

Council of Europe co-operation with the EEA AND NORWAY GRANTS

The Council of Europe and the EEA and Norway Grants, through an extensive co-operation over the last 14 years, have supported member states in implementing European standards. Areas of focus include in particular **Roma issues, children's rights, local development, good governance, human rights national implementation, correctional, international police co-operation and combating crime, justice, and domestic and gender-based violence.**

The EEA and Norway Grants are a financial mechanism funded by Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein to support the reduction of **social and economic disparities across Europe**. Its primary goal is to reduce inequalities between countries and strengthen bilateral relations with the EU's 15 least prosperous states.

The Council of Europe has been **involved in two previous cycles** and is now **preparing its involvement in a new cycle** of the Grants.

Key figures of the Council of Europe co-operation under the EEA and Norway Grants in the previous cycle:

- The Grant's contribution to the Council of Europe's role as International Partner Organisation (IPO) and project implementer amounted to **a total of 10.8 million euros**.
- The Council of Europe has worked with **10 member states**: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Lithuania, Latvia, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.
- It provided high-level expertise in **nine programme areas**.
- It was involved in **14 programmes (IPO) and one regional project**.
- Actively participated in **two networks** covering all beneficiaries: the SYNERGY Network and Correctional Education Working Group.

As an **International Partner Organisation (IPO)**, the Council of Europe played a vital role in the EEA and Norway Grants by supporting the implementing organisations and providing expert guidance on programme design and project implementation and reforms, ensuring compliance of the programmes with international standards and human rights principles, and fostering co-operation with beneficiary states. This partnership, rooted in shared values and principles, leverages the Council of Europe's multilateral expertise and the donor states' capacity to reduce social and economic disparities while strengthening bilateral relations.

WHAT'S COMING

The co-operation with the EEA and Norway Grants underscores the Council of Europe's unique role in **translating international standards into practical outcomes**, ensuring impactful and sustainable interventions, and enhancing the quality of life of people and governance in the beneficiary countries.

Looking ahead to the **new cycle**, the Council of Europe will continue to strengthen its collaboration with the Grants to address emerging challenges linked to the democratic backsliding, rule of law issues, misinformation, digital transformation, and violence against women. The current exchanges with the donors and the beneficiaries, to be finalised in 2025, include the following areas of support, as defined in the new Blue Book (version for public consultation):

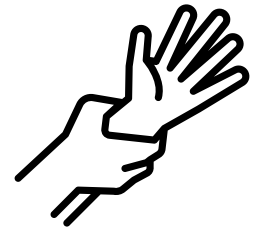
- Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
- Education
- Access to Justice
- Correctional services
- Serious and organised Crime
- Roma Inclusion and Empowerment
- Combating hate speech and hate crime
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) equality/ Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC)

IN THE SPOTLIGHT: SUCCESS STORIES

Gender-Based and Domestic Violence:

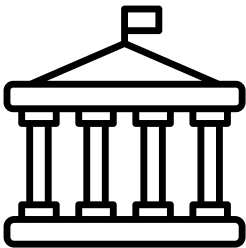
SYNERGY Network - Aligning national policymaking with the Istanbul Convention standards

Since 2018, the SYNERGY Network connects government and civil society actors from 15 EU member states to combat gender-based and domestic violence. The Council of Europe initiated and actively supported this network to exchange knowledge, guide national interventions on guidance on gender equality and Roma women's rights, and ensure the effective implementation of the standards set by the Istanbul Convention.



Key results:

- Organised over **15 international conferences, network meetings, and study visits** (2018–2024).
- Developed a **Handbook: “Nothing about Us, Without Us”** (2023) to address the specific needs of Roma women facing gender-based violence.



Efficiency of Justice:

Increasing the expertise of the Croatian judges with a 1-year training at the European Court of Human Rights

As part of the EEA and Norway Grants, local judges were seconded to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg for one year to gain hands-on experience and enhance their understanding of European human rights standards. These judges returned with advanced expertise in applying international human rights law, inspiring reforms in their national judicial system. Their experience supports fairer trials, better protection of rights, and increased public trust in justice.

Key results:

- **Nine Croatian and Bulgarian judges seconded to the European Court of Human Rights**, gaining expertise in human rights law.
- Supported the **modernisation of court services in Croatia**.

Children and Youth:

Supporting the opening of Latvia's first Barnahus, a child-friendly justice model for abuse cases

A Barnahus (Children's House) is a specialised child-friendly facility designed to provide integrated support for children and their families who are victims of sexual or physical abuse, to ensure that they are protected and receive the care they need while minimising trauma during investigations and legal proceedings. As part of the EEA and Norway Grants, the Council of Europe contributed to the establishment of Latvia's first Barnahus centre in Riga by providing expertise, training, and ensuring that the model aligns with international child protection standards, such as the Lanzarote Convention



Key results:

- **More than 100 professionals** trained on the Barnahus model for child protection.
- **More than 100 cases** handled in the first year of operation (2024).
- **Ongoing six-month training programmes** to expand psychological therapy services nationwide.



Digital transformation in justice:

TJENI Project – Increasing transparency and trust in judicial systems through digital transformation

From 2022 to 2024, the TJENI project, implemented by the Council of Europe, has developed and tested tools for the anonymisation (pseudonymisation) and publication of court decisions, the project ensures a balance between privacy rights and public access to information. These tools make judicial data more accessible, improve consistency in case law, and enhance the overall accountability of justice systems. The project also promoted the use of open data to modernise court systems, enabling more efficient decision-making processes and better public trust in judicial transparency.

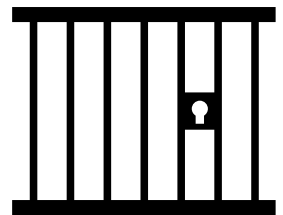
Key results:

- **Seven participating countries:** Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovenia.
- **10 international events** organised to exchange expertise
- **Development of IT tools** for anonymising and categorising court decisions.
- Creation of **eLearning courses** on open data, AI, and cybercrime.
- **One Hackathon:** Digital future of Justice

Correctional Services:

SECURE Project - Modernising prison services in line with European human rights standards

exchanges among practitioners from correctional services, the SECURE project focuses on improving prison conditions in Romania. It takes a multidisciplinary approach, targeting issues such as aggressive behaviours, addiction rehabilitation, and mental health support. By creating better conditions and implementing strategic public policies, the SECURE project not only improves the treatment of prisoners but also prepares them for successful reintegration into society. The Council of Europe provided expertise by sharing best practices, particularly in treatment programs for vulnerable prison populations, as well as ensuring that the project follows the recommendations of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT).



Key results:

- **52 staff trained**, with 30 participating in study visits.
- **150 inmates qualified**, including 50 Roma, improving their skills for reintegration.



More about the Council of Europe co-operation with EEA and Norway Grants

<https://go.coe.int/6D0Nq>

