

# **Peer Review of the Evaluation Function of the Council of Europe**

Management response & Action Plan  
November 2022

<b>Name of Report:</b>	<b>Peer Review of the Evaluation Function of the Council of Europe</b>		
<b>Date of Report:</b>	<b>21 October 2022</b>	<b>Date of Action Plan:</b>	<b>23 November 2022</b>

**Overall management response to the peer review:**

The Council of Europe would like to thank the Peer Review Panel for their time and commitment to the exercise – specifically, Arild Hauge (ex-UNDP), Claudia Ibarguen (UNESCO), Guy Thijs (ILO) and Urs Zollinger (independent consultant, King & Zollinger).

The Peer Review (PR) covered the Evaluation function of the Organisation including both the Directorate of Internal Oversight Evaluation Division (DIO-ED) and of the decentralised evaluations (evaluations managed by entities other than the DIO-ED) as well as a review of the implementation of the Evaluation Policy.

Management notes that the PR provided assurance that the Council of Europe Evaluation function has been noticeably strengthened over the past years and that a strong normative framework has been put in place with the new DIO Charter, the current Evaluation Policy and Evaluation Guidelines. It is noted that there are areas that require further improvements such as decentralised evaluations, where further investment and supervision is required to guarantee their quality, credibility and independence as well the need to define a target for total resources to be allocated to evaluations. It is noted that the report finds that although the evaluation culture has improved in the organisation, it is still not fully mature.

The recommendations, (five accepted, one under consideration), will help further strengthen evaluation, quality, coverage, capacities and use of evaluations within the organisation.

The Secretary General has stated in the preface to the current evaluation policy the importance she places on a strengthened organisational culture of evaluation learning and accountability. She has also stressed her commitment to fostering an enabling environment for the further development of Evaluation Culture. In this regard the Organisation welcomes the forward-looking perspectives provided by the report and will revise the Evaluation Policy and Evaluation Guidelines in accordance with international standards and good practices in order to bring further to life their full potential.

It is foreseen to propose revisions to the Evaluation Policy and Guidelines in Autumn 2023.

Management Decision <sup>1</sup>	Entity in Charge	Planned Actions <sup>2</sup> (determined by Entity)	Target Date for Action	Person Responsible for Action
<p><b>Recommendation 1: Optimise the selection of evaluation subjects and improve the scoping of evaluation subjects</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> Evaluation Division of the Directorate of Internal Oversight (DIO-ED) should move away from a 'mechanical' approach to cover sub-programmes and apply a flexible and transparent approach driven by stakeholder demand, relevance and urgency and based on extensive scoping or evaluability assessments.</p> <p><b>b)</b> The Council of Europe should consider alternative ways to ensure evaluation coverage of sub-programmes by for instance making the management of sub-programme evaluations the mandatory responsibility of Major Administrative Entities (MAEs) (decentralised evaluations) while retaining the option for DIO-ED validation exercises as required.</p> <p><b>c)</b> Committee of Ministers (CM), Secretary General (SG) and senior management of the MAEs should more pro-actively suggest specific areas for evaluations, thereby expressing their needs for evidence-based decision making.</p>				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input type="checkbox"/> Under consideration	<p><b>a) DIO-ED</b></p>	<p>DIO-ED will work more closely with stakeholders when preparing and developing the work programme. DIO-ED will closely follow discussions and participate in CM/rapporteur groups, ministerial and high-level and other meetings in order to gauge urgent and important issues for selecting evaluation topics that can contribute to decision-making. DIO-ED will also keep track of key policy milestones, so as to ensure the timelines of evaluation topics. More extensive scoping will be made with the evaluands based on the most salient issues. An evaluability assessment will be made and kept on file for each planned evaluation. The Evaluation Policy and/or Guidelines will be reviewed and updated accordingly.</p>	<p>30/09/2023</p>	<p>DIO-ED</p>
	<p><b>b) SG</b></p>	<p>This sub-recommendation will be considered in the light of the plan to be developed in response to Recommendation 3 (see below)</p>	<p>30/09/2023</p>	
	<p><b>c) CM, SG, MAEs senior management</b></p>	<p>The importance of this is noted, the wording in the Evaluation Policy and/or Guidelines in this respect will be reviewed, updated and communicated as appropriate.</p>	<p>30/09/2023</p>	

<sup>1</sup> The management decision is in relation to the Recommendation (Accept, Reject, Consider).

<sup>2</sup> For implementing accepted recommendations.

Management Decision	Entity in Charge	Planned Actions (determined by Entity)	Target Date for Action	Person Responsible for Action
<p><b>Recommendation 2: Assure coverage of the evaluation universe</b></p> <p>The Council of Europe should further expand the coverage of evaluation beyond technical co-operation and programmes/sub-programmes into the more institutional functions performed by the Council of Europe (e.g. standard setting, monitoring mechanism, European Court of Human Rights and Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe) while being cognisant of the political and legal nature of these very specific area of work.</p>				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input type="checkbox"/> Under consideration	<b>MAEs, DIO</b>	DIO-ED will contact PACE, the Court, monitoring and standard-setting bodies to identify evaluation topics. The Evaluation Policy and/or Guidelines will be reviewed and updated accordingly.	30/09/2023	DIO-ED
<p><b>Recommendation 3: Enhance resources for evaluation</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> The Council of Europe should aim at good international practice by earmarking a percentage of the total budget of the Council of Europe to its evaluation function comprising the central budget for DIO-ED and resources ring-fenced (earmarked) in projects for decentralised evaluations. A plan should be elaborated to increase resources over the short to medium term with a specific target percentage (e.g. 1.0%) and a target date for implementation.</p> <p><b>b)</b> DIO-ED human resources should focus on three priorities: (a) managing and conducting ED evaluations, (b) contributing to strengthening the quality of decentralised evaluations, and (c) contributing to learning (see also rec. 4.c).</p> <p><b>c)</b> DIO-ED should aim at a better balance between administrators ('A') (professional evaluators) and administrative support staff ('B')</p>				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input type="checkbox"/> Under consideration	<b>a) CM, SG</b>	Taking into account the findings of the report and other recommendations such as Recommendation 1 on selection of topics, Recommendation 2 on coverage and Recommendation 6 in respect of investment in decentralised recommendations a plan will be developed in order to propose a specific target resource level for evaluations (in line with the practice in other international organisations) to be included within the evaluation policy and guidelines along with a target date to achieve this level.	30/09/2023	PO DIO-ED DPC DPB DGI, DGII Other MAEs
	<b>b) DIO-ED</b>	DIO-ED will rebalance the division of work between these three elements. DIO-ED will focus more on learning activities.	31/12/2023	DIO-ED

Management Decision	Entity in Charge	Planned Actions (determined by Entity)	Target Date for Action	Person Responsible for Action
	<b>c) DIO-ED</b>	DIO-ED will request additional administrative support staff as part of future budgetary proposals to improve the balance between professional evaluators and support staff, taking into account also the expanding demand of quality assurance of decentralised evaluations and to enable the proposed DIO-ED responsibility for hybrid evaluations.	31/03/2023	DIO-ED
<p><b>Recommendation 4: Strengthen the usefulness of evaluation reports</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> Stakeholders from MAEs should better engage with DIO-ED during the different consultation steps (e.g. reference group meetings) to arrive at recommendations which are of optimal use to the MAEs (i.e. relevant, realistic, implementable, limited in number).</p> <p><b>b)</b> Making best use of the big evaluation reports, DIO-ED should produce stand-alone summary papers or fact sheets of 4-5 pages of each evaluation. In addition, DIO-ED should consider additional tailored by-products of evaluations highlighting selected topics.</p> <p><b>c)</b> DIO-ED should produce more learning products (e.g., meta studies and synthesise reviews) distilling more out of existing evaluations (including decentralised evaluations).</p>				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input type="checkbox"/> Under consideration	<b>a) MAEs</b>	The importance of engagement from MAEs is noted, the wording in the Evaluation Policy and/or Guidelines in this respect will be reviewed, updated and communicated as appropriate.	30/09/2023	DIO-ED
	<b>b) DIO-ED</b>	DIO-ED will in future prepare short summary reports of evaluations, as well as tailored by-products, including side-events. This is already planned for the next Evaluation report to be published.	31/12/2022	DIO-ED
	<b>c) DIO-ED</b>	DIO-ED will plan for more synthetic reviews and learning products.	31/12/2023	DIO-ED

Management Decision	Entity in Charge	Planned Actions (determined by Entity)	Target Date for Action	Person Responsible for Action
<p><b>Recommendation 5: Strengthen the visibility and authority of the Evaluation Division</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> While keeping the current structure of Directorate of Internal Oversight (DIO), DIO should adjust its Evaluation Policy, operating procedures and DIO Charter to strengthen the authority and visibility of the Evaluation Division, similar to other international organisations.</p> <p><b>b)</b> DIO should better communicate the difference between audit and evaluation, in order for stakeholders to better appreciate the two different functions (i.e., audit’s focus on compliance, evaluation’s contribution to learning and decision making).</p> <p><b>c)</b> Taking advantage of the merged co-location of audit and evaluation more collaboration should be explored.</p> <p><b>d)</b> When embarking upon recruitment of its next DIO Director, the vacancy should be open to external candidates. Selection criteria should include formal competencies and experience in independent oversight leadership, preferably comprising evaluation as well as audit. Applications from candidates associated with Council of Europe management and governance bodies should be avoided.</p>				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input type="checkbox"/> Under consideration	<b>a) DIO</b>	The responsibilities (authority) and tasks, of the Evaluation Division are clearly defined in the <a href="#">Evaluation Guidelines</a> <sup>3</sup> as being those on page 16 of the current <a href="#">Evaluation Policy</a> . <sup>4</sup> They are in line with those cited in the report as applying at UNESCO. They will be reviewed, benchmarking also with other organisations with similar structures and proposals for changes to the Evaluation Policy be made to ensure that the visibility and authority of the Evaluation Division is defined more explicitly within the policy, as well as the guidelines.	30/09/2023	DIO
	<b>b) DIO</b>	DIO-ED will increase its efforts to publicise its products, as well as its mandate and differences with other divisions of the oversight Directorate. DIO-ED will also prepare communication products, to improve visibility.	31/12/2022	DIO
	<b>c) DIO</b>	Building on the recommendations of the Peer Review of the Evaluation Function and the External Quality Assessment of Internal audit, opportunities for collaboration will be explored, taking into account the overall strategy of the DIO.	30/09/2023	DIO

<sup>3</sup> Page 13: Section 3.2.1 Evaluation Guidelines. “[Section II of the Evaluation Policy](#) outlines the responsibilities and tasks of the DIO Evaluation Division with regard to normative work, planning, design/implementation, use and support to decentralised evaluation”.

<sup>4</sup> See Annex I: Responsibilities and tasks of the Evaluation Division (DIO-ED).

Management Decision	Entity in Charge	Planned Actions (determined by Entity)	Target Date for Action	Person Responsible for Action
	<b>d) CM, SG</b>	In accordance with the Staff Regulations for posts at this level an external recruitment process is currently underway. The vacancy notice has been drafted such that that only candidates with "the necessary competencies and professional experience to ensure the fulfilment of the Directorate's mandate" (extract para 16 of the DIO Charter) will be considered. The Oversight Advisory Committee, in accordance with its Terms of Reference are being consulted on the process.	31/03/2023	SG
<p><b>Recommendation 6: Invest more in decentralised evaluations</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> The Council of Europe should establish a simple criterion for mandatory evaluations, comparable to other international organisation (e.g., financial threshold triggers<sup>5</sup>) and require a mandatory budget allocation (e.g. 1%) which could be adjusted based on programmes/projects.<sup>6</sup> This mandatory criteria and system must be reflected in the Evaluation Guidelines and enforced by senior management of the MAEs.</p> <p><b>b)</b> The Council of Europe should introduce hybrid decentralised evaluations.<sup>7</sup> The hybrid evaluations would be decentralised evaluations managed by MAEs but overseen and formally endorsed by ED (going beyond the current DIO-ED advisory role). As it adds work to DIO-ED, hybrid decentralised evaluations should be used selectively, based on prioritisation.</p> <p><b>c)</b> All MAE's should establish evaluation focal points and DIO-ED should enhance the capacity building of the evaluation focal points.</p> <p><b>d)</b> All MAEs should follow the established procedures including sharing final evaluation reports and management responses with DIO-ED for publication.</p>				
<input type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Under consideration	<b>a) CM, SG, MAEs senior management</b>	This recommendation will be considered in the context of the plan to be prepared as mentioned under recommendation 3a above.	30/09/2023	
	<b>b) CM, SG, MAEs, DIO-ED</b>	SG will request DPC/MAEs to inform DIO-ED of any new contractual agreement with the donors. This recommendation can also be considered in the context of overall resources for Evaluation	30/09/2023	

<sup>5</sup> Including sub-programmes, partial agreements, horizontal facilities, action plans, etc.

<sup>6</sup> Example: for programme/projects between Euro 2-10m: 1%; larger than Euro 10m capped at Euro 100 000.

<sup>7</sup> This term was coined by ILO EVAL. The hybrid decentralised evaluation network consisted of part-time evaluation focal persons in departments at headquarters, together with the full-time regional evaluation officers. The network plays an important role in planning and co-ordinating a large number of internal and independent project evaluations each year. The hybrid system provides for central oversight of decentralised evaluations and relies heavily on evaluation managers (see also Annex 8 of the Peer Review).

Management Decision	Entity in Charge	Planned Actions (determined by Entity)	Target Date for Action	Person Responsible for Action
	<b>c) MAEs, DIO-ED</b>	Capacity building with partners in MAEs will be developed by the DIO-ED  This specific recommendation for the creation of focal points will be considered in the context of the plan to be prepared as mentioned under recommendation 3a above.	30/09/2023	
	<b>d) MAEs</b>	The importance of following established procedures is noted, the wording in the Evaluation Policy and Guidelines in this respect will be reviewed, updated and communicated as appropriate.	30/09/2023	

## Abbreviations

CM	Committee of Ministers
DGI	Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law
DGII	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity
DIO	Directorate of Internal Oversight
DIO-ED	Evaluation Division of the Directorate of Internal Oversight
DPB	Directorate of Programme and Budget
DPC	Directorate of Programme Co-ordination (Ex ODGP (Office of the Directorate General of Programmes))
ILO	International Labour Organization
MAE	Major Administrative Entity
PO	Private Office of the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General
PR	Peer Review
SG	Secretary General
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme



## Annex I: Responsibilities and tasks of the Evaluation Division (DIO-ED) of the Council of Europe

Section 3.2.1 [Evaluation Guidelines](#): “[Section II of the Evaluation Policy](#) outlines the responsibilities and tasks of the **DIO Evaluation Division** with regard to normative work, planning, design/implementation, use and support to decentralised evaluation”.

### Section II of the current Evaluation Policy (page 16)

Normative work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ establishes an effective organisation-wide evaluation system to promote organisational learning, reform and accountability for results;</li> <li>▶ periodically reviews and updates the Evaluation Policy;</li> <li>▶ submits an annual report to the Secretary General and to the Committee of Ministers;</li> </ul>
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ identifies strategically relevant and timely evaluation topics in consultation with the Secretary General and other relevant stakeholders, such as the Committee of Ministers, and develops the evaluation work programme, taking into consideration the criteria for selecting topics outlined in Appendix 2, for review and endorsement by the Secretary General;</li> <li>▶ ensures that evaluation provides representative coverage of the Council of Europe activities;</li> </ul>
Design/ Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ independently designs and conducts evaluations in accordance with this policy, its guidelines, international evaluation norms and standards and in particular the guiding principles listed in Section I;</li> <li>▶ has the authority to establish direct communication and contact with any relevant evaluation stakeholder and ensures key stakeholders’ participation in and contribution to all phases of the evaluation process;</li> <li>▶ has the authority to review any documentation and request any information that is relevant for conducting the evaluation;</li> <li>▶ assures the quality of the DIO-managed evaluation process and products;</li> <li>▶ ensures that recommendations are targeted towards precise needs, are of a transformative nature contributing to meaningful learning and subsequent innovation and change;</li> <li>▶ has the authority to declare evaluation reports final;</li> </ul>
Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ submits evaluation reports to the Secretary General for preparation of a management response, including an action plan;</li> <li>▶ transmits published evaluation reports and related action plans<sup>13</sup> to the Chair of the Ministers’ Deputies and presents corresponding findings, conclusions and recommendations to the relevant governance bodies;</li> <li>▶ reports annually on the status of recommendations (acceptance and implementation);</li> <li>▶ regularly reports on evaluation findings to the Private Office of the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General, the Senior Management Group, other relevant stakeholders and, through its annual report, to the Committee of Ministers;</li> <li>▶ has the authority to publish and publishes evaluation reports and management responses in accordance with the provisions detailed below in Section V under ‘Publication’ and widely disseminates evaluation results and lessons learned to relevant stakeholders through organising events and other means of communication;</li> <li>▶ regularly follows up on the implementation of evaluation recommendations;</li> </ul>

Support to decentralised evaluation	<p>Is responsible for assurance of the quality of decentralised evaluations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ establishes a framework that provides technical and quality assurance support to decentralised evaluations;</li><li>▶ provides advice on the selection of consultants, drafting of terms of reference and draft evaluation reports;</li><li>▶ supports the development of learning groups of practice and knowledge networks drawing on recommendations from reports;</li><li>▶ provides technical advice on the implementation of Evaluation Guidelines;</li><li>▶ provides training and coaching on evaluation methodologies and processes;</li><li>▶ provides advice on the evaluability of Council of Europe interventions such as programmes, strategies and policies;</li><li>▶ publishes decentralised evaluation reports on the DIO intranet and internet websites.</li></ul>
-------------------------------------	--