

1505th meeting, 3 September 2024

11 Programme, Budget and Administration

11.2 People Strategy 2024-2027

Item considered by the GR-PBA

Empower,
engage
and
excel

Council of Europe

People Strategy
2024-2027



Directorate General of Administration
Directorate of Human Resources

September 2024

People Strategy 2024-27



Towards a more
transparent, efficient
and effective management
of human resources

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Four strategic priorities	5
Theory of change	7
Calendar	7
I. Workforce management	9
Planning workforce needs	9
Attracting and sourcing	9
Selecting and onboarding	10
II. Diversity, inclusion and well-being	11
Acting for enlarged diversity	11
Embracing inclusion	12
Supporting well-being	12
III. Organisational development	14
Boosting mobility	14
Enhancing the learning culture	15
Embracing a new working culture	15
IV. Modernisation of the HR function	17
Strengthening HR's advisory role	17
Providing data and HR analytics	17
Embracing technological opportunities	18
Appendices	19



Acknowledgements

The Directorate of Human Resources (DHR) would like to sincerely thank all colleagues who have contributed to the Council of Europe People Strategy 2024-2027, with their insights, ideas, reviews and constructive comments.

Methodology

Inclusivity and collaboration have been essential in developing this strategy. The Steering Group (cf. Appendix 1), chaired by the Deputy Secretary General, has played an important role in providing guidance and support. DHR has consulted an array of stakeholders (cf. Appendix 2) to ensure that the People Strategy reflects the needs, aspirations and expertise of the entire Council of Europe community. Drawing from various sources (cf. Appendices), including audits on recruitment and decentralisation, surveys on organisational culture and health and engagement, as well as an evaluation underway on change management, has provided insights to better understand the Organisation and to identify areas for improvement and devising initiatives aligned with the needs of staff and the Organisation's objectives.

The Strategy has been developed using the “Strategy Planning in the Council of Europe Practical Guide”¹ which can be assimilated with the change management approach initiated by Kurt Lewin’s work² with three phases: evaluation of previous strategy and lessons-learned (called ‘unfreeze’ by Lewin), with a design phase establishing the strategic priorities in the first quarter of 2024, and where Action Plans will be developed in the second to fourth quarters, once the strategy is approved (cf. Calendar p. 7).

Acronyms

AI	Artificial Intelligence
CM	Committee of Ministers
DGA	Directorate General of Administration
DHR	Directorate of Human Resources
D&I	Diversity and Inclusion
DIT	Directorate of Information Technology
HR	Human Resources
IT	Information Technology

¹ [Strategic Planning in the Council of Europe Practical Guide, November 2021](#)

² See e.g. [The Origins of Lewin’s Three-Step Model of Change - Bernard Burnes, 2020 \(sagepub.com\)](#); a bibliography of Kurt Lewin’s work is available e.g. on [Kurt Lewin - Wikipedia](#)



Introduction

The Council of Europe People Strategy 2024-2027 builds on the **solid foundation** established by the People Strategy 2019-2023,³ notably with the comprehensive review of the regulatory framework. This continuity represents a strategic advantage and demonstrates the Organisation's dedication to ongoing improvement and adaptability in a dynamic organisational environment.

It also duly takes into account further priority and direction to the Council of Europe's work provided by the Heads of State and Government in the final declaration of the Reykjavik Summit, that took place on 16 and 17 May 2023, where they declared to stand united against the Russian Federation's illegal and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine.

In this context, this comprehensive People Strategy is a commitment to **empower, engage and develop the staff of the Organisation**, with the aim to serve the latter's mission, to promote and protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The Organisation's ethos, as identified by staff, has served as guiding principles when preparing this People Strategy 2024-2027:

- **Integrity (independence, trustworthiness and responsibility)** is vital in DHR's and staff's commitment to promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law, ensuring that all actions and decisions are made with honesty and moral fortitude.
- **Professionalism** is embedded in the Organisation's pursuit of excellence and expertise, equipping it with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively support its mission.
- **Respect (dignity, diversity and discretion)** is paramount in fostering a culture of inclusion, where every individual's contribution is valued, and their rights are upheld.

These **guiding principles** form the basis of the Organisation's Code of Conduct and play a crucial role in the development of Council of Europe staff, driving the success of all collective endeavours.

The **Directorate of Human Resources** is part of the Directorate General of Administration (DGA), a key enabler in the Organisation, ensuring operational efficiency and a well-organised work environment, providing crucial support for the Organisation's success. Within DGA, beyond providing several administrative and advisory functions, DHR serves as a strategic partner, spearheading initiatives aimed at fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation.

In doing so, DHR collaborates with other DGA entities and the rest of the Major Administrative Entities and contributes to the Organisation's **administrative reform as well as its sustainable development efforts**. The People Strategy is part of such efforts, striving to apply proven good practice, insofar as possible within existing resources.

Through the instrumental role it plays in the administrative reform, the People Strategy positively contributes to an agile, resilient and results-oriented Organisation that can adapt to its current and future challenges, in line with the Programme and Budget,⁴ giving life to the Declaration of the **4th Summit of Heads of State and Government** of the Council of Europe in Reykjavik in 2023.

To achieve our objectives, we need a modern Council of Europe enabling us to meet current and future challenges as well as the expectations of future generations. We will ensure that (...) the Organisation is more **agile, resilient and results-oriented** (...) and we will continue the reform process to achieve **greater transparency, efficiency and effectiveness**.

Reykjavik Declaration (May 2023)

- **Transparency** to ensure clear and accessible communication to all stakeholders.

³ [CM\(2019\)58-final - Council of Europe People Strategy 2019-2023](#)

⁴ [CM\(2024\)1 - Council of Europe Programme and Budget 2024-2027](#)



- **Efficiency** to ensure optimal use of resources to achieve the goals of the People Strategy.
- **Effectiveness** to ensure that all related actions yield the intended results and set standards of excellence in the Organisation's work.

The People Strategy has been crafted in response to **internal and external factors**, considering the dynamic environment in which the Organisation evolves.

Externally, the Organisation needs to adapt to a changing environment, to **meet current and future challenges**, including significant political shifts arising, in particular, from the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, new technologies and the environmental crisis. Internally, the Strategy is gearing up to **embrace pivotal transformations**, including the integration of artificial intelligence, which inevitably affect ways of working. The Organisation will also have to face a large number of retirements in the coming years while welcoming new generations with different expectations.

The People Strategy is thus designed to be dynamic and responsive, ensuring that the Organisation not only adapts to these changes but also leverages them to **enhance organisational effectiveness and resilience**.

Four strategic priorities

To ensure that the Organisation moves towards a transparent, efficient and effective management of human resources and that staff members are empowered, engaged and excel, **three substantive strategic priorities** and a **supportive strategic priority** have emerged:



Workforce management, aiming to enhance the Organisation's ability to plan workforce needs, to attract and source, as well as appropriately select and onboard great talent.



Diversity, inclusion and well-being, seeking to promote a respectful and inclusive work environment, ensuring the well-being and fulfilment of each individual staff member, ensuring a fully embedded Ethical Framework along with a revised Policy on Diversity, Inclusion and Non-Discrimination (to be developed and discussed with the relevant Joint Committee in 2024).



Organisational development, focusing on the future of staff, by developing mobility and a learning culture for staff's professional development and for the Organisation to gain in agility, flexibility and resilience, while having a Results-Based Management approach. It also entails focusing on the future of the work environment which will be impacted by the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), as well as by the development of new ways of working including remote working and new workspace layouts.

To deliver the People Strategy 2024-2027, the Organisation is committed to developing the Organisation's HR capabilities, thereby equipping the HR function with the necessary tools and skills. The fourth strategic priority therefore aims at **modernising the HR function**, to maximise efficiency and optimise results.



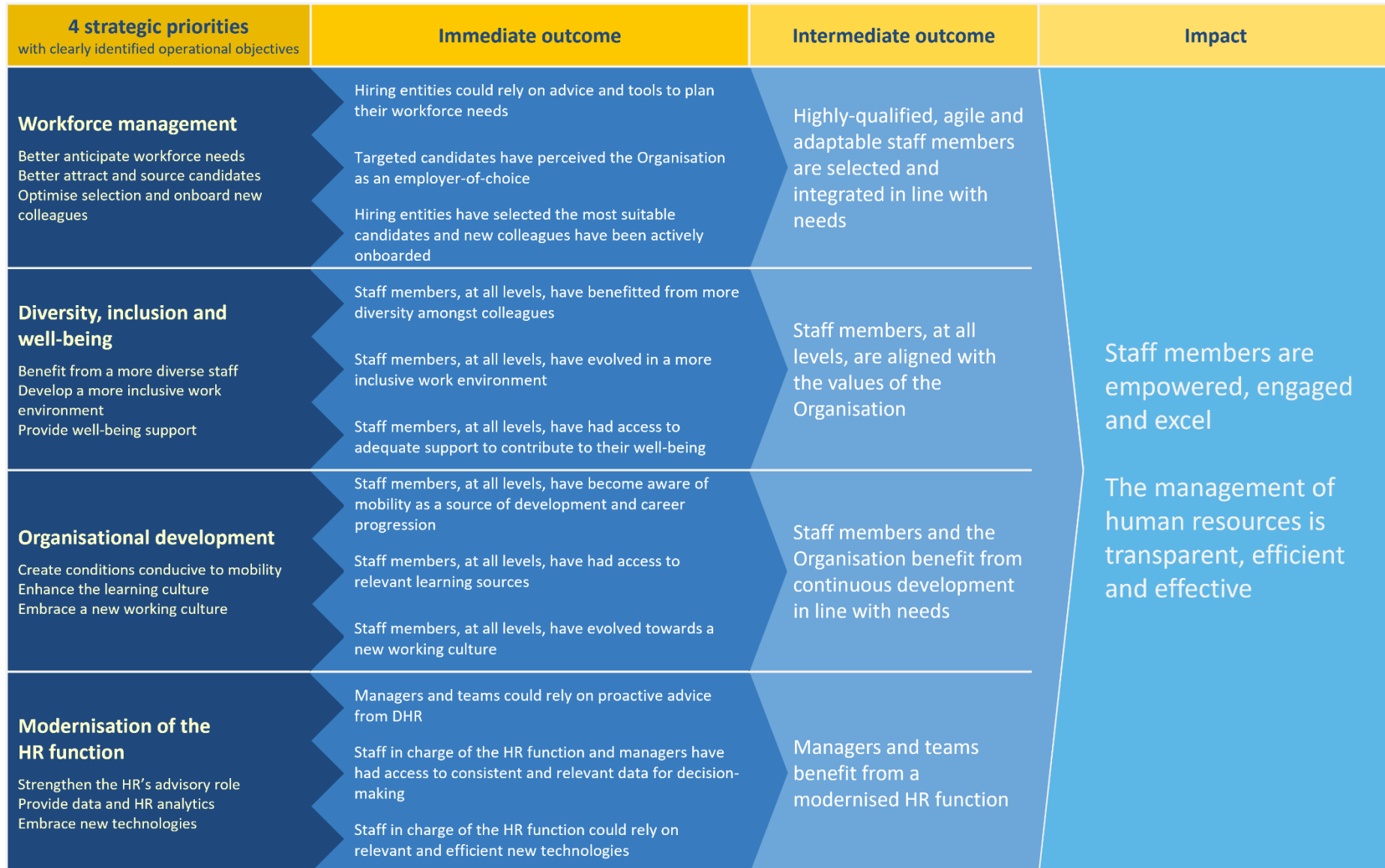


These priorities are summarised in the **Theory of change overview**, with **expected outcomes and impact**, on the next page, followed by a **Calendar**.





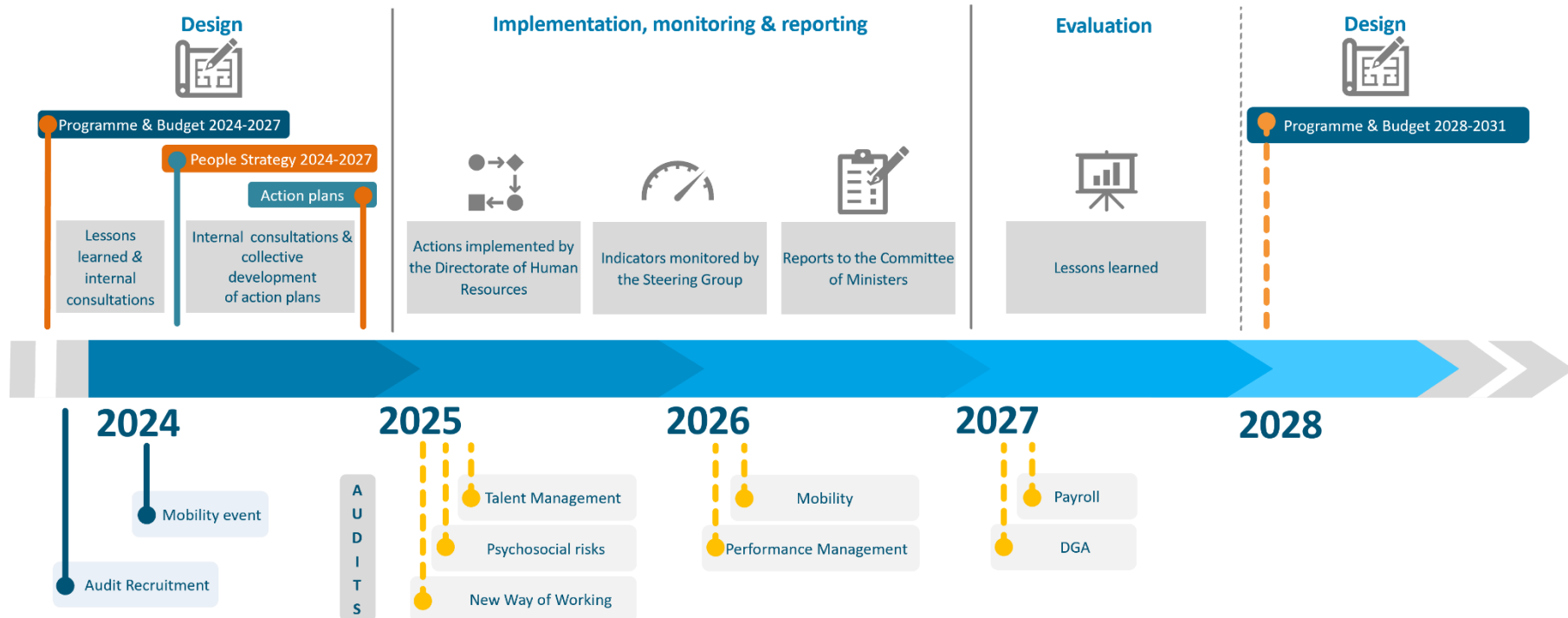
Theory of change





Calendar

The **Action Plans**, following on from the four high-level strategic priorities, will be developed by the **4th quarter of 2024**, thus concluding the design phase with clear roadmaps. Action plans will contain **specific and operational objectives along with associated indicators** to be able to measure achievements at the end of the implementation phase (2025-2026). Action plans will be accompanied by an **analysis of necessary resources, as well as risks and mitigating measures**.



While certain activities are ongoing since the previous strategy and some new initiatives have already commenced, the main **implementation phase** ('change', cf. Lewin) of this strategy will be **2025-2026**, together with monitoring and reporting, reserving sufficient time in **2027 for evaluation** ('freeze', cf. Lewin) and preparation of the next Programme and Budget and associated People Strategy objectives.

The need to preserve time for **evaluation before launching a new cycle** was one of the lessons learned from the People Strategy 2019-2023. Therefore, 2027 should be dedicated to evaluation to be ready to contribute to the next programmatic cycle. A **communication plan** is associated with the change management approach.



The following sections will detail the three intertwined substantive strategic priorities, as well as the supportive strategic priority, all designed to strengthen the Organisation’s work environment.

Workforce management

Planning workforce needs	Attracting and sourcing	Selecting and onboarding

Diversity, inclusion and well-being

Acting for enlarged diversity	Embracing inclusion	Supporting well-being

Organisational development

Boosting mobility	Enhancing the learning culture	Embracing a new working culture

Modernisation of the HR function

Strengthening HR's advisory role	Providing data and HR analytics	Embracing technological opportunities



I. Workforce management

This section covers workforce planning, attractiveness of the Organisation for candidates and how the Organisation can render recruitment processes more efficient, from the dissemination of vacancy notices and search for candidates up to the actual onboarding of those who have been hired.

Planning workforce needs



Although a workforce planning exercise has been conducted on a regular basis by DHR in consultation with management since 2012,⁵ additional efforts and adaptive tools to **better forecast** and scenario-plan to **anticipate needs** and fill them in an adequate and timely manner are needed, whether through professional development of staff or external recruitment.

Improving workforce planning is of strategic importance to ensure overall business continuity and to **address evolving needs**, societal changes and socio-economic or political crises in a flexible manner. This, in particular, covers the impact artificial intelligence will have on working methods.

Proper workforce planning requires a **holistic approach** that encompasses analysis, forecasting, strategic development and continuous monitoring. By effectively planning, the Organisation, through close co-operation between DHR and hiring entities, can ensure that it has the right people, with the right skills, at the right time, to achieve its objectives.

The associated Action Plan would include an overall workforce planning approach, ensuring data-driven decisions (such as anticipating recruitment needs, focusing sourcing on less-represented member States etc.) and specific measures for timely succession planning.

Attracting and sourcing



The Council of Europe statistics on applications and comparisons with other international organisations will require more in-depth analysis. It is clear however that the percentage of suitable candidates at the end of selection processes has decreased post-pandemic. Based on this and on recurrent feedback from hiring managers, improving the attractiveness of the Organisation as an **employer-of-choice** emerges as a need. Therefore, one strategic priority is to focus on the Organisation's attractiveness, to attract and retain the right talent, making sure that they are engaged and aligned with the Organisation's goals and values.

Hence, enhancing the Organisation's **capacity to source candidates** and effectively select – in a transparent and equitable manner – which talent to hire, is of crucial importance and, as such, part of the strategic priorities. This applies to all types of employment, including long-term roles, turnover profiles, junior professionals, secondees, temporary staff as well as different types of traineeships.

The related Action Plan will incorporate the recommendations and agreed actions of the Internal Audit on Recruitment⁶ which include a targeted and enhanced use of a variety of recruitment channels (including search for passive candidates), building the Organisation's **employer brand**.

⁵ [DD\(2019\)498 - Strategic Workforce Plan 2019-2023](#)

⁶ Internal Audit (2023) 02 *Recruitment at the Council of Europe Internal audit report of 22/02/2024* by the Directorate of Internal Oversight (DIO)



The Organisation, as a potential employer, should highlight what working for the Council of Europe means in terms of the Organisation's culture, values and vision. It should also emphasise working conditions, including compensation and benefits as well as development opportunities.

The related Action Plan should also address **reward and recognition** through *inter alia* an examination of the Organisation's use of the salary scales and how jobs are classified. The grade and salary framework should be better adapted to different career paths, including for specialist profiles that have proven more difficult to attract, and possibly including a career development scheme for (non-managerial) experts. Furthermore, other reward and recognition mechanisms should be identified, to better correspond to the international job market where the Organisation operates and to attract the top talent the Organisation needs.

Selecting and onboarding



First, **speeding up recruitment processes**, to reduce the risk of losing candidates and to minimise gaps between incumbents will help teams, which are today often stretched whilst awaiting replacements. This is one of many areas where the strategic priorities are mutually reinforcing since this objective would also serve to improve well-being of teams, by fostering early knowledge transfer and avoiding unnecessary workload caused by, amongst other things, loss of knowledge and backlogs. Speeding up recruitment processes should not however be at the detriment of transparency and fairness.

This thematic Action Plan should address ways to plan, set timelines and customise the Organisation's selection processes to better fit the needs for different levels and types of recruitment, avoiding any unnecessary delays. One high-priority project already underway consists in choosing and implementing a **new IT recruitment tool** for candidates and internal actors, which should help in improving the candidate experience and provide for technology-assisted application screening and candidate communication.

A new and adapted recruitment platform would speed up the process and free up resources for more value-adding activities across HR functions in the Organisation. Data protection and equitable treatment of candidates should be at the heart of any measures in this area. Furthermore, **modernising assessment tools** is essential to ensure that they align with current job market demands and technology trends, to attract and accurately evaluate the most qualified candidates.

Another piece of work already commenced, and which will be part of this thematic Action Plan, is the redesign of the **onboarding – or induction – programme**, for staff in headquarters as well as in the field to ensure a smooth integration of all types of Secretariat members. A recurrent area of concern is a holistic and coherent onboarding of staff, where DHR, other services and hiring entities all play a part. Onboarding is about integrating new staff into the Organisation, familiarising them with its culture and working environment. It aims to provide necessary information, training and support to ensure a smooth and effective start to the job. Integrating technology and ensuring a comprehensive and engaging onboarding experience can significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of talent acquisition, leading to a more engaged and productive workforce.



II. Diversity, inclusion and well-being

This section covers **diversity** which, in line with the Council of Europe Code of Conduct,⁷ means that different geographical, social, religious and ethnic backgrounds, generations, different genders, or sexual orientations and viewpoints are represented in the workplace; **inclusion** defined as providing fair treatment and equal access to opportunities and resources for all, in particular those who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised; and **well-being** of staff in the workplace. Generally, all HR processes should be developed in such a way that they are fair for persons from all backgrounds and the quality of life at work is crucial for staff well-being and ability to contribute to the Organisation's mission successfully and productively.

Acting for enlarged diversity



Diversity in the workplace refers to the representation of a wide range of traits and characteristics among staff, as described above. **Enlarging diversity** is crucial as it brings varied perspectives, experiences and skills to work, fostering creativity and innovation. With a diverse workforce, the Organisation is better equipped to understand and serve an equally diverse range of people. To enhance diversity, focused efforts can be made in recruitment and hiring practices, aiming for a broad and unbiased search for talent that reflects the diversity in all of the Organisation's member States. Additionally, providing diversity training helps in raising awareness about unconscious biases and reinforcing the value of a diverse workforce.

Beyond the dimensions of diversity that are currently monitored (gender, nationality and age), as suggested above, many others could be considered (ethnicity, religious and social background, staff with disabilities, etc.), bearing in mind however that requesting information about such (self-declarative) characteristics could be perceived as intrusive.

As per Council of Europe Staff Rules, **equality of opportunity** means that the Organisation aims to have at least 45% of each gender represented at all levels and types of job.⁸ The Organisation also aims to have a fair geographical distribution of Secretariat jobs among nationals of member States as per existing guidelines.⁹ Whilst several other characteristics are taken into account in the Council of Europe non-discrimination policies, there are currently no other targets in place.

Whilst the Organisation's workforce counts two thirds of women overall and half women, half men at grade A4, the **gender balance needs improvement** in several entities at A5-A6 managerial level. Furthermore, there is a vast majority of women amongst support staff, where a reverse rebalancing, with a larger proportion of male colleagues, would be welcomed. As regards **geographical diversity**, several member States are under-represented according to the indicative points system. Means for improving this situation are closely linked to the improvement of **sourcing strategies** mentioned under the previous strategic priority.

⁷ [Council of Europe Code of Conduct](#), p.13

⁸ [Staff Regulations Article IV, Staff Rule on entry into service, Article 430](#)

⁹ [CM/Del/Concl\(78\)281 - Conclusions of the 281st meeting of the Ministers' Deputies, January 1978](#) – Appendix IX, p. 98



Embracing inclusion



Inclusion in the workplace is about ensuring that all staff, regardless of their diverse backgrounds, **feel valued, respected and integrated into the organisational culture**. Inclusion is key to unlocking the potential benefits of a diverse workforce. It is about creating a work environment where differences are embraced and where every individual can contribute meaningfully and realise their potential.

To foster inclusion, the Organisation should focus on inclusive leadership training, empowering leaders to create a culture where every voice is heard and every team member feels involved. An **inclusive culture** not only boosts employee engagement and retention but also drives productivity by allowing everyone to contribute their best.

That is why it would be strategically important to **diversify the workforce in a multidimensional way** to better represent the diversity of populations in the Organisation's member States and to make sure that the Organisation is a truly **inclusive and engaging workplace**.

The Action Plan focussed on diversity and inclusion (D&I) should include concrete measures such as limiting external candidates' eligibility for certain external vacancies to a set of non- or under-represented member States in accordance with the provision that allows to target certain groups.¹⁰ Other actions deemed compatible with the principle of non-discrimination may be considered. Furthermore, it is expected that the **Policy on Diversity, Inclusion and Non-Discrimination** currently being drafted would include a focus also on candidates and staff with disabilities and caring responsibilities. D&I are of cross-cutting interest and need to also be taken into account in establishing other Action Plans, amongst others those related to recruitment (e.g. to minimise the negative impact of biases) and onboarding.

Supporting well-being



The Organisation needs to support the physical and mental well-being of staff as it is a *sine qua non* condition for them to perform their duties and to fittingly represent the Organisation. The initial results of a recent staff survey¹¹ show that whilst Council of Europe staff experience much fewer physical health issues than the benchmark, perceived stress levels are higher. Vulnerabilities is another area for concern as almost 6 out of 10 respondents face at least one difficult personal situation and 14% of respondents carry caring responsibilities for a dependent or sick person. Similarly, whilst the **engagement levels** are very high and the quality of life at work, as well as professional relations, are assessed more positively than the benchmark, there is a perceived lack of work-life balance. Maintaining the high level of commitment to the Organisation and staff's strong sense of their work being meaningful, while providing measures to **improve work-life balance**, will therefore be important.

¹⁰ [Staff Rule on entry into service, paragraph 420.1](#): "Specific conditions for appointment, including but not limited to age, physical capacities, language skills, and citizenship of a particular member State, may be set in respect of vacancies provided that such conditions have an objective and reasonable justification."

¹¹ Reference pending results of this Health, Engagement and Vulnerabilities survey being finalised by the insurer, discussed with the Well-being Network, Staff Committee and presented to staff/published on Intranet.



Measures would usefully include strengthening management and leadership practices, as a **shared management culture** promoting collective intelligence, co-operation, fairness, transparency and more inclusive dialogue, debate and decision-making are all key to a positive work environment. Managers are playing a key role in the application of policies and in the creation of good working conditions for their teams. DHR ensures that managers have the right tools to fulfil this daily mission and that they are aware of training opportunities, the availability of HR Advisers, HR procedures and guidelines, etc.

The Organisation also needs a solid framework for **preventing, detecting and addressing issues**, including dealing with long-term sick leaves - protecting absent staff and their teammates - and providing managers with adequate information and tools for handling replacements and workload. It is also key to ensure that flexible work arrangements are adequately put into practice, including the right to disconnect, to contribute to the attractiveness of the Organisation, to **improve the overall well-being** of staff and to maintain the high level of engagement. The Organisation has already implemented tools to provide support, advice, coaching and dispute resolution for staff. These mechanisms need to be strengthened and promoted within the Organisation to be better known, used and effective. It may also be useful to include measures to encourage staff to make healthy life-style choices.

Finally, in addition to various awareness-raising measures, including the presentation of the new Ethics Framework of the Council of Europe to all staff members held at the end of 2023, further awareness-raising efforts and training should be developed to ensure that **ethical behaviours** become the DNA of the Council of Europe organisational and managerial culture. The Organisation also needs to continue to prioritise the handling of harassment issues and unacceptable conduct as necessary, with the support of the Ethics Officer and the Well-being Network. Furthermore, transparency and impartiality being of the utmost importance in taking recruitment, promotion and mobility decisions, these principles will also be reflected in related Action Plans.



III. Organisational development

Development takes place at individual, team and organisational levels. This section regroups areas that contribute to organisational development and the evolution of the organisational culture: to boost mobility, enhance the learning culture and embrace new ways of working, striving for an agile and resilient staff and Organisation.

Boosting mobility



Despite a fair amount and steady increase of staff movements across the Organisation, as well as collaboration between entities, there is a persistent perception that the Organisation is siloed and lacking a certain corporate identity. Furthermore, the final recommendations of the external audit on decentralisation¹² are expected to recommend several measures regarding field offices, with the overall aim to optimise the Organisation's impact across all member States. To address these areas, a strategic priority continues to focus on the **development of mobility opportunities**, which should also enhance the overall flexibility and agility of staff, whilst recognising the need to maintain an adequate level of expertise and institutional memory and not to lose sight of the importance of further consolidating the strategic triangle of standard-setting, monitoring and co-operation.

In addition to the Mobility Event organised at the beginning of 2024, which numerous colleagues attended and which received very positive feedback from all actors and visitors, and other initiatives, the associated Action Plan will need to include measures conducive to mobility and to ensure that it is a positive experience for staff. The Action Plan should consider financial **incentives for mobility** to the field and the creation of 'space' (knowledge that a certain number of roles regularly become vacant, providing opportunities to return to headquarters) so that staff are serene about a field mobility. Accompanying measures such as cultural awareness and language training as well as robust and specific onboarding (and appropriate support for staff returning to headquarters) should be part of the package. Compulsory mobility, with the exception of highly specialised profiles, will be further considered.

Including **knowledge-transfer tools** (see also below) will be key to mitigating the risk of losing valuable expertise or institutional memory due to staff mobility. Apart from mobility between the field and headquarters, measures to encourage internal mobility between entities should be put in place, while acknowledging that certain profiles are highly specialised and that institutional memory must be safeguarded. The related, new Staff Regulation¹³ shall be translated into concrete measures for mobility to become a tangible criterion for promotion.

External mobility opportunities with other international organisations should also be encouraged. Rotational roles for suitable profiles could be identified and regular career conversations introduced, where both staff and managers, as well as DHR, would play a role.

¹² Reference pending final recommendations on Decentralisation to be delivered by the External Auditors

¹³ [Staff Regulations, Article V - Career Development, paragraph 5.7](#): "Staff members shall be encouraged and supported to acquire experience in different sectors and duty stations of the Organisation. Staff mobility shall be taken into consideration when staff members' merits are assessed for the purpose of promotion."



Enhancing the learning culture



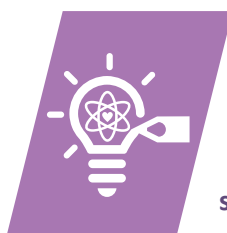
As part of organisational development, the Organisation should strengthen the **learning and growth culture** that enhances staff's skills and knowledge and drives innovation to ensure that the Organisation is successful in its undertakings and is equipped to cope with societal changes.

The foundation of a learning culture is leadership that advocates for and actively participates in continuous learning. Structured learning paths such as the LEAP (Leadership Programme) also contribute to **strengthening change management** in the Organisation. Other structured learning paths need to be further developed to provide opportunities for staff's professional development and to facilitate the changing of career paths, thus creating internal talent pools allowing for internal staff's professional development, growth and mobility as an alternative to external recruitments.

Focus on learning and **knowledge-sharing** is an objective that is also part of the Results-Oriented Management Strategy 2023-2027 that the Organisation adopted in 2023.¹⁴ The People Strategy seeks to provide a coherent approach to contribute to such a results-oriented culture. The related People Strategy Action Plan(s) should therefore include actions to embed the **results-oriented approach** to ensure more effective operations, a better alignment of resources and enhanced organisational performance.

Finally, offboarding, including **measures to facilitate transitions** (mobility, promotions, departures...); knowledge transfer mechanisms in the context of succession planning; exit interviews to collect feedback from departing colleagues, should also be considered as part of the Organisation's co-development strategies.

Embracing a new working culture



DHR's role to facilitate the transition to a new working culture is included in this strategy as an important contribution to modernising the organisational culture while ensuring the well-being and productivity of teams and managers. Expectations from staff and candidates on maintaining or improving work-life balance are high and include new ways of working, including **new types of office spaces, remote work ways to collaborate through new technology and more.**

Whilst other DGA entities lead the work on the "Bricks" (office space) and "Bytes" (IT), DHR is a main actor when it comes to the third B, i.e. "Behaviours". The latter includes the **managerial culture**: empowering middle management to reduce levels of approvals, implying the necessity to take responsibility and assume accountability. The ability of managers to address performance issues, at all levels, and be co-owners of strategic decisions, are also key elements of a more collaborative organisational culture. Managers are already assessed on their managerial competencies (and may benefit from LEAP and 360° feedback), but overall, the Organisation needs to make sure that people management is seen as an integral part of roles at managerial level, that adequate time is dedicated to managing staff, that managers are given the appropriate training and support to have the skills and competencies to manage effectively (including the challenge of hybrid teams with the development of teleworking).

¹⁴ [CM/Inf\(2023\)8 Results-oriented management strategy 2023-2027](#)



DHR should continue to support the management of probationary periods as well as unsatisfactory performance at all levels and to provide tools to managers and staff to detect issues early on and find adequate solutions when the need arises.

Additionally, further use of **collective intelligence**, as part of a new working culture, would increase staff's participation in decision-making processes. To do this, it is appropriate to develop participatory methods, to encourage everyone to speak up and to foster a sense of sharing a common goal. Overall, staff has an important role to play in building a new working culture, demonstrating the core values of integrity, professionalism and respect, as they should guide the Organisation's working methods. How the values are adhered to should continue to be assessed in the context of recruitment, training, mobility, promotion and performance management.

As regards both learning and work culture developments, **Artificial Intelligence (AI) is part of technology changes** in the external environment where staff, as experts in their respective fields, should be involved in seizing opportunities, whilst mitigating the risks, including ethical, that these innovations also represent. By proactively addressing the changes AI brings, the Organisation can prepare its staff with the skills they need for the future; ensure that the Organisation's recruitment strategies are aligned with emerging needs; and overall, maintain a competitive and innovative workforce. This would obviously be done in co-ordination with DIT and its working group on AI, as well as other entities concerned by the risks that AI brings. Integrating AI into the Organisation requires fostering a relationship between human staff members and AI, to capitalise on their respective strengths to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of services. It is important to include the required competencies in job descriptions and develop bespoke training programmes that prepare both current staff and future talent for the changing demands of AI-enhanced roles. This will ensure jobs that are adaptable and an Organisation ready to take advantage of AI to innovate and improve working conditions for staff.



IV. Modernisation of the HR function

Recognising that the backbone of any successful organisation consists of its staff, **DHR** is committed to expand its capabilities to support the Organisation's People Strategy and respond to the Reykjavik goals of transparency, effectiveness and efficiency. Serving as a strategic business partner, DHR should respond to entities' needs and align with the overarching organisational goals.

The modernisation of the HR function involves investing in advanced training, embracing innovative HR technologies and adopting innovative HR practices, equipping itself with the tools and expertise necessary to respond adeptly to the current and future challenges and to be a proactive force in shaping the organisational culture and driving strategic objectives. This is crucial in ensuring that the People Strategy and associated Action Plans are aligned with the overarching organisational goals, thus enabling a more agile, responsive and forward-thinking HR function. This is about **empowering DHR**, strengthening its role in various processes and making it more effective and results-oriented.

Strengthening HR's advisory role



As a business partner, DHR should ensure a stronger advisory role to more proactively support the Organisation and its managers and teams in delivering and ensuring efficient and effective services to the entities. To do so, DHR should also strengthen its internal **knowledge-sharing and collaboration**, speed up and streamline processes with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, make use of shared digital workspaces and filing; as well as strengthen exchanges on good practices with other international organisations to identify further improvement areas.

This change requires the setting up of new tools, to enable HR staff to free their time from unnecessary administrative and technical burdens. These savings should also be used to provide **more effective services**, including early support for needs assessments; comprehensive workforce management; and deeper analysis of the assessment framework for recruitment and of the salary scale and job classification, as well as other elements, to build the Council of Europe employer brand and ensure effective working conditions to the benefit of staff and the Organisation.

Providing data and HR analytics



Putting in place a comprehensive, co-ordinated and fit-for-purpose capability to collect and analyse HR data would allow DHR to advise managers in an optimal manner at all levels in the Organisation. This work will build on existing HR data which is not however currently available in a single repository and not easily available and exploitable to all users in the HR function.

Enhancing the Organisation's ability to be **data-driven in the field of HR** would contribute to more efficient and effective advice and decisions. It should allow DHR to be more data-driven when deciding on the best way to fulfil the Organisation's staff needs amongst internal mobility, internal development and training, or external recruitment. It should also reinforce DHR's capacity to plan and anticipate needs, thus enabling better programming and budgeting of the HR function, including the setting up, monitoring and evaluation of **relevant indicators**. Developing this dimension, ensuring a sufficient level of data protection and privacy safeguards, would be a first step towards a more comprehensive data-driven piloting of the Organisation's people management.



Embracing technological opportunities



The simplification and automation of administrative activities, in order to reduce or eliminate tasks with limited or no value-added, requires seizing new technological opportunities. This involves notably embracing Artificial Intelligence and other technological possibilities whilst addressing associated challenges. Such technologies should be chosen based on proven best practice with the aim to free up resources for substantive work and for providing advice and support to staff and managers.

HR IT tools have considerably evolved over the last decade. Tools already available on the market can significantly improve the **sourcing and selection of candidates**, including for example searching and approaching passive candidates or using platforms in a targeted way to improve diversity. They could also help to find the right balance between internal and external recruitment, as well as between general (large competitions) and specific vacancies, to fill roles with right profiles in a timely manner, which is a recurrent issue for managers in the Organisation.

Such tools could also increase **self-service for staff**, for example through the wider use of chatbots, provided that it saves HR time and is of benefit to internal clients, whether in their capacity as managers of teams or individual staff members.

Finally, they could support other important aspects of the strategy, to improve recruitment through to onboarding or, with an advanced Learning Management System, enhance staff's **learning experience**.



Appendices

- Appendix 1: [Steering Group – composition](#)
- Appendix 2: [Consultation process](#) (diagram)
- Appendix 3: [Summary of brainstorming sessions and Ideas box suggestions – HR specialists, Staff](#)
- Appendix 4: [Summary of brainstorming sessions with Heads of External Offices](#)
- Appendix 5: [Summary of interviews with Heads of Major Administrative Entities and Steering Group’s input](#)
- Appendix 6: [Staff Committee’s input](#)
- Appendix 7: [Organisational Culture - staff survey results](#) (as published on Intranet by DIO on 5 January 2024)
- Appendix 8: Health, Engagement and Vulnerabilities survey – summary of results (Malakoff-Humanis) [pending finalisation and presentation to Well-being Network and other parties]
- Appendix 9: [Decentralisation external audit](#)
- Appendix 10: [Recruitment internal audit – main findings and recommendations](#)
- Appendix 11: [Council of Europe “Staff Data Report” 2022](#)