-36-vawdv-report-en/1680a68fd7>

well as the unwillingness of the managers to touch the subject – either out of their own position, or for fear of wading into a political minefield. In this sense, the interventions are not effective yet – even though the gradual improvement in attitudes is reflected in nationwide studies.

Quote: We might want to go deeper on Gender Identity issues, given the relatively new decision of ECtHR. [...] We might want to work more on LGBT issues, but the matter is tricky also due to the disagreements within the gay community.

Overall, the project targets any rights holders who may be victims of discrimination, hate speech or hate crime, but it does not strongly differentiate its approach between various badges/vulnerabilities. For instance, there is limited data on the way in which the trainings and campaign targeted specifically national minorities and religious minorities: the focus was generally on tolerance, and the application of the legal framework.

This challenge is particularly acute in case of intersectional discrimination motives (the combined effects of multiple vulnerabilities to discrimination and multiple barriers to access to inclusion), for instance for the rights holders who belong to a religious and a sexual minority, showing that intersectionality has not been fully integrated in the project design and project monitoring, with the consequence that the results of the project for groups presenting multiple vulnerabilities are limited and under-reported when they happen. There is, for instance, no data on how the project reached to people concerned both by social exclusion (e.g. through poverty and/or unemployment) and belonging to a religious or national minority.

Finding 5: Stakeholders are satisfied with the project's outcomes, noting the need for higher degree of engagement from international development partners and for some finetuning.

Most of the surveyed (85.7%, N=63) consider the CoE involvement in fight against discrimination, hate crime and hate speech “very productive.” But 45% of them never participated in an activity of any other international organisation related to this field. During the interviews it was also noted that other development partners could pay closer attention to accenting antidiscrimination agendas and improve coordination, perhaps with CoE's expert lead. The project therefore clearly fills a gap and provides support in a niche for which it has a high added value, and underpins the effectiveness of the project: because the CoE provides unique support, this support is all the more valued by the duty bearers, who in turn convert this support into their own actions.

However, the project hardly reaches a critical size to capitalise on this advantage. In this connection, while a third of respondents noted that CoE is the most competent actor on this thematic area (31.7%, N=63), during interviews it was noted that the expertise of CoE would be better utilised if complemented with more or other financial capacities, in fields of trainings, but also when organising outreach activities. In other words, there is a potential for scaling up by galvanising other international partners.

In particular, the Equality Week was perceived as holding the potential for higher outreach, but it was often stated that coordination with other development partners was insufficient. Other respondents also considered that the Equality Week lacked clear thematic focus, which made it difficult to expand social media coverage.

CASE: EQUALITY WEEK

Equality Week is one of the flagship activities of the Council of Europe in anti-discrimination field, and it is mainly aimed at raising awareness about the related concerns, and uniting like-minded actors in furthering the objectives of anti-discrimination work.

Out of 83, 42 representing 50% of the respondents, engaged in Equality Week. Among those participants, the vast majority (90%) are aware of the event's endorsement by the Council of Europe (CoE). 40 respondents (48%) evaluated the effectiveness of Equality Week, providing an average rating of 4.8 on a 5-point scale. None of the participants perceived any negative consequences of the event. They felt that it advanced CoE objectives in multiple areas, especially in terms of raising public awareness about existence of the minorities and making their concerns more visible, as well as accenting the topics of non-discrimination.

Most of the respondents consider CoE convening power indispensable for keeping the Equality Week going. Several government counterparts concede that they could take over parts of administrative and even financial burden for organising the Equality Week. Yet, they are sceptical of their ability to ensure the diversity of participants, especially from civil society and beyond. It was even mentioned that the government agencies would also be wary of their colleagues taking the lead, for the fear that they would affect the agenda based on their internal priorities.

Some of the counterparts noted that the Equality Week could have benefited from a clearer focus, such an annual central theme, that could have helped generate a more focalised media campaign, accenting a particular facet of discrimination or hate speech. Some interviewees acknowledged the downside of such approach – some participants may feel that “their” issues are not adequately addressed. Yet, a compromise could be found by, for instance, organising a thematic seminar/workshop led by CoE, where the convening power of the Council could be used to address divisive or controversial topics in a safe space.

Finding 6: The stakeholders, especially prosecutors and SRO, report considerable improvement in their knowledge and skills about non-discrimination, as well as application of these skills. However, the project’s analytical and monitoring framework is not sufficient to capture and boost these changes as much as it could.

Surveyed training participants, majority of which are prosecutors, agreed or strongly agreed that the training helped them identify instances of discrimination (N=57, 85%), recognise and address stereotypes related to minority groups (N=41, 65%), and be more mindful of their communication with minorities (N=52, 83%). While fewer participants acknowledged having difficulty recognising discrimination cases in the past (N=26, 42%) or understanding their own victimisation (N=27, 43%), the majority (95%) felt that their responses to discrimination had improved post-training.

Most trainings delivered in framework of the project were relatively short and at least some were provided online during the pandemic years, with interviewed participants noting that online course – while convenient during the pandemic - subtracts from the personal experience of interaction and mutual learning among trainers and peer participants.

While the self-reporting on success is encouraging, the interviews and, especially focus group meetings with SROs revealed that some of the information is being lost once the information is cascaded down to the regions. Some comments and observations from the SROs that were trained (especially in the regions) by CoE-trained capital-based trainers showed that they failed to fully grasp the concepts of gender equality, or the rights of the minorities.

This shortcoming is not specific to the knowledge, skills and attitudes channelled by the project: they correspond to the institutional transition that the SROs are undergoing. Similarly, to the CoE's outcomes, all related interviews pointed that the SRO's transition from ensuring "order" in schools to offering support services to pupils has also failed to penetrate deeply. It is beyond the scope of the evaluated project to accompany change management within this institution, but it is essential that the project takes that reality into account, so as to anticipate challenges in trickling down the project's results all the way to the SROs in the regions. The review of project documentation and interviews show that this awareness exists within the CoE, but that it is not yet deep nor explicit enough to further tailor activities and boost the transmission of results from the capital-based trained trainers, to achieve outcomes the SROs in more remote locations.

CASE: SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

The evaluation team held two focus group meetings with SROs, in Tbilisi and in Gori. The results of these conversations reveal that the inherent contradiction between the original purpose of the service (*Mandaturis* (a word conceptually similar to English *bailiffs*), tasked with ensuring the policing of the schools, eradication of the counter-cultural behaviours, delinquency etc.) and the current iteration of its role (SROs – service providers in support of pupils) persists, and affects the reputation, expectations and attitude from the teachers' body as well as the parents, and ultimately the outcomes of the project.

While in principle, the SROs and their managers report their commitment to the service-provision role, especially in Tbilisi, they also overwhelmingly note that teachers and school principals in particular, see them as enforcers of order, which creates misunderstandings and, at time, conflicts.

Most of the trained trainers derive sincere professional and personal satisfaction from being "pupils' advocates" and "their persons of confidence." Yet, some, especially outside the capital, are still speaking positively of the role as ensuring "orderly behaviour" at schools.

This duality is not only perceptive. While SROs are falling under the authority of the Ministry for Education and Science, they are still being trained at the Police Academy, which seems a poor fit for their current role. The evaluation team was not able to access the full curriculum of this training.

The memory of their past function, and the fact that they are not being trained with other teachers isolates them from the pedagogical body within a given education institution. In part, focus group participants say this has a positive effect of pupils exhibiting more trust towards them as "non-teachers." But on the other hand, the teachers balk at "issues/conflicts being brought outside their classroom" and are reported as periodically non-cooperative in addressing problems, or addressing their own behaviour/comments/practices that could be discriminatory.

In the view of the project team, to be effective as in fighting against hate speech, abuse and discrimination, SROs functional role and the administrative attachment needs to be clarified. It is

entirely possible, that there is a space for both of these functions (Mandaturis *and* SROs) to exist, but they cannot possibly be effectively embodied by the same person.

There is no evidence of a comprehensive CoE-owned mechanism to evaluate the medium- and long-term effects of the training on knowledge and skills. The interlocutors at the training centres report running pre- and post-evaluation questionnaires, but some acknowledge that they may suffer from reporting bias, exaggerating positive effects. It was not possible to conclusively establish, whether the ability to implement knowledge on non-discrimination is taken into account during the regular performance evaluation of the civil servants and judicial officials engaged in trainings. Besides, the training participants' managers sometimes lack the knowledge and capacity to enable the CoE training participants to apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills. This is typically the case, for instance, among prosecutors. The managers also lack the topical background to properly evaluate the level of knowledge and capacity of their subordinates. This type of shortfalls was evidenced by the comments about the necessity of bringing the management up to speed when it comes to this subject area, and also documented in multiple past CoE project evaluations.

Finding 7: There are signs that the project triggered gender transformative results, but these are not reported in an analytical fashion.

Interviews with several interlocutors suggest that certain aspects of CoE cooperation, delivered through this and other CoE projects, are yielding some gender transformative results. Improvement of the capacity of the police and prosecutors to identify and address gender-based violence, or to identify the elements of gender discrimination in crimes, are considered to have affected the social status and social relations of women, their attitude towards the authorities, and the authorities' attitudes towards them. Most interlocutors also highlight that much more remains to be done, and that they have sought assistance of other, more narrowly specialised institutions, such as UN Women, to complement the CoE input.

Yet, this aspect of the project's outcomes is not well represented in the project reports. The *Gender mainstreaming* sub-section in the Cross Cutting Issues chapter is descriptive and output/activity-based. It contains no analytical conclusion about the transformative change the project might have generated at the result or outcome level. This is to a significant extent due, as described in **Finding 3**, to the fact that gender-related outcomes are absent from the logical framework of the project, which is limiting the project teams' avenues for identifying, measuring and reporting on the outcomes. For comparison, gender is reported on much more extensively in the final report of the previous stage of the project (2018-2022), since the gender-related objectives and indicators were the part of the logical framework. However, even there the focus is mostly activity-based and descriptive, rather than analytical and focused on outcomes and transformative results.

Gender-sensitive data collection is not strongly integrated in the project's monitoring, and is mostly circumscribed to measuring the rate of participation of men and women, which is superfluous at best, and misleading at worst, in two project-related contexts: SROs are mostly female, while the police investigators are mostly male, and changing that gender ratio is beyond the scope of the project or the capacity of the interlocutors.

However, some initial steps made by stakeholders provide a good basis for the CoE to build upon – partly because gender equality is recognised by interviewees from complementary perspectives, as a

less controversial topic than the inclusion of various minorities.¹⁴ As interlocutors in the prosecution and law enforcement have noted, previous awareness building and training efforts have created a basis to build upon when it comes to addressing, in particular, hate-motivated crimes against women, at various seniority levels among the partner institutions (including managers). However, as is the case with other groups of people who are particularly vulnerable to hate speech, hate crime, and/or discrimination, further progress would require continuing to engage the management level, and sustaining support to some institutional elements (e.g. the Human Rights Department at the Ministry of Interior).

4.3. Impact

To what extent did the CoE interventions contribute to comparative positive change in the situation of the end-beneficiaries? What have been reasons for achievement or lack thereof?

Finding 8: Within the project, the most impactful interventions occur when the CoE uses its strong convening power and expertise.

Survey respondents strongly believed in the usefulness of CoE's role in combating discrimination, hate speech and hate crime (N=57, 86%). Specifically, the CoE was recognised for increasing society awareness levels (84%), particularly in schools where awareness of the risks of discriminatory behaviour and hate speech improved (58%); respondents also agreed that victims are better equipped to identify whom to approach when the need arises (52%).

While the absolute majority of the quantitative study participants consider the lack of awareness and resistance by public opinion as key problems in fighting discrimination (80%, N=65), they also expressed the belief that the Equality Week contributes to increased awareness of minorities (80%, N=32), enhances the visibility of minorities in society (N=27, 68%), and fosters a sense of community among minorities (N=26, 65%). The Equality Week, however, takes place in a context of multiple initiatives and societal transformations around the issues of diversity, tolerance, anti-discrimination, and inclusion: the 2018 and 2021 CoE surveys on Hate Crime, Hate Speech, and Discrimination in Georgia (attitudes and awareness) record modest but significant progression on several values, attitudes and behaviours. It is plausible that the Equality Week has contributed to these in a marginal fashion, but without decisive impact. The key impact of the Equality Week is rather its mobilising effect among duty bearers, as it contributes to a common message and to emulation dynamics among duty bearers on the values of diversity, tolerance, anti-discrimination, and inclusion. Indirectly, this in turns contributes to societal changes – but this change is not directly attributable to the project.

The expertise that CoE brings to the table, and the professionalism of its office staff and experts, are considered primary drivers of impact by most of the government interlocutors. This is reflected in quantitative data and overwhelmingly confirmed by the interviewees.

¹⁴ This opinion was voiced by the interviewees, and was already encountered in another evaluation: Evaluation of the Council of Europe's work under the sub-programme "Violence against women and domestic violence" 2016-2020: <https://rm.coe.int/dio-2022-36-vawdv-report-en/1680a68fd7>

Quote: CoE project is remarkable for its flexibility to adapt to needs and its openness to consultation. Years ago, we needed to explain the meaning of discrimination, provide the questions... now the situation has changed dramatically.

Finding 9: The degree of impact on end-beneficiaries is modulated by political will.

Concerning challenges in combating discrimination, respondents identified societal unpreparedness and opposition (N=52, 81%) and victims' reluctance to approach relevant authorities (N=37, 58%) as significant issues. When assessing knowledge levels on concepts like gender equality, harassment, discrimination, hate speech, and hate crimes, respondents indicated greater awareness of these issues in the past five years. However, hate speech and hate crime seem to be less familiar concepts.

At the same time, interviewees recognised that in many cases, successful application of the non-discrimination principles requires not only improved awareness and professionalism of the interlocutors but change in organisational culture that is only feasible if there is a political will of the managers and the political leadership.

Quote: Of course, changing the organisational culture, for example, of the police is very difficult and, yes it needs training, but in the end, it is a matter of the political will – if there is none, we are unlikely to achieve impact. Given that there is not a lot of openness to change, if little political will – there will be little change.

Yet some changes seem to be taking place. When respondents were asked in a survey about the extent to which principles like diversity tolerance, combatting harassment and hate speech, gender equality, hate crime prevention and a discrimination-free environment are implemented in their companies or organisations, they reported a noticeable shift. Only 5-6% assessed that these principles were fully applied five years ago, but 46-57% of respondents perceive them to be fully applied currently. Like with the self-assessment of the individual capacity to tackle discrimination and hate crimes, there is no other time-bound quantitative data to verify the validity of this perception.

Another area where CoE project makes impact is in offering a safe space for discussion, especially between the governmental and non-governmental actors. The trust of civil society in the government's motivation has diminished considerably in recent years, due to consistent campaigns against watchdog CSOs,¹⁵ attempts to exclude such watchdogs from consultative process,¹⁶ as well as passing of repressive legislation¹⁷ targeting CSOs and free media, which was repealed only after massive public protest.¹⁸ In these circumstances, CSOs and Public Defenders Office said CoE acts as a trusted intermediary, or a "bridge", making a crucial impact on advancement of the reform agendas, including in the field of anti-discrimination.

Quote: In the current circumstances, it is very difficult for the CSOs and state agencies to sit at the same table and discuss things. Unfortunately, the doors are being closed in many directions – like judiciary

¹⁵ [Brief | Ruling Party Contests Civic Space](#), Civil Georgia, 10 September 2022.

¹⁶ ['Violating Neutrality' or 'Attempts to Discredit': ISFED Responds to Ruling Party Accusations](#), Civil Georgia, 25 August, 2022

¹⁷ [Law on "Transparency of Foreign Funding" Passes 76-13 in the First Reading](#), Civil Georgia, 7 March, 2023.

¹⁸ [Majority Drops the Bill on "Foreign Agents" in the Second Reading](#), Civil Georgia, 10 March, 2023.

reforms, elections. The project of CoE is a sort of a bridge which helps us ask questions and hear answers from MIA or Prosecutor's office.

Quote: The CoE lead is important because they are [an organisation] that everyone is comfortable to associate with. This is true for the government agencies too – they may not work under [other agency's] leadership.

4.4.Sustainability

To what extent can it be expected that the beneficiaries will continue the CoE efforts in three components?

Finding 10: Training courses are integrated into national training programs, but the national partners are not fully capable of implementing them on their own with comparable quality to that of the CoE.

The interlocutors reported that training programs spearheaded by the project are now integrated into their training curriculum, which is a considerable achievement and a necessary condition for sustainability. However, it is not a sufficient condition: the same interviewees expressed doubts that they can carry on independently, without CoE support, at this stage.

Several impediments were mentioned: the trainers that were trained locally have not yet attained the quality comparable to CoE trainers; they are few in number and as soon as there are one or two losses (e.g. trainers finding another full-time employment or leaving the country), this creates a gap that is hard to fill without external support (especially in case of SROs); in some cases like the Special Investigation Service the agencies do not have their own training facility to hold the training sessions, although some other agencies – like the Ministry of Interior – plan to engage the police academy more to draw on their extensive facilities.

Some interlocutors also mentioned that donor support is essential for facilitating retreats and trainings outside an institution – it was mentioned that while some consider this a luxury, holding the professional development sessions outside the agency office is a motivator for the participants and provides the tangible educational benefit of gathering at a location where they cannot be constantly solicited by their supervisors or colleagues.

Quote: It would be very difficult to continue trainings without donor support, our resources are limited [for example] for doing the retreats, or engaging external, foreign experts. We need donor support here.

Some of the interlocutors, especially from civil society, say that the official agencies do not have sufficient incentives to appropriate the training programmes and that they are considering continuous support from the international development partners in this area as normal. This is perhaps an unintended, negative outcome of long-term cooperation, but it also shows inherent limits to ownership of international commitments, of which the CoE is the guardian – and that building this ownership is long-haul effort which the CoE is best place to conduct.

Quote: I don't think the agencies would be willing to continue training programs on their own. On the contrary, there is a perception that CoE, EU are there to provide it.

The conversations with the CoE staff reveal that increased national ownership and sustainability of these efforts are very much a concern, which is also echoed by the phrasing of the ToR that served as a basis of this evaluation. Yet, the project document and project reports do not contain a detailed sustainability and/or gradual phaseout/handover plan for the training components of the project.

Finding 11: The national partners are willing and likely to allocate resources to the Equality Week, but the convening power of the CoE is unlikely to be replaceable in the short term.

The Equality Week is considered by interviewed stakeholders as a good way of promoting the non-discrimination agenda to the forefront of the traditional and online media, and thus raising awareness about current concerns. In this format, the convening power of the CoE is particularly evident, as the series of events bring together diverse actors from the government, civil society and, recently, also private sector. One interlocutor called it a “uniting event.”

Quote: The Equality Week became a tradition, people are expecting it. It may achieve its objective better if it would involve people more, and went beyond the capital, engaged municipalities.

The opinions among the interlocutors converge that the Public Defenders’ Office is the most natural “national owner” of the Equality Week. Several line ministries, as well as CSOs agree on this point. Public officials interviewed also suggest that their own agencies may be able to co-finance the Equality Week, or to provide an in-kind contribution (venue, transportation, etc.). But the key concern in the long run is trust. The government agencies do not trust that their colleagues won’t hijack the event towards their own narrow agendas, while pointing out that CoE gives the stakeholders “full independence” in choosing their own topics for the Week.

Most agree that the CoE convening power cannot be matched, at least not in the short term.

Quote: In the recent period the government is not as engaged with civil society as we would have liked, trying to maximally separate themselves from CSOs, agencies not attend events... So, from sustainability point of view the Equality Week needs engagement of CSOs to bring us together. In the end, it would be good for PDO to take over the lead for it.

It was suggested that a gradual handover, with CoE keeping the thematic coordination role may be the way forward, to establish the practices and procedures of national coordination before transferring the event into national ownership.

4.5.Efficiency

To what extent could alternative working methods have led to the achievement of comparable or better results with fewer resources?

Finding 12: The project allocated resources in an adequate fashion, balancing clear, predictable targeting with flexibility.

The targeting to the CoE programming is defined by the Action Plan developed in a collaborative process with the Government of Georgia, which limits the margin of manoeuvre for direction of actions.

The project is budgeted with EUR 591 thousand over 22 months, which makes for a monthly average budget of EUR 26.8 thousand. The budget was increased to EUR 1.091 million following the top-ups.

Given that the project has three distinct areas of application (law enforcement training, SRO training, Equality Week) and several other activity level interventions (data analysis, encouraging private sector participation), the allocated funds are quite modest in comparison with the intended outcomes.

Allocation of the resources follows a logical course of development from the previous project, and stakeholder feedback suggests that the CoE has managed an adequate follow-through on their past investments in training and awareness building, while striving to “close the loop of competence” whenever appropriate – for example, by expanding the prosecutor’s training to the ministry of interior and the Courts, where both the lack of awareness and of the capacity create a bottleneck, as the interlocutors suggest.

Some of the interlocutors suggested that due to the deterioration of the government’s political stance on discrimination issues, the resources could better be spent by prioritising more and deeper engagement with CSOs. Yet, the evaluation team observes that this would have gone against the grain of the CoE’s operating procedures and mandate as primarily a standard-setting and monitoring institution, whose cooperation activities are essentially geared towards supporting the States party to implement legal instruments and in living up to their commitments. The strategic choices of the CoE with this project therefore draw on the CoE’s comparative advantages to optimise efficiency.

The findings above suggest that while the overall financial resource allocation to the outcomes project has been adequate, the CoE offices’ human resources capacity is limited and may struggle to ensure the additional level of complexity that programming requires in a challenging context: conducting implementation context analysis, gender-transformative planning, expanding monitoring, evaluation and learning capacity is likely to require additional staff.

5. Conclusions

The project has built on the key added value of the CoE in an under-served thematic area: it has mobilised rare and valuable expertise to support the implementation of Georgia's international legal commitments, while acting as a convening actor and a guarantor of trust among the project's stakeholders. The focus of the evaluated components of the project was adequate in terms of topics and target groups, although the Equality Week component could benefit from finer focusing. The three components benefitted from the achievement of the predecessor projects, and from the CoE's reputation accumulated through this past project and through other CoE actions in Georgia. The design of activities was of good quality and inclusive, although the gender transformative potential of the project was under-documented and under-explored from the design stage.

The project has undoubtedly led to an increase in the awareness, knowledge, and skills of its direct beneficiaries. It has also led to new attitudes, behaviours, and professional decisions among these immediate target groups within the discharge of their functions. This is true of the public authorities involved in the Equality Week, of the SROs who participated in training, and of the prosecution and law enforcement actors engaged in capacity building.

However, as these benefits are trickling down toward the outcome level (e.g. through cascade training or changes of practices beyond immediate beneficiaries in the targeted institutions), the effects of the project get more diluted, and dampened by two key factors. The first is an adverse political environment, whereby the country's commitments to diversity, tolerance, inclusion, equality, and non-discrimination vacillate, as witnessed by pervasive political discourse. The second is the incomplete institutional transitions observed in key partner institutions: the transformation of the SRO's mission, and the functional independence of and within the prosecution, reveal differences of ownership between the capital city and the regions, as well as the weight of the mid-management layers of the institutions which do not necessarily accompany the progress of the practitioners exposed to international support.

At impact level, the monitoring data of the project is not strong enough, and the dilution of the project's intervention into broader societal changes is too high, to measure change or confirm attribution. However, there is plausible evidence that the project contributes to some systemic institutional changes (SROs, prosecution) regarding prevention and response to hate speech, hate crime, and discrimination. But this impact is different depending on the groups who are vulnerable to these three phenomena. Prevailing informant opinion suggests that the change potential has been highest on gender equality (although this is not sufficiently researched to become evidence), uneven when it comes to religious and national minorities, and lowest as regards sexual minorities.

The project has succeeded in forming strategic alliance with and among dedicated public officials and civil society actors, who are ready and willing to take on the continuation of some project activities. This is particularly true of the Equality Week, at least in logistical terms. However, phasing out must be gradual and accompanied, and the CoE's presence is required to secure a level of trust guaranteeing that such activities stay true to the spirit of the legal instruments that have inspired them. The sustainability and upscaling of the changes achieved by the project is therefore partially ensured.

6. Recommendations

Nb	Level	Recommendations	Addressees	Timeline	Benefit	Related Findings
1.	Programme	Prepare a successor project, that would regularly conduct Implementation Context Analysis (ICA), integrate it with continuous project evaluation	DGII, CoE Office	Next budgetary cycle, then continuous	Ability to consciously adapt to shifting contextual changes, increased flexibility of the project and sharper focus on impact.	1,2,8
<p>Points to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider conducting a dedicated ICA exercise ahead of the project cycle or as a baseline deliverable of the successor project, either in-house or through inviting an external expert. Focus on the impact (intended or unintended) that the project has on power relations between the stakeholders and map them in accordance with their ability and willingness to support positive or negative change. • Integrate these findings into deliberations about the project's theory of change and its logical framework, to question assumptions and to inform the discussions about projected relevance and impact. • Use ICA to compile a risks and mitigating actions table. Use the Project Report template to integrate the key elements of ICA (e.g. under Stakeholder Analysis, and Risks sections), and project adjustments stemming from it. • Inform ICA by findings from the Monitoring Bodies, to compare perceptions and gauge trends. • Drawing on initial ICA findings, report on the context as a part of the regular reporting cycle. Review the ICA, especially stakeholder standings and trends annually in consultation between HQ, Office management and project team, to consider feasibility of specific outcomes, whether the assumptions remain valid, and whether adaptations are required in form or content of interventions. 						
2.	Programme	Enhance the monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) processes	DGII, CoE Office	Continuous	Ability to autonomously gauge impact and improve effectiveness	6,7, 3, 4
<p>Points to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build the in-house capacity to develop and implement the project's continuous monitoring and evaluation plan (could be integrated to the successor project, as a baseline activity). • Complement the logical framework with a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) plan, which would set indicators for learning about the impact of the project and its activities. Inform the indicators by referring to ICA, to gauge the areas of desired change that are particularly sensitive in terms of affecting the dominant power relations (e.g. empowerment of women and minorities)...). • Budget for quantitative research, and lessons-learned studies, reaching out, in particular, to the beneficiaries that may leave civil service. Use this research to elaborate in-depth, multi-faceted lessons learned cases, that would look at the impact of the project activities inside the institutions. 						

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult the development partners who dedicate considerable budgets to quantitative research to establish the common indicators that could be shared and benefit learning. 						
3.	Programme/project	Identify potential Gender-Transformative Results and integrate them to the successor project	CoE Office, supported by/in consultation with the Directorate of Programme Coordination, quality and Human Dignity Department/Gender team	Next budgetary cycle, then continuous	Better reflecting the achievements to date, going beyond disaggregation, to encourage change	3, 7, 4
<p>Points to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include robust gender analysis to the successor project document, including through an inter-sectional approach. Conduct Sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI)-oriented planning and establish gender-transformative results in the logical framework at the outcome level. Consult and cooperate with other development partners, such as UN Women, in setting the indicators that can be effectively verified in studies solicited by them. Engage with Transversal Programme on Gender Equality to exchange experience and views on addressing the SOGI-related concerns in similar contexts. 						
4.	Project/activity	Explore synergies within CoE and with other development partners.	DGII, CoE Office, Project team, relevant other CoE departments	Continuous	Capitalising on CoE expertise and its recognised comparative advantage as a convening power to maximize impact.	4,5
<p>Points to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CoE has a recognised comparative advantage, which could allow the CoE Office to act as a convening power for other international development actors and pool the resources directed at various aspects of non-discrimination. This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> providing CoE expertise to other development partners' projects that tackle non-discrimination or adjacent topical areas (e.g. ethnic and religious minority rights, women's rights, labor rights) sharing context analysis with the development partners that work with same stakeholders (e.g. MIA, prosecutors, courts), to work jointly toward desired change. Some internal synergies can be explored within CoE: e.g. the Education Department handbook on handling controversies in schools could become a useful tool for the SROs. 						
5.	Activity	Hand over ownership of the Equality Week to PDO, while keeping a	Project team, CoE Office	Mid-2024	PDO and other counterparts are ready to take more	5, 8, 9, 11, 12

		coordinating role to focus discussions			ownership of the Equality Week, liberating CoE to play to its strengths.	
<p>Points to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider giving most responsibility for planning and organising Equality Week to PDO, while reducing financial participation and/or helping with fundraising, including from private sector. For the coming two years, maintain the CoE's role as an "international partner" to PDO, and play to the CoE's perceived comparative advantage: create a "safe space" platform to discuss the most contentious issues with participation of the official agencies, CSOs and wider public. Ensure participation of the CoE topical experts/facilitators as necessary. 						
6.	Activity	Continue supporting the training of the MIA staff and start working with courts and prosecutor's office on anti-discrimination/hate crime. Focus on managers and on trailing/modelling the "full chain" of response to incidents.	GDII, Project team	Next cycle	Sustaining achievements in training prosecutors by engaging/motivating managers. Creating examples of the police/magistrates handling specific cases.	6, 9, 10
<p>Points to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build on and expand existing training arrangements to increase participation of the managers, whose attitude and decisions are crucial for the impact of the efforts that were already made and for the retention of staff. The courts are considered as a weak link in the system by prosecution, MIA and CSOs. While involving the judges in training, use of mock investigation/trials could be a good way to observe the operation of the whole chain of justice, and can also productively include CSOs/defence lawyers. 						
7.	Activity	Continue helping the trained trainers and assist SRO in resolving the "functional duality" between order and support, within the thematic scope of the successor project.	GDII, Project team	Next cycle	Clarification of its functions as support to pupils and a part of the pedagogical community will resolve the inherent contradiction that reduces impact.	6, 9

Points to consider:

- Conduct the functional analysis of SRO office, as well as the comparative study of similar services in the other CoE country(es) to dwell on the inherent conflict between the function as a provider of order (original *Mandarturi* mandate) and of services and support to pupils.
- Engage with the MoES to facilitate closer integration of the SROs into the pedagogical community in schools, to build relationship of trust with the teachers.
- Continue supporting the trained trainers methodologically and as mentors, so that they can provide additional cascade trainings in the region, as well as to serve the points of reference, to ensure more uniform retention of the key identity and non-discrimination concepts in the regions.

A. Annexes

Annex 1: Semi-Structured Interview Template for CoE staff and National Interlocutors

Interviewee(s)	
Function(s)	
Date of the meeting	
Location	
In confidence or shareable?	

Introduction

- **Self-presentation** by expert
 - Name, function, specifying being an independent expert hired to assess the results of the trainings – and not CoE staff.
 - Purpose of the interview: to understand how the participants were impacted by the CoE efforts (Equality week, trainings), what worked well, what did not work so well, and how to improve in the future.
 - Not an evaluation of anyone’s individual performance. Not a control, not an audit, but a learning exercise.
 - What is necessary and valued is the interviewees’ personal experience and opinion – they are encouraged to speak in their personal capacity, not as representatives of an institution.
- **Stress the process ensures anonymity.** Interview notes will not be shared. Your name does not need to appear in the notes, even if they are kept on interviewers’ computer. Interview results will be synthesized into a general assessment report, without attributable statement. Request authorization to take anonymized notes on computer.
 1. How do CoE efforts in Georgia fit within the overall architecture of activities related to equality and non-discrimination? In country’s reform agenda?
 2. How relevant do you think the (COMPONENT) was – the topics, the method, the target groups?
 3. How was the project managed? Could an alternative method of delivery have been used?
 4. What did this (COMPONENT) change for the participants? How likely do you think they are to use the knowledge and skills acquired? Will they be able to use them?
 5. How was gender mainstreamed into the design, implementation and monitoring of progress? Did this lead to specific results or changes?
 6. How have the relevant national institutions integrated the CoE initiatives/approaches into their work? Are they likely to retain them when the CoE activities end? Why?
 7. What can be improved in terms of effectiveness of the (COMPONENT)? If you could change something, what would it be?
 8. Any additional comments/ideas?

Annex 2: DRAFT Focus Group Discussion Template for Beneficiaries

(Will be further adapted based document review and Interviews)

Interviewee(s)	
Function(s)	
Date of the meeting	
Location	
In confidence or shareable?	

Introduction

- Explain Focus Group Discussion **rules and purpose**.
- **Presentation of the evaluation, Self-presentation** by expert (name, function, specify independent expert hired to assess the results of the trainings – not CoE staff).
- **Purpose of the FGD:** to understand how the training participants were affected by the (COMPONENT), what worked well, what did not work so well, and how to improve in the future.
 - Not an evaluation of anyone’s individual performance. Not a control, not an audit, but a learning exercise.
 - What is necessary and valued is the interviewees’ personal experience and opinion – they are encouraged to speak in their personal capacity, not as representatives of an institution.
- **Stress the process ensures anonymity.** Interview notes will not be shared. Your name does not need to appear in the notes, even if they are kept on interviewers’ computer. Interview results will be synthesized into a general assessment report, without attributable statement. Request authorisation to take anonymized notes on computer.

1. Are you often confronted by equality and non-discrimination issues in your work, and how do you address them? What has changed in the way you use/refer to/adhere to human rights standards in your practice, as a result of participation in [the relevant CoE component]? Can you give examples?

Instructions for moderator: Look for improved awareness of equality/non-discrimination issues, probe for attitudes in dealing with end-beneficiary communities. Ask for examples/issues encountered most often, and how they are addressed in practice. Only then make the link with received training (if relevant) and try to trace why the participants choose one approach over another.

2. For you, what is a well-trained resource officer/prosecutor? To this end, what would you expect from training? What should be done for the CoE-promoted awareness and trainings to be engrained into your national institution?

Instructions for moderator: Prompt for behaviours, attitudes, and not only knowledge and skills. Look for the cues as to the ability of being able to independently act as multipliers promoting human rights education. Prompt for examples/real life situations.

3. Does the CoE training [under relevant COMPONENT] meet your expectations, and how? How could CoE or your institution improve the training? If you could change something to the topic, scope, content or organisation of these trainings, what would it be?

Instructions for moderator: Look for equation/differences between this description, and the response to the previous question. Steer the discussion towards the future, possible recommendations.

4. Any additional comments/ideas?

Annex 4: List of Institutions/Organisations Consulted

Organisation	# of People
Council Of Europe	4
PDO	1
Coalition for Equality (1 person	1
GYLA Georgian Young Lawyers Association	1
Office of Resource Officers of Educational Institutions	1
TCJ	1
Prosecutor’s Office and its Training Centre	3
Ministry of Internal Affairs	3
Supreme Court of Georgia	1
Special Investigation Service	2

Annex 5: Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation questions	Indicators	Data collection method	Data sources
Relevance	To what extent do the interventions respond to needs?	<p>Topics track with national reform agendas</p> <p>Interventions are aware of and tailored to context and respond to needs</p> <p>Extent to which gender and social inclusion were analysed and mainstreamed through expected transformative results in project design</p>	<p>Document Review</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews</p> <p>Focus Group Discussion</p> <p>Online survey</p>	<p>Project's documents and reports.</p> <p>Sample of training materials</p> <p>Semi-structured interview protocols</p> <p>Focus Group Discussion protocols</p> <p>Online survey results</p>
Effectiveness	To what extent did the interventions achieve desired change among direct beneficiaries?	<p>Direct beneficiaries report tangible changes</p> <p>Level of satisfaction of stakeholders with projects' results</p> <p>Changes in knowledge, skills and application of/by resource officers/prosecutors of equality and non-discrimination standards their daily work</p> <p>Gender disaggregation participants and availability of disaggregated monitoring data</p>	<p>Semi-structured interviews</p> <p>Focus Group Discussion</p> <p>Online survey</p>	<p>Project's documents and reports.</p> <p>Semi-structured interview protocols</p> <p>Focus Group Discussion protocols</p> <p>Online survey results</p> <p>Training exit questionnaires' results</p>

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation questions	Indicators	Data collection method	Data sources
		Identification of gender and social inclusion transformative results by project monitoring and reporting		
Impact	To what extent did the CoE interventions contribute to comparative positive change in the situation of the end-beneficiaries?	<p>Interventions build on CoE comparative advantage (address a particular niche, provide expertise-heavy training, etc)</p> <p>Direct beneficiaries and other development partners recognize CoE contribution being crucial to positive change.</p> <p>Conditions for end-beneficiaries improved or the deterioration was effectively checked (equality is better protected and non-discrimination policies are applied)</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews</p> <p>Focus Group Discussions</p> <p>Online survey</p>	<p>Interviews with other development partners.</p> <p>Document review.</p> <p>Project's documents and reports.</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews</p> <p>Focus Group Discussions</p> <p>Online survey</p>

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation questions	Indicators	Data collection method	Data sources
	What have been reasons for achievement and lack thereof?	<p>Incidences of adverse/conducive factors for implementation identified by stakeholders which were met by adaptive strategies. Examples of adaptations and their results.</p> <p>Differences in ownership and attitudes towards the components, depending on gender and social position of stakeholders.</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews</p> <p>Survey</p>	<p>Project's documents and reports.</p> <p>Sample of training materials</p> <p>Training exit questionnaires' results</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews</p> <p>Focus Group Discussions</p> <p>Online survey</p>
Sustainability	To what extent can it be expected that the beneficiaries will continue the CoE efforts in three components?	<p>Extent of integration of training courses (resource officers and prosecutors) in national continuous training programmes</p> <p>Level of ownership and retention of ToT certified trainers</p> <p>Resource allocation to training</p>	<p>Document Review</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews</p> <p>Survey</p>	<p>Project's documents and reports.</p> <p>Sample of training materials</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews</p> <p>Focus Group Discussions</p> <p>Online survey</p>

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation questions	Indicators	Data collection method	Data sources
Efficiency	To what extent could alternative working methods have led to the achievement of comparable or better results with fewer resources?	<p>Instances of choices made in resource allocation between target groups and working methods and their outcomes.</p> <p>Identification by CoE staff and partner institutions of feasible and comparable alternative working methods</p> <p>Examples of synergies with other CoE projects and other actors' projects and initiatives</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews</p> <p>Survey</p>	<p>Project's documents and reports.</p> <p>Sample of training materials</p> <p>Training exit questionnaires' results</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews</p> <p>Focus Group Discussions</p> <p>Online survey</p>