

*Document prepared by the Directorate of Programme Co-ordination*

## Final Evaluation of the Council of Europe Action Plan for Georgia 2020-2023

### Management Response

<b>Name of Evaluation Report:</b>	<b>Progress Review and Final Evaluation of the Council of Europe Action Plan for Georgia 2020-2023 - Final Report</b>		
<b>Date of Evaluation Report:</b>	<b>28 July 2023</b>	<b>Dates of the Management Response:</b>	<b>02 October 2023</b>
<b>Overall management response to the evaluation:</b>			
<p>The Directorate of Programme Co-ordination (DPC) of the Council of Europe considers that the report is an overall fair assessment of the implementation of the Action Plan thus far and agrees with most conclusions and recommendations.</p> <p>Whenever relevant, the recommendations of the Evaluation were taken into account in the drafting of the new Council of Europe Action Plan for Georgia 2024-2027 as well as in the process of development and validation of new project proposals, implementation and reporting.</p>			

<b>Recommendation 1:</b>	
<p>Relevance can be assured by maintaining the current approach of participatory design of Action Plan and projects, while being alert to possible gaps, where the preferred priorities of partner institutions may result in the exclusion of some groups or issues, or where partners' preferred activities are not optimal for the actual substantive reform needed. Relevance to the socio-economic circumstances of a large percentage of the population should be enhanced by more focus on social and economic rights, linked to the Council of Europe's mandate in this sphere.</p>	
<b>Recommendations to:</b>	<b>Priority level (1 (low priority) to 3 (high</b>

	<b>priority)):</b>
- Directorate of Programme Co-ordination	
<b>Management Decision (Accept/Partially Accept/Reject): Accept</b>	
<b>Management response</b>	
<p>Over the years, the Directorate of Programme Co-ordination has made the Action Plan preparation process increasingly inclusive. A participatory approach to Action Plan preparation is ensured through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alignment to the most recent decisions, resolutions, recommendations, findings, conclusions of reports and opinions of the CoE's monitoring and expert advisory bodies in respect of the country, as well as the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights and direct consultation of CoE stakeholders through an internal roundtable specifically dedicated to Action Plan preparation with the CoE, gathering colleagues from monitoring, co-operation and standard setting;</li> <li>- Conduction of an external evaluation of the Action Plan, thereby collecting views from diverse stakeholders on the relevance, effectiveness and value added, in order learn from experience and integrate lessons learned in the next cycle;</li> <li>- Organisation of an Action Plan Steering Committee Meeting during its last year of implementation Plan to take stock of outcomes achieved, discuss the possible challenges identified during the implementation period, and start identifying priorities for the next action plan with the CoE co-operation sector, governmental authorities and selected Civil Society Organisations;</li> <li>- Organisation of exchanges with donors "in situ" about past co-operation activities and the prospects for the next programming period;</li> <li>- Organisation of thematic discussions at the technical level with CoE staff, representatives of national authorities and Civil Society Organisations to define for each theme more "operational" priorities, expected outcomes, main interventions, partners, target groups, beneficiaries, relevant sources of justification, indicators, potential barriers for implementation and some mitigating measures as well as transversal elements (e.g. civil society participation and gender mainstreaming);</li> <li>- Consultation with national priorities on the basis of a consolidated AP draft and related discussions through the Permanent Representation.</li> </ul> <p>At the project level, the CoE Human Rights Approach, mainstreamed throughout all CoE projects, calls for incorporating the principles of participation and inclusion, equality and non-discrimination, accountability and transparency and access to information throughout the project cycle. At the initiating and planning level, this implies consulting in the "broadest possible way" stakeholders and taking into account different stakeholders' perspectives when setting project objectives. Project Steering Committee meetings are a "formal" moment when consultations occur, but bilateral consultations also take place with several counterparts, both governmental and non-governmental. Practices vary depending on the projects/sectors.</p>	

Planned Actions	Target Date for Action	Entity Responsible for Action
The Directorate of Programme Co-ordination will consolidate and mainstream the practices implemented so far when it comes to Action Plan preparation and continue its efforts to mainstream implementation of and reporting on the Human Rights Approach at project level.	Continuous	Directorate of Programme Co-ordination

<b>Recommendation 2 and 6:</b>	
<p>Recommendation 2: Ongoing Council of Europe staff development should be prioritised, particularly on applying relevant planning/monitoring/evaluation standards (including on transversal themes). Online training resources should be complemented by group training, including combined training with relevant stakeholders, UN agencies etc. Longer-term projects and longer staff contracts merit serious consideration, for employment security of staff, and to ensure that the Council of Europe retains knowledge, and to minimise the impact on projects of staff being distracted by the need to seek out future work opportunities.</p> <p>Recommendation 6: From the project design stage, dialogue with partners needs to include specific focus on measurement of expected contributions to reform; an agreed MEL methodology; SMART indicators etc. Measurement of progress should be highlighted as a matter of efficiency and accountability to donors, but also as a matter of Council of Europe and Georgia’s mutual legal accountability to rights-holders. Given the size of the project portfolio and team, an MEL focal point (logically positioned in the recommended architecture’s programme coordination tier) is required. This tier can enhance MEL capacity of project teams, collate, and share lessons across projects; rationalise end-of-project evaluations and incorporate them into office-wide learning; it can also contribute to the development of staff programming capacity. Project and Action Plan evaluations should be taken as opportunities to build an accountability culture among duty-bearer institutions, and to enhance Georgian partners’ capacity to measure progress, including their participation on evaluation Reference Groups etc.</p>	
<b>Recommendations to:</b>	<b>Priority level (1 (low priority) to 3 (high priority)):</b>
Directorate of Programme Co-ordination	
<b>Management Decision (Accept/Partially Accept/Reject): Accept</b>	

## Management response

Considerable progress has already been made in applying RBM methods in project planning, monitoring and reporting, notably since the introduction of the Project Management Methodology (PMM) in 2017. Since that time the Directorate of Programme Co-ordination has been taking measures to address shortcomings observed in the staff capacity to design, monitor and report on projects, such as the definition of outcomes which may be too generic to measure change in specific target groups, insufficient indicator dimensions with modest data collection methods, in particular when it comes to the development of capacities. In addition, under the lead of the Directorate of Internal Oversight, the organisational management culture has been evolving. Action Plans and Facilities are systematically evaluated, and findings and lessons learned are duly taken into account in the design and management practices across the Organisation.

Since 2019, the Directorate of Programme Co-ordination has designed and delivered hands-on workshops on results-based reporting targeting project staff. The curriculum underlines the importance of a solid logframe and indicators, strongly linked to relevant country stakeholders, as the basis for evidence-based and outcome-based reporting.

In March 2022 a regional Project Management Officer (PMO) was recruited in the Council of Europe Office in Tbilisi to provide support to co-operation projects in terms of project management methodology. The Officer's duties extend to the CoE Offices in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. Focus on results-based approach, data collection methods and evidence-based reporting is at the core of the Officer's responsibilities. Based on the initial needs assessment, the PMO supports co-operation projects through a) supporting the project staff on data collection and analysis related issues at various stages; b) participating in developing research instruments and drafting project related documents and c) organising activities (targeted trainings) aimed at building the project staff's capacities in data generation and analysis. The PMO has brought more attention to the issues of formulating the results and indicators in the logframe, as well as to several methods of data collection in the Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Republic of Moldova Offices through meetings and capacity building activities.

In order to have the most adequate indicators possible, given the CoE acquis and working methods, and in order not to be driven by the common indicators of partners, it was decided in spring 2022 that the CoE should develop its own Common Indicators for the key sectors of technical co-operation. The CoE RBM will therefore be reinforced by common sectoral indicators, which will contribute to comparability of results and the ability to measure progress over time.

As part of the reform of the Staff Regulations and its secondary legislation, the DHR has planned to review the conditions of employment of field staff. A revision of Instruction No. 1234 defining the conditions of recruitment and employment of locally recruited staff in Council of Europe duty stations outside France is planned. This revision will be carried out by DHR in consultation with stakeholders, in particular DPC, the staff of the field offices and the Directorates concerned.

**Planned Actions**

**Target Date for Action**

**Entity Responsible for Action**

<p>The Directorate of Programme Co-ordination will continue providing support to project teams in project planning, monitoring and reporting, through the PMM and results-Based Reporting training activities. Specific attention will be given to identifying valid and establishing an appropriate monitoring system.</p> <p>In co-operation with the Directorate of Human Resources, the Directorate of Programme Co-ordination will aim at ensuring that all staff working in co-operation are trained in PMM and RBR. A training plan for 2024 will be developed defining time frame and locations for in-person training in situ and in HQ. The related budget will be defined and resources identified in co-operation with the Directorate of Human Resources.</p> <p>A pilot initiative targeting the staff of the Tbilisi office will specifically aim at enhancing the monitoring practices, with a specific focus on data collection. Capacity development, through a mix of training and coaching activities, are foreseen in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• persuasive communication skills and ability to use arguments and facts to convince stakeholders</li> <li>• quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods</li> <li>• preparing evidence-based and results-focused reports</li> <li>• project delivery and behavioural insights</li> </ul> <p>Consultants will also be hired to review the most recent scientific findings related to technical cooperation and, on that basis, develop a toolkit tailored to the CoE. Stock will be taken from this pilot initiative with a view to draw lessons and extend capacity development to other CoE staff.</p> <p>A review of the conditions of employment of field staff under the lead of DHR is carried out with the revised staff regulation 1234 that will be applied as of 1 January 2024.</p>	<p>Continuous</p> <p>31/12/2024</p> <p>30/06/2024</p> <p>31/12/2023</p>	<p>Directorate of Programme Co-ordination</p>
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**Recommendation 3:**

There is a need to rationalise the number and duration of projects. This might mean specific issues/themes being addressed as sub-components of a larger project or programme, or at least the clustering of related projects. Where 100% of funding is not committed at the outset, projects might make provisional plans to add components during their lifetime as funding becomes available.

<b>Recommendations to:</b>	<b>Priority level (1 (low priority) to 3 (high priority)):</b>
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- Directorate of Programme Co-ordination	
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**Management Decision (Accept/Partially Accept/Reject): Partially Accept**

**Management response**

The main factor currently limiting the duration and scope of projects is the availability of funds. The current practice is to start implementation when 90% of a project budget is secured and to keep project implementation within the timeframe of the relevant Action Plan (projects financed by earmarked funds constitute an exception to this rule). This constraint requires to find a good balance between the “size” of projects and the need to cover in a relevant manner as many sectors as possible, which are often dealt with by different administrative entities. In some cases, when additional budget becomes available and the needs justify it, budget increases are provided to enlarge the scope of a project and/or to intensify activities. The Directorate of Programme Co-ordination will consider launching larger projects/programmes, whenever feasible and taking into account management constraints.

<b>Planned Actions</b>	<b>Target Date for Action</b>	<b>Entity Responsible for Action</b>
The Directorate of Programme Co-ordination, in co-operation with the operational Main Administrative Entities will consider ways to rationalise the number of projects and to launch larger projects/programmes. Internal guidelines will be prepared in this respect.	<b>31/12/2024</b>	Directorate of Programme Co-ordination

**Recommendations 4 and 11**

<p><b>Recommendation 4:</b> The architecture of the Council of Europe Georgia office should be revisited to ensure meso-level coordination of projects and enhanced management of organisational growth. This should involve a 'programme coordination tier', between the Head of Office and Deputy and project teams. This tier should comprise of substantive and methodological PCM expertise with a mandate to maximise synergies and sharing of best practice and lessons learned between projects; coordinating capacity-building of project teams; and serving as an initial point of contact for other agencies active in related spheres in Georgia and for other relevant Council of Europe activities in the region.</p>		
<p><b>Recommendation 11:</b> A meso-level tier in a revised office/programme delivery architecture should be put in place to address challenges in some sectors of moving beyond project outputs/outcomes to measured sustainable substantive change. This would facilitate senior cross-cutting programme management support to project teams in any situations where project managers and partner institutions differ on issues of project orientation or progress and also enhance efficient transferrable learning across projects etc.</p>		
<b>Recommendations to:</b>		<b>Priority level (1 (low priority) to 3 (high priority)):</b>
Directorate of Programme Co-ordination		
<b>Management Decision (Accept/Partially Accept/Reject): Partially Accept</b>		
<b>Management response</b>		
DPC recognises the potential added value to have meso-level co-ordination in external offices. DPC is considering launching a pilot initiative in the Tbilisi office in 2024 to introduce thematic coordinators located in Tbilisi in order to strengthen the Office management structure and bolster the office by deploying international staff with relevant knowledge and expertise.		
<b>Planned Actions</b>	<b>Target Date for Action</b>	<b>Entity Responsible for Action</b>
Following internal discussions at DPC on the operationalisation of the recommendation, consultations with operational MAEs are envisaged for autumn 2023. Specific arrangements, including the staffing and the financing of such positions, will need to be found. Given the wide range of topics covered by the co-operation sector, it may be difficult to identify staff with substantive expertise covering this wide range of themes willing to move to the field. Given that the meso level is already – at least administratively - represented by the Deputy Heads of	<b>31/12/2024</b>	Directorate of Programme Co-ordination

<p>Office who cover all projects in their office and taking into account the existing reporting lines between projects in situ and the respective units in Strasbourg, the operational implementation of this recommendation would need to ensure that it does not result in additional layer of bureaucracy. DPC will explore ways and means how they can be supported on question of substance by the MAEs and the project teams..</p>		
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**Recommendations 5 and 10**

Recommendation 5:  
 Awareness-raising and capacity-building (training, study visits, mentoring and expert advice etc.) should be systematically linked to transfer of responsibility to relevant institutions, including agreed commitment of necessary resources by the state and enhanced measurement of the application of knowledge and tools and of resulting changes to practice.

Recommendation 10:  
 Action Plan and project formulation should be premised on specific discussions with partners on risks and opportunities regarding sustainability of project outputs. Each project should produce a draft sustainability plan at an early stage, for revision at the closing stages of the project timeline, including future resource implications.

Recommendations to:	Priority level (1 (low priority) to 3 (high priority)):
- Directorate of Programme Co-ordination	

**Management Decision (Accept/Partially Accept/Reject): Accept**

**Management response**



In order to ensure sustainability of capacity development activities, Council of Europe projects factor in, to the extent possible, the necessity to co-operate with national capacity development institutions to ensure sustainability of results (e.g. academy of justice). These efforts often take the form of including in the curricula of the partner institutions the capacity development activities developed within the framework of a project, thereby transferring capacity development responsibilities directly to national authorities.

The CoE systematically discusses the effectiveness and sustainability of results (including capacity development) with national partners. It would be difficult to go further and make the implementation of activities conditional on a commitment by the national authorities to allocate resources for their follow-up. This could be perceived by these authorities as an attempt by the Council of Europe to overstep its mandate. Such a requirement could become an obstacle to the implementation of projects.

Planned Actions	Target Date for Action	Entity Responsible for Action
The Directorate of Programme Co-ordination, within the framework of its RBM initiatives and the guidance provided to project managers by its country advisors, will encourage the project teams to systematically engage in discussions with local counterparts in order to enhance sustainability of project results, including in the field of capacity development.	Continuous	Directorate of Programme Co-ordination

### Recommendation 7

In the case of project partners, there is an ongoing need to raise awareness of HRA. Council of Europe project teams; long-term consultants; and partners need space and support to enhance capacity to apply the HRA principles in all stages of the project cycle. In particular, effective integration of the principles of transversal themes requires enhanced focus on measurement of their delivery in the Action Plan and projects' monitoring, evaluation and learning.

Recommendations to:	Priority level (1 (low priority) to 3 (high priority)):
Directorate of Programme Co-ordination	

**Management Decision (Accept/Partially Accept/Reject): Accept**

**Management response**

DPC acknowledges the continuous need to improve the application of the HRA and, within the framework of the PMM training activities, gender mainstreaming training activities and the guidance provided to project managers by country advisors (project design, reporting), it will pursue to enhance CoE project staff's capacities to systematically apply the CoE Human Rights Approach.

Planned Actions	Target Date for Action	Entity Responsible for Action
PMM training activities; Gender mainstreaming training activities; Guidance provided by to project managers by country advisors.	Continuous	Directorate of Programme Co-ordination

**Recommendation: 8**

The current high levels of CSO participation should be continued and expanded, including beyond Tbilisi, and with clarification as regards the Council of Europe's rationale for partnering with state institutions. CSO participation in projects can be enhanced by more focus on their role as monitors of substantive progress, including enhancing their role in project MEL- legitimising this role where state institutions are skeptical about engagement with CSOs.

Recommendations to:	Priority level (1 (low priority) to 3 (high priority)):
Directorate of Programme Co-ordination	

**Management Decision (Accept/Partially Accept/Reject): Accept**

## Management response

The modalities and nature of civil society participation in Council of Europe co-operation activities are currently informed by the [Guidelines on Civil Society Organisations' participation](#). They are also addressed in the [internet portal](#) on the Council of Europe and Civil Society and the [practical guide for civil society participation](#).

The Secretary General has identified the need to strengthen the protection and promotion of civil society space in Europe among the Organisation's priorities. In response to the decisions taken at the Helsinki Ministerial Session in 2019, the Secretary General issued her proposals (SG/Inf (2020)8), where it was also demonstrated that, with the exception of specific activities restricted to member states, nearly all of the Council of Europe's standard setting, monitoring and co-operation activities involve some level of engagement with civil society (see in particular appendix to SG/Inf(2020)8). The implementation measures as presented in the Secretary General's final report -SG/Inf (2022)13 - (notably, the launch of a handbook and a civil society portal on the cooperation with the Council of Europe; the interaction with our structures, such as the informal exchanges of views with CM Rapporteur Groups and the enhanced participation in steering and ad hoc committees) have been welcomed by the Turin Ministerial Session (May 2022). In view of the call in the Turin Ministerial for the work to be enhanced and in the light of the Reykjavik Declaration, the [Secretary General's Roadmap on the Council of Europe engagement with civil society](#) is currently being finalised.

Planned Actions	Target Date for Action	Entity Responsible for Action
Specific proposals on provision of information on various areas to civil society will be contained in the SG's above-mentioned Roadmap currently being finalised.	31/12/2024	Private office

## Recommendation 9:

Gender mainstreaming across future Action Plans and projects needs to be more integral in analysis of the root causes and of expected results. This requires systematic application of gender concepts by all partners in programming to each stage of the project management cycle: from root cause/needs analyses; to design and delivery of activities/inputs and measurement of the project processes; and of outcomes and impact. More capacity-building of staff and long-term consultants to apply relevant Council of Europe gender tools is necessary (and desired by project

teams). The regional Gender Advisor (a role vacant since December 2022, but to be filled again in autumn 2023), and the Council of Europe Gender Equality Focal Point Network launched in 2021 can play a key role in this.		
<b>Recommendations to:</b>		<b>Priority level (1 (low priority) to 3 (high priority)):</b>
Directorate of Programme Co-ordination		
<b>Management Decision (Accept/Partially Accept/Reject): Accept</b>		
<b>Management response</b>		
<p>Gender equality is one of the priorities of the Council of Europe and gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures is one of the six strategic objectives of the Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023. The Directorate of Programme Co-ordination acknowledges the importance of gender mainstreaming in cooperation projects. Important resources have been invested for this purpose since 2018, both for the development of policy documents, tools and guidelines as well as for the training of project teams. The <a href="#">Gender mainstreaming toolkit for co-operation projects</a> operationalises the Strategy in a concrete way and offers practical guidance on the implementation of a gender dimension in co-operation activities within the Organisation as well as by national partners and other stakeholders. Action aimed at ensuring a gender-sensitive approach in the implementation of the Action Plan included constant efforts towards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– providing and analysing gender disaggregated data and related information to enable the project teams to see the need for gender mainstreaming activities, and adjusting the project accordingly by better integrating the gender perspective;</li> <li>– gender-balanced composition of implementation teams;</li> <li>– gender balance in the selection of participants in project activities;</li> <li>– gender-sensitive communication on projects. In this regard, a Gender sensitive communication checklist was developed to assist project staff;</li> <li>– inclusion of gender issues in reporting. In this regard specific reporting guidelines have been developed.</li> </ul> <p>As mentioned above, the “Gender mainstreaming toolkit for co-operation projects” includes the Gender Analysis as the first step in the mainstreaming of gender in a project as “it creates better understanding of the situation of women and men as well as the relations between them”. The Directorate of Programme Co-ordination, through the newly appointed (1 September 2023) regional Gender Advisor seconded by Finland and based in Chisinau, will provide support to project teams for the development of gender analyses.</p>		
<b>Planned Actions</b>	<b>Target Date for Action</b>	<b>Entity Responsible for Action</b>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Further implementation of the gender mainstreaming toolkit and guidelines.</li> <li>- Discuss with DRH for the continuation of the gender mainstreaming training programme</li> <li>- Reactivation of the field offices gender focal points network.</li> <li>- Progressive development and implementation of gender analyses for all CoE projects</li> </ul>	Continuous	Directorate of Programme Co-ordination
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<b>Recommendation: 12</b>		
<p>The added value of the Council of Europe can be enhanced by strengthening the linkages between elements of the ‘triangle’. In particular, there is a need for enhanced capacity to translate Council of Europe standards into programming methodologies and impact measurement, and for revising the current office/project delivery architecture. Without more focus on measurement of impact of programming (including of cross-cutting principles), there is a risk that the added value of the ‘triangle’ is conceptually sound, but inadequately evidence-based.</p>		
<b>Recommendations to:</b>	<b>Priority level (1 (low priority) to 3 (high priority)):</b>	
Directorate of Programme Co-ordination		
<b>Management Decision (Accept/Partially Accept/Reject): Accept</b>		
<b>Management response</b>		
<p>The strategic triangle (standard setting, monitoring and co-operation) is a recognised comparative advantage of the CoE. Action Plan preparation and project design rely consistently on the findings of the monitoring mechanisms. DPC will consider ways to enhance the links and present them in a more transparent manner in planning documents. Specific attention will be given to impact measurement issues as part of the RBM initiatives (see response to recommendations 2 and 6).</p>		
<b>Planned Actions</b>	<b>Target Date for Action</b>	<b>Entity Responsible for Action</b>

The Action Plan and project templates will be revised with a view to enhance the visibility of the links between the results of the monitoring mechanisms on the one hand and Action Plans and project documents on the other.	31/12/2024	Directorate of Programme Co-ordination
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<b>Recommendation: 13</b>		
The Country Office should retain lessons learned as the basis for planning for any similar future disruption, by retaining any virtual approaches that have merit. However, face-to-face interaction should be the preferred norm for capacity building activities. (Covid-19 pandemic)		
<b>Recommendations to:</b>	<b>Priority level (1 (low priority) to 3 (high priority)):</b>	
Directorate of Programme Co-ordination		
<b>Management Decision (Accept/Partially Accept/Reject): Accept</b>		
<b>Management response</b>		
The recommendation is in line with the current CoE practice.		
<b>Planned Actions</b>	<b>Target Date for Action</b>	<b>Entity Responsible for Action</b>
Cost effectiveness considerations related to the use of virtual approaches will continue to be systematically made when planning capacity building activities. Further changes in practice will take into account the response provided within the framework of the <a href="#">evaluation of the CoE's support to member states in addressing challenges related to the Covid-19 pandemic</a> .	Continuous	Directorate of Programme Co-ordination

