

Council of Europe Action Plan for Azerbaijan 2022-2026

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Action Plan for Azerbaijan 2022-2026

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council of Europe Action Plan for Azerbaijan 2022-2025 is a strategic programming instrument that aims to bring Azerbaijan's legislation, institutions and practice further into line with Council of Europe standards in the areas of human rights, the rule of law and democracy. The Action Plan is intended to support the country's efforts to honour its obligations as a Council of Europe member State.

The Action Plan priorities take into account decisions, resolutions, recommendations, conclusions of reports and opinions of, *inter alia*: the Committee of Ministers (CM), the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (Congress), the Commissioner for Human Rights (the Commissioner), the European Commission for Democracy through Law of the Council of Europe (the Venice Commission), the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR), the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ), the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), the Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL) and other monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies. It also takes into account Azerbaijan's national reform agenda, including the strategic document "*Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development*", the Strategy for Socio-Economic Development in 2021-2025, the National Action Plan (NAP) to combat domestic violence for 2020-2023 and other documents.

Under this Action Plan, the Council of Europe and the Azerbaijani authorities have agreed to continue to carry forward jointly, through co-operation programmes, reforms to improve the implementation of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) case law and judgments at the national level, improve the criminal justice system and ensure fundamental freedoms, further build the capacities of the media, enhance data protection, promote gender equality and combat violence against women and domestic violence, promote children's rights, ensure social rights, further increase the effectiveness, accountability and transparency of the judiciary, including constitutional justice, step up the fight against corruption and money laundering, combat cybercrime, further advance reform of the prison system, conduct electoral reform, enhance dialogue between the national authorities and civil society organisations, contribute to environmental protection, promote human rights education for young people and develop a democratic and inclusive climate in schools. The parties have also identified new areas for co-operation, namely aligning national anti-discrimination legislation and practice with Council of Europe standards, ensuring freedom of expression, artificial intelligence, combating drug abuse and illicit trafficking and combating trafficking in human beings in line with national legislation and international obligations of Azerbaijan.

Discussions have been held with the Azerbaijani authorities on possible specific post-conflict issues.

The Action Plan also builds on the outcomes of the previous Action Plans under which positive developments were reported in the following areas: promoting gender equality; promoting children's rights; judicial capacity building and improving court management; fight against corruption and cybercrime; promoting freedom of the media and improving journalistic standards; improving prison management and building the capacity of medical staff in prisons; and developing youth human rights education.

The Action Plan will also contribute to the implementation of the *UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* by supporting the *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs), notably Goal 3 – on good health and well-being, 4 - on quality education; 5 - on gender equality; 10 - on reduced inequalities; and 16 - on peace, justice and strong institutions.

The overall budget for this Action Plan totals € 9.6 million.

The successive Action Plans serve to bring the legislation into line with European and international standards, enhance institutional capacities, introduce best practices and, ultimately, to improve living standards for the citizens of Azerbaijan.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Action Plan	Council of Europe Action Plan for Azerbaijan 2022-2025
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AML/CFT	Anti-Money Laundering/Countering Financing of Terrorism
ASK	Azerbaijan Entrepreneurs' Confederation
ATUC	Azerbaijan Trade Union Confederation
Bern Convention	Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats
Budapest Convention	Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime (ETS No. 185)
CCPE	Consultative Council of European Prosecutors
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEPEJ	European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice
CM	Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe
Congress	Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
Convention 108	Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data
Convention 108+	Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data and its protocol
COP198	Conference of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism
CPT	European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
ECSR	European Committee of Social Rights
ECRI	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
ESC	European Social Charter
EU	European Union
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
FCNM	Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
GR-DEM	Rapporteur Group on Democracy
GRECO	Group of States Against Corruption
GRETA	Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
HELP	Council of Europe European Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals
ICESCO	Islamic World, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
Istanbul Convention	Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210)
Lanzarote Convention	Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (CETS No. 201)
Lanzarote Committee	Committee of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse
Lugano Convention	Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law
MONEYVAL	Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism
NAP	National Action Plan
NAYORA	National Assembly of Youth Organisations of Azerbaijan
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NSC	North-South Centre of the Council of Europe
OB	Ordinary budget
ODGP	Office of the Directorate General of Programmes
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PACE	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
PGG	European Union/Council of Europe Eastern Partnership for Good Governance Co-operation Framework
PMM	Council of Europe Project Management Methodology
SDGs	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The Commissioner	Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights
THB	Trafficking in Human Beings
UN	United Nations
UNAOC	United Nations Alliance of Civilizations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
VAW	Violence against women
VC	Voluntary contribution
Venice Commission	European Commission for Democracy through Law

PART I - INTRODUCTION

1.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW

1.1.1 AZERBAIJAN AND THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Republic of Azerbaijan became the 43rd member State of the Council of Europe on 25th January 2001. Accordingly, it has entered into, and has agreed to honour, several specific commitments which are listed in Parliamentary Assembly *Opinion 222 (2000)*.

Azerbaijan has accepted the obligations incumbent on all member States under Article 3 of the Statute¹: compliance with the principles of pluralist democracy and the rule of law as well as respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons placed under its jurisdiction.

To date, the country has signed and ratified 65 treaties of the Council of Europe, signed seven more and is subject to a number of Council of Europe mechanisms and bodies, including the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (CM), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights (the Commissioner), the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), the Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO), the Conference of the Parties under the Council of Europe Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism (COP198), the Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL), the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR), the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (the Congress), the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) and the Consultative Council of European Prosecutors (CCPE). Azerbaijan has also been party to the Enlarged Partial Agreement of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe (NSC) since 1 August of 2010.

Past programmes backed by the European Union aimed to fight corruption, to promote efficiency in the justice system, to improve the quality of journalism education and training, to improve the role and capacity of the Justice Academy, to train legal professionals and to support reform of the prison system. Similarly, voluntary contributions from Council of Europe member States have helped fund projects in the areas of journalist training, a youth policy project on human rights education and democratic citizenship, electoral assistance and civil society. The two Action Plans devised to support democratic reforms in Azerbaijan for the period of 2014-2016 (extended to 2017) and 2018-2021 have ever since provided a more strategic framework for co-operation with the Council of Europe.

1.1.2 ADDED VALUE OF THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Council of Europe technical assistance programmes form an integral part of the unique strategic triangle of standard-setting, monitoring and co-operation: the development of legally binding standards is linked to their monitoring by independent mechanisms and supplemented by technical co-operation to facilitate their implementation. The Organisation's actions are developed and implemented in areas where the Council of Europe has strong expertise and added value.

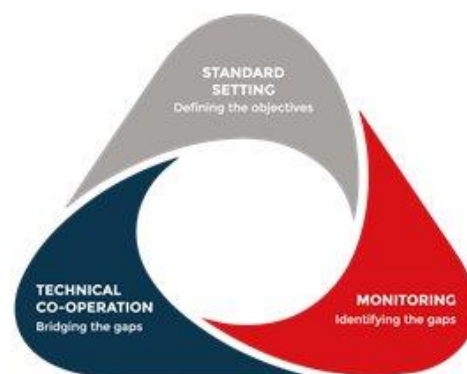


Figure 1: Council of Europe strategic triangle

¹ Council of Europe constitutional document - <http://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/0900001680306052>

1.1.3 MAIN FINDINGS OF MONITORING MECHANISMS AND EXPERT ADVISORY BODIES

This Action Plan builds, to a large extent, on the most recent decisions, resolutions, recommendations, report conclusions, opinions and findings of the Council of Europe's monitoring and expert advisory bodies in respect of the country. The results of the previous Action Plan with the Council of Europe for the period 2018-2021 are also taken into consideration. In addition, the present Action Plan takes into account the challenges identified in the Secretary General's annual reports on the State of Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law in Europe. In addition, the Action Plan reflects the priorities of the country's reforms, as set out in the strategic document "*Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development*", the National Action Plan to combat domestic violence for 2020-2023, the National Action Plan for 2020-2024 on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in the Republic of Azerbaijan and the National Action Plan for the Promotion of Open Government 2020-2022.

In developing the present Action Plan and designing the technical co-operation support given to reforms, the gaps identified by the Council of Europe institutions, monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies have been taken into account, with the relevant documents being included in the appendix.

Main results of the previous Action Plans

The present Action Plan takes into account the following (non exhaustive) list of outcomes of the previous Action Plans with Azerbaijan 2014-2017 and 2018-2021²:

- The training capacities of the Justice Academy were significantly increased.
- A road map for improvement of the criminal justice system in Azerbaijan was developed and presented to the authorities.
- Curricula on "Journalism Ethics" and "Media and Freedom of Expression", including four textbooks, were developed for use in universities; 250 journalists from different regions of Azerbaijan were trained in freedom of expression and the right to privacy offline and online; gender equality and media; and media coverage of elections.
- The Azerbaijan Press Council adopted amendments to its Code of Professional Ethics, introducing a new standard-setting document entitled "*Protection of the principle of gender equality and non-discrimination*".
- A guide on "*Gender equality and the media*" for Azerbaijani news producers was produced and disseminated.
- The curriculum for a new course on "*Gender equality and media freedom*" was prepared. The new course will be introduced as of the 2020-2021 academic year at the Journalism Faculty of Baku State University.
- The National Action Plan for Combating Domestic Violence was approved.
- Azerbaijan ratified the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention). A gap analysis of legislation, policies and practices aimed at preventing and combating online child sexual exploitation and abuse and strengthening multi-sectoral co-operation was conducted.
- Court management was improved based on the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) indicators and methodology - five pilot courts have now achieved clearance rates close to 100% for all categories of cases and no backlog has been identified; disposition times are now considerably shorter.
- A road map for the dissemination of CEPEJ tools was finalised. Tools on access to courts for vulnerable groups and on the communication strategy for the judiciary were developed.
- The national legal framework on targeted financial sanctions against terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction was analysed and recommendations were made and incorporated in a new draft law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Targeted Financial Sanctions and related amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure.
- The capacities of medical staff and prison managers were enhanced in accordance with international standards.
- Action Plans on prison management and prison health care were revised and approved by the national authorities.

² Council of Europe Action Plans for Azerbaijan: 2014-2017 (*ODGProg/Inf(2014)2-rev*); 2018-2021 (*GR-DEM(2018)15*)

- An anti-discrimination/equality platform bringing together 13 civil society organisations and experts started work on reinforcing the role of civil society in this area and on enhancing dialogue between civil society and institutions such as the Ombudsperson.

In order to address the unprecedented Covid-19 outbreak and to continue implementing the previous Action Plan under these circumstances, the workplans for individual projects were modified in spring 2020 in line with overall priorities and in compliance with the restrictions in force. This involved applying mitigating measures, where necessary, with the focus on both programming adaptations and technical solutions, especially in the area of IT-based solutions. The same approach will be applied to implementing this Action Plan if circumstances so require.

The main strategies/adjustments to pandemic-related restrictions can be summarised as follows:

- Programming adaptations: focusing on types of activities that are easier to transfer to online formats and/or using the lockdown for specific online focused activities. This can include for example distance learning, training of trainers, desk studies/work, expert analysis, online communication campaigns/events with extensive use of social media postings and newsletters, etc.
- Technical solutions: transferring activities such as meetings, consultancies or training to online formats. This can include for example online monitoring of the learning progress of end-line beneficiaries, development of online training materials, written procedures, questionnaire-based assessments complemented by consultations through videoconferencing, development of awareness-raising and communication material and the production of online-specific support material.
- Response to specific requests from partners to address the health crisis while upholding the objectives of the Action Plan.

Consultation process

This Action Plan has been prepared following consultations with the authorities of Azerbaijan. Consultations with international partners, especially the European Union, have also taken place in the course of preparing this document.

The Committee of Ministers is to examine the final report on the implementation of the Action Plan 2018-2021, take note of its outcomes and approve the new Action Plan for Azerbaijan 2022-2025.

1.2 ACTION PLAN GOALS

The present Action Plan is a strategic programming instrument for the period from 2022 to 2025. Its **goal** is to support reforms in Azerbaijan which will bring Azerbaijani legislation, institutions and practice further into line with Council of Europe standards in the areas of human rights, the rule of law and democracy and so support the country's efforts to honour its obligations as a Council of Europe member State.

The Action Plan **areas of co-operation** are as follows:

- The Council of Europe will continue to support the authorities of Azerbaijan in moving forward (and completing where possible) the reforms undertaken in strategic areas, notably:
 - improving implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) case law at the national level and strengthening mechanisms for the execution of judgments of the national courts;
 - improving the criminal justice system;
 - ensuring fundamental freedoms;
 - capacity building for the mass media;
 - enhancing information security and personal data protection;
 - preventing and combating gender-based and domestic violence and promoting and enhancing gender equality, and improving women's access to justice;
 - protecting and promoting children's rights;
 - ensuring social rights;

- increasing the independence and effectiveness of the judiciary, including constitutional justice;
 - strengthening the capacities of the anti-corruption and anti-money laundering bodies;
 - fighting cybercrime;
 - improving detention conditions;
 - support for electoral reform;
 - enhancing dialogue between government and civil society institutions;
 - strengthening youth participation and building capacities for human rights and citizenship education with young people.
- The Council of Europe and the authorities of Azerbaijan have jointly identified new areas for co-operation based on the more recent work carried out by Council of Europe institutions, monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies, including notably:
- ensuring and protecting freedom of expression;
 - criminal justice system;
 - artificial intelligence;
 - environmental protection;
 - promoting tolerance and non-discrimination;
 - combating trafficking in human beings
 - combating drug abuse and illicit trafficking of drugs.

Promoting gender equality and gender mainstreaming remains among the priorities of the present Action Plan. Gender mainstreaming, based on Council of Europe standards and recommendations, will help to better address the needs of individuals living in Azerbaijan without discrimination and to enhance the quality, effectiveness and sustainability of the Action Plan implementation.

In meeting its objectives, this Action Plan will also contribute to the implementation of the [UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

PART II - PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR 2022 - 2025

Below are details of the actions proposed per pillar, as set out in the Programme and Budget 2022-2025.

2.1 HUMAN RIGHTS

The work to further align legislative and institutional frameworks with international human rights standards in line with international obligations of Azerbaijan and to increase the capacity of relevant institutions to conduct reforms should be continued. This requires, inter alia, improving the effectiveness of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) system, supporting criminal justice reform, ensuring the right to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression, working on data protection and the applications of artificial intelligence (AI), preventing and combating gender-based violence and protecting and promoting children's rights, promoting gender equality, combating discrimination, assisting in the realisation of social rights in line with the European Social Charter (ESC) and working together to protect the environment. Likewise, efforts are still needed with regard to the implementation of ECtHR judgments in certain groups of cases pending execution before the Committee of Ministers.³

Technical co-operation to be implemented in this area has been designed taking into consideration the reports and conclusions of relevant Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies, including notably: the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), the Committee of Ministers (CM), the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights (the Commissioner), the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO), the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) and the Committee of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Committee).

³ [Azerbaijan Country Factsheet](#) published by the Department for the Execution of Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights

The actions under this pillar will contribute to the implementation by Azerbaijan of the following Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 4, target 7⁴; SDG 5, targets 1, 2,⁵ SDG 8, targets 7, 8⁶; SDG 10, targets 2, 3,⁷ SDG 16, target 2, 6, 10.⁸

2.1.1 EFFECTIVE ECHR IMPLEMENTATION

→ Enhancing the effectiveness of the ECHR system at national level

There is a need to further improve the national system of implementation of ECtHR judgments. The Council of Europe stands ready to engage in consultations in this regard with the relevant Azerbaijani authorities and provide technical assistance for the national institutions involved in the implementation of ECtHR judgments.

Effective national implementation of human rights largely depends on the ability of judges, prosecutors and lawyers to apply the ECHR and other human rights standards in their daily practice. Training of legal professionals was one of the priorities under the previous Action Plans for Azerbaijan 2014-2017 and 2018-2021. According to the latest data, in total 533 legal professionals (74% men and 26% women) increased their knowledge of European human rights standards in different regions of Azerbaijan (Ganja, Mingachevir, Shirvan) with the help of the national trainers (during 20 training sessions) over the period 2018-2020⁹. The Council of Europe contributed to improving human rights education in Azerbaijan by providing sectoral assistance to national training institutions, such as the Justice Academy, in aligning their teaching methodologies and practices with Council of Europe standards which led to visible improvements in developing training capacities and knowledge. In addition, under the Council of Europe Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals Programme (HELP) 50 lawyers (32 men and 18 women) successfully completed the courses on ECtHR procedures and admissibility criteria and were awarded HELP certificates.

Under the present Action Plan, activities designed to improve the implementation of European human rights standards in Azerbaijan with the focus on supporting national capacities to deliver targeted training on specific human rights standards will be continued. Analysis of the case law and discussions on particular issues among legal professionals will serve as a basis for avoiding repeated procedural and substantive violations in the future and so improve application of the ECHR at national level as well as contributing to the execution of judgments handed down by the ECtHR. Special attention will be paid to raising awareness about Protocol No. 16,¹⁰ which entered into force on 1 August 2021.¹¹ Capacities of judges and court staff to

⁴ Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Goal 4, target 7: Ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

⁵ Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Goal 5, target 1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere. Goal 5, target 2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

⁶ Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. Goal 8, target 7: Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms. Goal 8, target 8: Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.

⁷ Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries. Goal 10, target 2: Empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status. Goal 10, target 3: Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.

⁸ Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Goal 16, target 2: End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children. Goal 16, target 6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels. Goal 16, target 10: Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.

⁹ *Council of Europe Action Plan for Azerbaijan 2018-2021. Progress review report (01/01/2018-31/08/2020)*

¹⁰ CETS No. 214, Protocol No. 16 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

¹¹ Protocol No. 16 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms allows the highest courts and tribunals of a High Contracting Party, as specified by the latter, to request the European Court of Human Rights to give advisory opinions on questions of principle relating to the interpretation or application of the rights and freedoms defined in the Convention or the protocols thereto. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/214>

apply the ECtHR case law and the principles of independence and efficiency of the court system will be increased. It is also planned to make extensive use of the pool of trainers set up at the Justice Academy of Azerbaijan during earlier co-operation activities in order to increase capacities of judges and court staff.

The Council of Europe will support efforts aimed at enhancing the independence of the Bar Association, and the reform of the Bar Association's regulatory framework with a view, in particular, to increasing the number of practising lawyers, especially in the regions. The Council of Europe will support the Bar by enhancing the capacity of members to promote and protect human rights and represent their clients in an effective manner.

Azerbaijan is one of the countries where the right to conditional legal aid is a procedural right protected by the Constitution¹². There is, however, no law on free legal aid, establishing a fully-fledged system of free legal aid (for both preliminary and secondary legal aid) that guarantees access to justice for people in vulnerable situations, in line with the Council of Europe's recommendations. The need for free legal aid services is particularly great among vulnerable and disadvantaged groups (people with disabilities, children, pensioners, etc.) who face financial and other barriers when it comes to accessing professional legal representation and advice. The Council of Europe will provide assistance to the national authorities in reforming the legal aid system, including involving the Ombudsperson's Office in line with the ECRI recommendations¹³. In this regard, the capacity of the Bar Association to set up and provide free legal aid services through its offices and clinics will be supported and strengthened.

Expected outcomes:

- ✓ The system of adoption of general and individual measures for national implementation of ECtHR judgments is analysed and improved.
- ✓ The competence and skills of legal professionals (lawyers, judges, prosecutors, assistants to judges, independent practitioners) are improved, enabling them to apply the ECHR effectively.
- ✓ The role and capacity of the Justice Academy to train legal professionals including through the application of HELP methodology, and with due regard to the gender perspective, is increased.
- ✓ The independence of the Bar Association is enhanced.
- ✓ Reform of the regulatory framework of the Bar Association is facilitated.
- ✓ The capacity of the Bar Association to ensure smooth entry into the profession and to adhere to the code of ethics is strengthened.
- ✓ National capacities of existing frameworks that provide free legal aid services are enhanced.
- ✓ Regulatory frameworks pertaining to the provision of free legal aid services are enhanced.

Main national partners: Ministry of Justice, the Presidential Administration, the Parliament, Constitutional and Supreme Courts, Justice Academy, Training Centre of the Prosecutor General's Office, Bar Association, academics and civil society groups.

→ Supporting the criminal justice reform

The Council of Europe supported the Azerbaijani authorities in harmonising national judicial practices by providing analysis and recommendations to state actors in the light of the case law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) and other human rights protection mechanisms under the Action Plans for Azerbaijan 2014-2017 and 2018-2021. The functioning of the criminal justice system was analysed, and a roadmap of actions in line with Council of Europe standards developed and presented to national stakeholders. The roadmap may serve as a useful instrument for adopting the necessary measures for implementing the relevant ECtHR judgments. Under the current Action Plan, the Council of Europe will continue its efforts to support the national authorities in improving the justice system by providing analysis and recommendations on how to modify national legislation and practice, in particular as regards making the necessary amendments to the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure.

¹² Article 61 of Constitution guarantees the right to legal advice: I. Everyone has the right to obtain qualified legal advice. II. In specific cases envisaged by legislation legal advice shall be rendered free, at the government's expense.

¹³ <https://rm.coe.int/fourth-report-on-azerbaijan/16808b5581> p.14

Expected outcomes:

- ✓ The functioning of the criminal justice system is analysed, and recommendations are made on how to align the legislation and practice with Council of Europe standards.
- ✓ The amendments to the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure in line with the Council of Europe recommendations are introduced.

Main national partners: Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Presidential Administration, the Parliament, Prosecutor General's Office, Constitutional and Supreme Courts, and Academy of Justice.

→ Freedom of assembly

The Council of Europe stands ready to provide assistance to the Azerbaijani authorities in implementing the relevant provisions on freedom of assembly in practice.

Expected outcomes:

- ✓ The national legislation on public assemblies is in line with the requirements of Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).
- ✓ The relevant Convention-compliant provisions of national legislation on freedom of assembly are effectively applied in practice.

Main national partners: Ministry of Justice, Presidential Administration, Parliament.

→ Freedom of expression and the media

Ensuring freedom of expression and the media is crucial for a democratic society. The Council of Europe and Azerbaijan co-operated in the media sphere under the previous Action Plan. Specifically, ethical standards for media professionals, including gender mainstreaming in the media were promoted. For example, the Azerbaijan Press Council adopted amendments to its Code of Professional Ethics, introducing a new standard-setting document entitled "*Protection of the principle of gender equality and non-discrimination*". A Guide on "*Gender equality and the Media*" for Azerbaijani news producers was drawn up and the curriculum for a new course entitled "*Gender equality and media freedom*" was developed and introduced as of the 2020-2021 academic year at the Journalism Faculty of Baku State University. Journalists from different regions of Azerbaijan were trained in freedom of expression and the right to privacy offline and online, gender equality and media, media coverage of elections and gender-based violence cases. In addition, efforts were made to promote conflict sensitive journalism. Journalists from both online and offline media outlets received training in this area and a *Handbook on Conflict Sensitive Journalism* was developed by national and international experts for use by Azerbaijani media professionals.

At the same time, the need to improve legislation and practice in line with Council of Europe standards in these areas remains pertinent. The Council of Europe will continue to raise public awareness and promote a multi-stakeholder dialogue on how to improve the national legislation on defamation and journalistic practice. The Council of Europe also stands ready to provide the national authorities with legal and technical assistance in introducing the necessary changes to the legislation on defamation and in ensuring that these changes are applied in practice by all the relevant institutions.

Expected outcomes:

- ✓ The national legislation and practice are in line with the requirements of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).
- ✓ Institutional capacities, including self-regulation mechanisms, to ensure freedom and independence of media and safety of journalists are improved.
- ✓ Ethical standards in the Azerbaijani media are reinforced.

Main national partners: Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education, Presidential Administration, Media Development Agency, State Committee for Family, Women and Children, the Parliament, Press Council of Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan University of Languages, Baku Slavic University, Baku State University, media outlets, civil society representatives.

→ Data protection and artificial intelligence

Azerbaijan's data protection laws currently consist of three key pieces of legislation, namely the Law on State Secrets, the Law on Data, Data Processing and Data Protection and the Law on Personal Data. In addition, Azerbaijan is a Party to the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (Convention 108) and its additional protocol requiring the establishment of an independent dedicated authority as a crucial element of the data protection system. The Council of Europe stands ready to provide legal expertise to enhance Azerbaijan's legislative framework in this regard, and technical support so that the legislation can be applied in practice. Also, the Council of Europe stands ready to provide the necessary technical and legal assistance in the preparations for signature and ratification the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (Convention 108+), in line with the Committee of Ministers declaration (Decl(20/01/2021)).

Artificial intelligence (AI) represents one of the great technological challenges of our century. While it offers considerable opportunities for society and individuals, it also affects the standards protected by the Council of Europe: human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Under the present Action Plan, the Council of Europe stands ready to work with Azerbaijan on the topic of artificial intelligence based on the *Council of Europe's work in progress*. Specifically, Azerbaijan will be encouraged to disseminate and implement in the relevant areas the most recent Council of Europe Guidelines on Artificial Intelligence and Data Protection and the Ethical Charter on the use of artificial intelligence in judicial systems and their environment. The Council of Europe stands ready to provide support in order to strengthen capacities of national institutions in the field of AI.

Expected outcomes:

- ✓ Azerbaijan moves closer to signing and ratifying the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (Convention 108+).
- ✓ Legislation compliant with the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (ETS No. 108) is enacted.
- ✓ A dedicated independent authority is established and operational.
- ✓ Council of Europe guidelines on the use of artificial intelligence are disseminated and implemented by the relevant institutions in Azerbaijan.
- ✓ An awareness-raising campaign on the importance of data protection is conducted for the benefit of the local population.

Main national partners: Presidential Administration, the State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations under the President of the Republic, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technologies, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ombudsperson, Parliament and civil society representatives.

2.1.2 EQUALITY AND HUMAN DIGNITY

→ Promoting Gender Equality and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence

The Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023 provides the framework for working with member States to advance gender equality in six priority areas, including preventing and combating violence against women (VAW). Under the present Action Plan, co-operation in the area of gender equality and combating violence against women and domestic violence will build on the progress achieved under the previous Action Plan 2018-2021. This progress provides a solid foundation for future improvements. Among other things, the legislation on media from a gender equality perspective has been reviewed and recommendations to bring it into line with Council of Europe standards have been issued to the authorities; a significant number of journalists received training in the Council of Europe's standards on gender equality and media freedom; and relevant textbooks have been prepared for inclusion in the curricula of Azerbaijani universities. The Council of Europe will thus continue working to raise awareness among the general public as regards preventing domestic violence and violence against women and girls and promoting gender equality, in particular in the media.

At international level, Azerbaijan is bound by obligations under, for example, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). As regards co-operation with the Council of Europe, Azerbaijan has made specific commitments to improve gender equality, ensure equal access to justice for women and combat violence against women, including under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), the (Revised) European Social Charter (ESC) and the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. At national level, the legislation generally grants women and men the same rights in areas related to civil status such as marriage, divorce, and child custody. Based on previous co-operation activities focusing on increasing knowledge about the standards in the field of violence against women and other gender equality standards, the Council of Europe will continue raising awareness of these standards among the Azerbaijani national authorities and general public and stands ready to provide further technical assistance to this end.

In this context, the National Action Plan (NAP) to combat domestic violence for 2020-2023 (approved by presidential decree on 27 November 2020) can be regarded as a major development. At the request of the Azerbaijani authorities, the Council of Europe will further support the implementation of this document under the present Action Plan. This work will include introducing effective prevention and protection standards and mechanisms to address violence against women and domestic violence.

A gender-responsive justice system is crucial for success in promoting gender equality and combating violence against women. The strategic objectives of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023, moreover, require member States to guarantee equal access to justice for women. The Council of Europe will continue working with the relevant national authorities to mainstream gender in the justice system and to ensure access to justice for women. This will be done through, *inter alia*, building the capacity of justice-sector professionals to respond to cases involving violations of women's rights through gender-sensitive and victim-centred approaches. The Council of Europe stands ready to provide assistance to the Azerbaijani authorities for the implementation of the National Action Plan 2020-2023 on combating domestic violence in the Republic of Azerbaijan, including through awareness-raising and supporting the capacity of staff of specialist support services for victims. The work of non-governmental organisations working in the field of prevention and combating domestic violence will also be supported.

Expected outcomes:

- ✓ Awareness of gender equality instruments among the Azerbaijani authorities and the general public is raised.
- ✓ Effective prevention and protection standards and mechanisms to address violence against women and domestic violence have been introduced.
- ✓ The justice system is gender mainstreamed resulting in a more gender-responsive and non-discriminatory justice system.
- ✓ Increased capacity of law enforcement, legal professionals, including judges, prosecutors and lawyers to address cases of gender-based discrimination, violence against women, and other women's rights violations.
- ✓ The gender equality perspective in Azerbaijani media is reinforced.
- ✓ Capacities of non-governmental organisations in the field of social protection of victims of domestic violence are strengthened.

Main partners: Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, State Committee for Family, Women and Children, Academy of Justice, legal professionals and civil society organisations supporting women victims of violence.

→ Children's rights

The Council of Europe and the Azerbaijani authorities actively co-operated in this area under the previous Action Plan. A major achievement in this regard is Azerbaijan's ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention) in December 2019. Following ratification, there have been some initiatives to raise public awareness of the Lanzarote Convention. Specifically, a child-friendly booklet on the Lanzarote Convention in the Azerbaijani language has been made available, and the Child-Friendly IT Guidelines have been developed. On 2 June 2020 the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan signed a Decree on the approval of the "2020-2030 Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Children". The Council of Europe will provide the necessary assistance to ensure effective implementation of the Strategy.

The Council of Europe stands ready to continue its active co-operation with the authorities with regard to the implementation of the Lanzarote Convention, to provide support in devising strategies for the prevention and protection of children from violence, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and to enhance the capacities of professionals working in the sphere of combating child exploitation and abuse. In order to ensure a better understanding of the Lanzarote Convention, its mechanisms and goals, the Council of Europe will also focus on raising public awareness of the Lanzarote Convention in Azerbaijan. In its activities, the Council of Europe will take account of the recent documents adopted and issued by Council of Europe bodies.¹⁴

Expected outcomes:

- ✓ Strategies for the prevention and protection of children from violence, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse both online and offline are put in place and implemented.
- ✓ Capacities of professionals in dealing with child sexual exploitation and abuse are strengthened.
- ✓ Public awareness of the Lanzarote Convention is raised.

Main national partners: State Committee for Family, Women and Children, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population, Ombudsperson, Justice Academy.

¹⁴ European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) 2019 conclusions relating to the implementation of the accepted provisions of the revised European Social Charter belonging to the thematic group "Children, families and migrants"; *Declaration by the Committee of Ministers on the need to protect children's privacy in the digital environment (2021)*; *Declaration by the Committee of Ministers on strengthening the rights of the child as the key to a "future-proof" Europe (2020)*; *Handbook for policy makers on the rights of the child in the digital environment (2020)*.

2.1.3 ANTI-DISCRIMINATION, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

→ **Non-discrimination**

The Council of Europe and Azerbaijan have co-operated in this area before. The highlight of this co-operation was the establishment of the Equality Platform Azerbaijan, bringing together 13 civil society organisations (CSOs) to strengthen the role of civil society in combating discrimination and to promote a structured dialogue between stakeholders in this area. In addition, the staff in the Ombudsperson's Office improved their skills thanks to a training course on European anti-discrimination standards.

The Council of Europe stands ready to assist the Azerbaijani authorities in following the recommendations set out in the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) *report* on Azerbaijan under the fifth monitoring cycle (2016) and the ECRI *conclusions on the implementation of the priority recommendations* in respect of Azerbaijan subject to interim follow-up (2019). In particular, it is recommended to (i) include the grounds of colour, language, citizenship and ethnic origin in all criminal law provisions aimed at combating racism and discrimination, (ii) criminalise incitement to violence and incitement to discrimination against foreigners and (iii) criminalise the creation or the leadership of a group which promotes racism; support for such a group; and participation in its activities.

Enhancing the role of civil society in fighting discrimination, hate crime and hate speech, and in promoting tolerance is important. The need for a structured dialogue between civil society and government agencies on combating discrimination was a topic of discussion at meetings between civil society actors and the Ombudsperson's Office facilitated by the Council of Europe under the previous Action Plan. The Council of Europe will continue to provide support to civil society in this matter.

Awareness raising is an effective tool in countering discrimination. In co-operation with the national authorities, the Council of Europe will work on raising public awareness about tolerance and non-discrimination and the unacceptability of hate crime and hate speech in a democratic society. Awareness raising is also important for public officials as they represent the state in their interaction with citizens.

Expected outcomes:

- ✓ Amendments to Azerbaijani criminal, civil and administrative law in line with the Council of Europe standards on combating racism and discrimination are introduced.
- ✓ The Ombudsperson's Office staff's capacities to effectively protect human rights and freedoms are increased.
- ✓ The role of civil society actors in fighting discrimination is enhanced.
- ✓ Awareness of tolerance and non-discrimination standards among public officials and the general public is raised.

Main national partners: Ministry of Justice, Ombudsperson, Justice Academy, civil society organisations.

2.1.4 SOCIAL RIGHTS

→ **Social rights**

Azerbaijan ratified the (Revised) European Social Charter (RESC) on 2 September 2004, accepting 47 of its 98 provisions. Compliance with the accepted provisions is monitored by the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) through the reporting procedure. One of the main objectives therefore is acceptance of additional provisions of the RESC and of the collective complaints procedure at another time. The Azerbaijani authorities have taken concrete steps to adopt two additional articles of the RESC, namely Article 15 (on the rights of persons with disabilities) and Article 19 (on the rights of migrant workers and their families). The Council of Europe stands ready to provide any necessary assistance in this regard.

Efforts should also be made to reduce non-conformity with the provisions of the Charter. The ECSR has found evidence of continued non-compliance with the accepted provisions of the Revised ESC under the last cycle relating to the thematic group “Employment, training and equal opportunities”. It is considered that the next report to be submitted by the Republic of Azerbaijan on “Employment, training and equal opportunities” will provide more detailed information on the discrepancies.

The Azerbaijani authorities pay particular attention to the rights of persons with disabilities (including the access of children with special needs to accessible and affordable social services); gender equality and women’s employment; equal opportunities and equal treatment between women and men in employment in view of eliminating the gender pay gap; trade unions’ rights including for members of Azerbaijan Trade Union Confederation (ATUC).

The Council of Europe and the Azerbaijani authorities aim to address these issues to the extent possible within the framework of the present Action Plan while also placing particular emphasis on raising awareness of the need to promote social rights.

Expected outcomes:

- ✓ Azerbaijan has accepted additional provisions of the ESC.
- ✓ The number of situations of non-conformity with the provisions of the European Social Charter is reduced.
- ✓ Azerbaijan has taken positive steps to improve the rights of persons with disabilities in compliance with Article 15 of the RESC
- ✓ The rights of persons with disabilities are ensured in compliance with Article 15 of Revised European Social Charter.
- ✓ The gender pay gap between women and men is reduced.
- ✓ Women in employment are better protected.
- ✓ Trade unions are empowered and well aware of their rights provided by the RESC.
- ✓ Awareness of the need to promote social rights among the general public and public officials is raised.

Main national partners: Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population, Ministry of Economy, the Parliament, the Ombudsman, Azerbaijan Trade Union Confederation (ATUC), Azerbaijan Entrepreneurs’ Confederation (ASK), NGOs.

2.1.5 CO-OPERATION IN THE AREA OF ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

→ Co-operation in the area of environment and climate change

The protection of human rights and the environmental protection are inextricably linked to each other. As explained in the [Council of Europe Manual on Human Rights and the Environment](#), the environmental protection is embedded in the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter. In addition, the Council of Europe adopted the treaties recognising the right to a healthy environment, namely the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention), the Convention on Civil Liability for Damage resulting from Activities Dangerous to the Environment (Lugano Convention) and the Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law. Bearing this in mind, Azerbaijan and the Council of Europe have decided to include this area of co-operation in the present Action Plan.

As climate change becomes more and more of a reality, many countries have adopted and are discussing appropriate legislative frameworks in order to preserve the environment and address environmental crimes. Azerbaijan has set “clean environment and green growth country” one of its five main priorities in its strategic document National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development until 2030. At the same time, it has to be considered that the recognition of the right to a healthy environment not only requires an appropriate legislative framework, but also an effective application and implementation of the relevant provisions and initiatives.

In this regard, the Council of Europe stands ready to support legal professionals, civil society organisations and national human rights institutions in acquiring knowledge and increased capacities to deal with environmental cases, ecological damages and other impacts on the environment, using human rights instruments.

Expected outcomes:

- ✓ National policy frameworks are in line with the European standards and objectives of the environmental protection;
- ✓ Capacities of legal professionals, civil society and human rights institutions to analyse policy impact on environment through human rights instruments are increased;
- ✓ Awareness is raised among the general public and public officials on the importance of healthy and clean environment.

Main national partners: Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, Bar Association, Ombudsperson's Office, civil society organisations

2.2 RULE OF LAW

In its [Resolution 2357 \(2021\)](#), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) welcomed some positive developments and the progress made during the previous Action Plan in Azerbaijan but expressed concern over outstanding issues.

Technical co-operation to be implemented in this area has been designed taking into consideration the reports and conclusions of relevant Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies, including notably the Committee of Ministers (CM), the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), the Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO), the Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL), the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) and the Pompidou Group. The results of the previous Action Plan with the Council of Europe for the period 2018-2021 are also taken into consideration.

Under the current Action Plan, the Council of Europe will seek to actively work with the Constitutional Court of Azerbaijan, encouraging the latter to make use of the Council of Europe's expertise in the field of constitutional justice. The work on the independence and efficiency of justice will build on the results achieved under the previous Action Plans. One important area of co-operation in this regard would be extending successful pilot practices to local courts throughout Azerbaijan. With a view to increasing public trust in the judicial system, co-operation will be pursued in the areas of effective enforcement of court decisions and the communication strategy of the judiciary. With regard to the independence of justice, Azerbaijan will be encouraged to implement the most recent GRECO recommendations with the assistance of the Council of Europe.

Following up on the results achieved under previous Action Plans, co-operation will also be pursued in the areas of fighting corruption and economic crime, cybercrime and prison management.

The actions under this pillar will contribute to the implementation by Azerbaijan of the following Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 3, target 5,¹⁵ SDG 5,¹⁶ SDG 8, target 7,¹⁷ SDG 16, targets 3, 4, 5, 6, and a.¹⁸

¹⁵ Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. Target 5: Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.

¹⁶ Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Goal 5, target 1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere. Goal 5, target 2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

¹⁷ Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. Goal 8, target 8.7: Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.

¹⁸ Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Goal 16, target 3: Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all. Goal 16, target 4: Significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organised crime. Goal 16, target 5: Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms. Goal 16, target 6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels. Goal 16, target a: Strengthen

2.2.1 RULE OF LAW BASED INSTITUTIONS

→ Constitutional justice

Azerbaijan is encouraged to make use of the resources available to the Council of Europe, and in particular the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), in the field of constitutional justice, including through the Quick Response Mechanism.¹⁹

Expected outcomes:

- ✓ The Venice Commission has provided opinions in the field of constitutional justice at the request of the Azerbaijani authorities, including through the Quick Response Mechanism.

Main national partners: the Constitutional Court of Azerbaijan.

→ Independence and efficiency of justice

Since 2014 technical co-operation has led to improvements in the efficiency of the Azerbaijani courts and the quality of judicial services, using the tools developed by the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ). In this respect, the Joint EU/CoE Programme Support for a better evaluation of the results of judicial reform efforts in the Eastern Partnership "*Justice Dashboard EaP*" will serve as a useful tool. As a result of the work under the previous Action Plan, court management was improved, with pilot courts achieving clearance rates close to 100% for all categories of cases with no backlog and much shorter disposition times. Recently, a road map for the dissemination of CEPEJ tools among the Azerbaijani courts was finalised, tools on access to courts for vulnerable groups and on the communication strategy for the judiciary were developed, and support for reform of the enforcement system was launched. A training needs assessment for CEPEJ topics was conducted among different target groups within the judiciary with a view to developing a Justice Academy training programme on court management. The Council of Europe intends to continue its support for the Azerbaijani authorities, notably in the following areas:

- application of the methodology and tools developed by the CEPEJ on judicial time management and quality of justice, including in local courts;
- improving the Justice Academy's training methodology and curricula for judges (initial and in-service) in line with the CEPEJ tools, Council of Europe standards and good practice;
- providing training for the judiciary in the day-to-day management of courts;
- improving the system of enforcement of court decisions;
- improving access to justice for women and groups in vulnerable situations.

In addition, with a view to increasing mutual understanding between the judiciary and the media, professionalising press relations in the courts and public prosecutor's offices and ensuring a justice system that is transparent, visible and comprehensible, the Council of Europe will assist the Azerbaijani judiciary in implementing a communication strategy with a set of concrete activities and specific goals, based on CEPEJ communication tools.

With regard to the independence of justice, there remains room for improvement in this area in Azerbaijan. Further efforts are required concerning the implementation of the recommendations on the prevention of corruption in respect of members of parliaments, judges and prosecutors contained in Greco's Fourth Evaluation Round *Compliance Report on Azerbaijan* (2019) and the recently published Addendum to the Second Compliance Report on Azerbaijan (2021). The Council of Europe stands ready to assist the authorities in complying with the recommendations that have not been implemented or remain only partly implemented. These concern transparent asset disclosure systems for members of parliament, judges and prosecutors, the composition and functions of the Judicial Legal Council and the undue influence of the executive over the Prosecutor's Office.

relevant national institutions, including through international co-operation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime.

¹⁹ The Quick Response Mechanism is an EU/CoE Joint Programme Partnership for Good Governance tool, by which the Council of Europe, in particular through its Venice Commission; may provide ad hoc legal advice to respond to requests for legislative analysis and related assistance from the concerned countries or the European Commission <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/pgg2/quick-response-mechanism>

Expected outcomes:

- ✓ The efficiency and quality of judicial services are further improved through the dissemination of the experience of the pilot courts and capacity building for justice professionals.
- ✓ The Justice Academy's training methodology and curricula for judges (initial and in-service) are further improved in line with Council of Europe standards and good practice.
- ✓ The system of enforcement of court decisions is improved.
- ✓ Access to justice for women and for groups in vulnerable situations, such as people with disabilities, victims of domestic violence, etc. is improved.
- ✓ A communication strategy for the judiciary has been approved by the authorities and implemented.

Main national partners: the Judicial Legal Council, Ministry of Justice, the Judge Selection Committee, Academy of Justice, the Bar Association.

2.2.2 ACTION AGAINST CRIME, SECURITY AND PROTECTION OF CITIZENS

→ Fight against corruption and money laundering

Corruption is a global challenge which has an effect on the rule of law and the enjoyment of human rights, it erodes trust in public institutions, and poses a threat to political stability and economic development. The Azerbaijani authorities have reiterated their commitment to fight corruption, and have initiated anti-corruption reforms, including the introduction of a comprehensive legal framework to fight corruption, and expressed readiness to co-operate with the Council of Europe in their implementation.

In 2017, Azerbaijan's Parliament ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism (CETS No.198) and is now subject to Thematic Monitoring Reviews under this Convention. The National Action Plan for the Promotion of Open Government 2020-2022 is intended to make a significant contribution to achieving greater progress as regards the improvement and digitalisation of public services, prevention of corruption, strengthening civilian oversight, expanding public participation, increasing financial transparency and ensuring access to information.

Under the previous Action Plans, the Council of Europe contributed to the revision and strengthening of the legal and regulatory framework; facilitated the anti-corruption policy process by ensuring public input and expert advice for the development and implementation of national anti-corruption action plans; supported the development and integration of ethics and anti-corruption training into civil service and higher education sector; contributed to strengthening institutional and operational capacities of the Azerbaijani authorities; contributed to building professional capacities for investigation and prosecution of economic crimes;

In the area of fighting against money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism, the support consisted of advising on the adoption of legislation on Anti-Money Laundering/Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT); strengthening the legislation on targeted financial sanctions, as well as by advising on legislative and institutional mechanisms to enhance the beneficial ownership transparency particularly through the setup and use of beneficial ownership register.

Furthermore, the Council of Europe has contributed to enhancing the asset recovery regime in Azerbaijan by providing support for extending the legal framework, as well as recommendations for the designation and setting up of Asset Recovery and Asset Management Offices.

However, shortcomings remain, and further action is needed to address them, in particular, in the following areas:

- The scope and effective application of the AML legislation, including the introduction of risk-based approach to supervision;
- Enhancement of the AML/CFT institutional framework including through capacity building for key AML/CFT bodies;
- Regulatory and operational regimes on transparency of beneficial ownership;
- Improved framework for recovery of proceeds of crime and management of confiscated assets;
- Effectiveness of the prevention and enforcement mechanisms for disclosure of assets, in particular the implementation of the Azerbaijan's law on asset declarations;
- Strengthening and safeguarding judicial independence;
- Enhancement of public procurement transparency;
- Ensuring operational efficiency and autonomy of the specialised anti-corruption and AML/CFT bodies in line with Groups of States against Corruption (GRECO) and Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL) recommendations and Financial Action Task Force (FATF) standards;
- Building professional capacities for investigation and prosecution of economic crimes, with the active integration of ethics component.

In addition, specific actions could be foreseen with regards to the prevention of corruption in respect of members of parliaments, judges and prosecutors in line with the [GRECO Compliance Report on Azerbaijan](#) within the Fourth evaluation round. The Council of Europe also stands ready to provide technical assistance to Azerbaijan in order ensure the effective implementation of pending and future GRECO (fifth round evaluation) and MONEYVAL recommendations, in line with the Council of Europe standards.

Expected outcomes:

- ✓ Legislative framework and institutional capacities to fight and prevent economic crime are improved.
- ✓ Effectiveness of application of the international anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing standards is increased;
- ✓ Corruption prevention is strengthened in line with GRECO recommendations through effective implementation of an anti-corruption policy cycle, strengthened judicial independence and asset disclosure regime and integrity of public officials.
- ✓ Transparency of public procurement procedures is further enhanced;
- ✓ The quality and quantity of economic crime-related investigations and prosecutions are increased.
- ✓ Operational efficiency and autonomy of the competent anti-corruption and AML/CFT institutions are ensured.
- ✓ Professional capacities for investigation and prosecution of economic crime are enhanced.
- ✓ The legislative framework and effectiveness of asset recovery are enhanced.

Main national partners: Commission on Combating Corruption; Presidential Administration; national Financial Intelligence Unit; Anti-Corruption General Directorate under the Prosecutor General's Office; Anti-Corruption Training Centre of the Scientific-Advisory Council under the Prosecutor General's Office, other relevant authorities.

→ Cybercrime

Azerbaijan and the Council of Europe worked together to counter cybercrime under the previous Action Plan. Recently, the Council of Europe conducted an assessment of training needs and co-operation opportunities in relation to cybercrime and electronic evidence in Azerbaijan; addressed the latest aspects of public-private co-operation at the law enforcement/Internet service provider Co-operation Workshop in Baku; organised a series of online meetings with international participants to facilitate an open discussion on the experience of public-private co-operation; involved the Azerbaijani authorities in regional desktop-based studies and surveys on aspects of data protection, law enforcement/service provider co-operation and data preservation.

Under the present Action Plan, the Council of Europe will continue providing assistance to the Azerbaijani national authorities with the aim of bringing the domestic legislation on cybercrime further into line with the Budapest Convention that Azerbaijan ratified in 2010. Current priorities also include the adoption of a national strategy on fighting cybercrime; improved interagency, international and public-private co-operation; and improving the skills of investigators, prosecutors and judges in relation to cybercrime and electronic evidence. The Council of Europe will provide legal and technical assistance to Azerbaijan to achieve progress in these areas.

Expected outcomes:

- ✓ Domestic legislation on cybercrime is in line with the Budapest Convention.
- ✓ National strategy on fighting cybercrime is adopted and implemented.
- ✓ Interagency and public-private co-operation in the fight against cybercrime is enhanced.
- ✓ Capacities of investigators, prosecutors and judges to address cybercrime are enhanced.

Main national partners: Prosecutor General's Office; State Security Service; Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technologies, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Justice, national communications regulatory authorities; personal data protection authorities; Internet service providers (including international providers); national cyber security experts.

→ Prisons and police

Azerbaijan has been taking steps to reform the prison system since 2017. To date, more than 300 changes have been introduced to domestic laws with the aim of improving penal policy and expanding the range of non-custodial sanctions available. New prison facilities are being built to replace obsolete buildings. With the Presidential Decree of 7 November 2017, the Probation Service was established within the Ministry of Justice. The reform includes the modernisation of prison infrastructure, increased oversight of prison conditions, training for staff, and action to improve transparency and prevent corruption. The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) conducts regular visits to Azerbaijan.

Under the previous Action Plans, the Council of Europe conducted actions aimed at providing support to the Azerbaijani authorities in reforming the prison management system and health promotion and prevention, in line with European standards and best practices. A gender sensitive approach will be applied all through the expected outcomes in order to ensure the full effectiveness of the implementation.

Expected outcomes:

- ✓ Action Plans on prison management and prison health care are implemented with technical support from the Council of Europe.
- ✓ The new Code of Ethics is approved by the Azerbaijani authorities and introduced for prison staff across the country.
- ✓ Knowledge and capacities of prison staff in terms of prison health care and prison management are enhanced.
- ✓ The system of reintegration of prisoners is supported through vocational training, business mentoring, legal and psychological support.
- ✓ The system and the procedures for prevention and protection against torture and other forms of ill-treatment by the police and in prisons are improved.
- ✓ Investigation into cases of possible ill-treatment/torture meet the criteria required to qualify as "effective" according to the case law of the European Court of Human Rights.

Main national partners: Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Health Care.

→ **Trafficking in human beings**

Combating trafficking in human beings is a new area of technical co-operation between the Council of Europe and Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan signed up to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings in 2010 and since then has been regularly monitored by the Group of Experts on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA). The latest report and recommendations were made available in 2018, noting both progress and shortcomings in relation to the provisions of the Convention. In accordance with [Recommendation CP\(2018\)24](#) on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by Azerbaijan, which was issued by the Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (2018), further action is required in the following areas among others:

- develop a comprehensive statistical system on trafficking in human beings by compiling reliable statistical data on presumed and formally identified victims of trafficking in human beings (THB) from all main actors;
- take measures to prevent trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation;
- take additional measures to prevent trafficking in children;
- ensure that victims of THB are identified as such, in compliance with Article 10 of the Convention;
- improve the identification and referral to assistance of child victims of trafficking.

The Council of Europe stands ready to provide technical assistance to the Azerbaijani authorities in implementing these recommendations as well as the provisions of the National Action Plan (NAP) for 2020-2024 on Combating trafficking in human beings in the Republic of Azerbaijan, in accordance with Council of Europe standards, including those on gender mainstreaming. In this context, there should be a special focus on awareness raising among the general public and public officials.

Expected outcomes:

- ✓ Legislative and procedural frameworks in the area of trafficking in human beings are improved in line with Council of Europe standards.
- ✓ A comprehensive statistical system on trafficking in human beings is established.
- ✓ Assistance to ensure effective implementation of the National Action Plan for 2020-2024 on combating trafficking in human beings is provided.
- ✓ Awareness is raised among the general public and public officials on the issue of trafficking in human beings and effective prevention mechanisms.

Main national partners: Ministry of Internal Affairs, Prosecutor's Office, State Migration Service.

→ **Drug abuse and illicit trafficking**

Drug policies is a new area of technical co-operation between the Council of Europe and Azerbaijan. Through its [Work Programme 2019–2022 "Sustainable drug policies respectful of human rights"](#), the International Co-operation Group on Drugs and Addictions (Pompidou Group) operates in the following areas: better overview and understanding of drug policy approaches; contribution to cost effectiveness and identifying and awareness of the positive and negative consequences of drug-related policies by providing tools, guidance and models of tried and tested practice; support for member States in developing, implementing and evaluating drug policies, strategies and action plans; flexible responses to address emerging issues in a timely manner on an ad hoc basis.

[Under the current Action Plan](#), the Council of Europe stands ready to conduct an overview of drug policies in Azerbaijan, assist the Azerbaijani authorities in developing, implementing and evaluating a strategy/action plan in the area of drug policies, and contribute to improved policy responses by providing access to specialised, professional networks and co-operation platforms.

Expected outcomes:

- ✓ Drug policies in Azerbaijan are improved in line with international standards.
- ✓ A national strategy in the area of drug control has been developed and put into practice.

Main national partners: Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Health Care.

2.3 DEMOCRACY

Maintaining the dialogue between state institutions and civil society and bringing national legislation on non-governmental organisations (NGOs) into line with Council of Europe standards remain key priorities of the new Action Plan. A diverse and independent civil society is indispensable for a stable and functional democracy. The Council of Europe will continue to promote democratic culture through education by facilitating the integration and further development of Education for democratic citizenship/Human rights education, provide support to formal and non-formal educators and increase the capacities of youth NGOs and public authorities working with young people in Azerbaijan to foster youth participation. There are also plans to provide support towards building a rights-based youth policy in Azerbaijan and contribute to the efforts of the national authorities in maintaining and developing intercultural dialogue.

Technical co-operation to be implemented in this area has been designed taking into consideration the reports and conclusions of relevant Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies, including notably: the Committee of Ministers (CM), the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (the Congress) and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI).

The actions under this pillar will contribute to the implementation by Azerbaijan of the following Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 4, target 7²⁰, SDG 16, targets 6 and 7²¹.

2.3.1 DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

→ Electoral issues

Electoral reform remains important for the development of democracy in Azerbaijan. Further efforts are needed to address the concerns previously identified by the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), the Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO) in its Second Addendum to the Second Compliance Report on Azerbaijan for the Third Evaluation Round,²² and the judgments of the European Court on Human Rights (ECtHR). Issues identified concern notably the content of the Election Code, the composition of election committees, party financing and the role of political parties in the electoral process. The Council of Europe stands ready to provide the necessary legislative and technical support to Azerbaijan in this regard.

Expected outcomes:

- ✓ Electoral legislation of Azerbaijan is in line with Council of Europe standards.

Main national partners: Central Election Commission.

²⁰ Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Goal 4, target 7: By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

²¹ Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Goal 16, target 6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels. Goal 16, target 7: Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.

²² GrecoRC3(2017)4.

2.3.2 DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

→ **Civil society**

Under the previous Action Plans, some initial steps towards aligning domestic legislation with Council of Europe standards were taken. Among other things, the report “Bringing the law and practice relating to NGOs in the Republic of Azerbaijan into compliance with European standards” was presented to high-level government representatives in Baku, and the legislative proposals addressing the key issues in the laws governing the registration of NGO and NGOs’ access to funding were drafted for further consultation with the authorities. In addition, an anti-discrimination/equality platform bringing together 13 civil society organisations and experts started work on reinforcing the role of civil society in the area of anti-discrimination and on enhancing dialogue between civil society and public institutions such as the Ombudsperson.

Under the present Action Plan, the Council of Europe will work with the authorities on bringing the legislation on the functioning of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) into line with Council of Europe standards, as well as on improving practices related to civil participation in decision-making processes and on promoting constructive dialogue between the authorities and civil society organisations.

In addition, as part of the Enlarged Partial Agreement of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe (NSC), Azerbaijan helps to encourage a bottom-up dialogue between civil society and other democratic governance actors to promote North-South dialogue, responding to four priority areas: global development education, youth co-operation, women empowerment and migration.

Expected outcomes:

- ✓ Domestic legislation on NGOs, including registration procedures, complies with Council of Europe standards.

Main national partners: Presidential Administration, Ministry of Justice, Agency for State Support to Non-Governmental Organisations of the Republic of Azerbaijan; civil society organisations, Milli Mejlis (Parliament).

→ **Education for democracy**

Since 2016, Azerbaijan has benefitted – through the North-South Centre (NSC) – from the successive joint programmes with the European Union “Intercultural Learning Exchange through Global Education, Networking and Dialogue (iLEGEND and iLEGEND II)” under the Global Education Programme. Global education is a pedagogical approach that fosters multiple perspectives and the deconstruction of stereotypes and builds on a learner-centred approach to foster critical awareness of global challenges and engagement for sustainable lifestyles.

Under the present Action Plan, the Council of Europe intends to further involve Azerbaijan in the activities within the Global Education Programme, including iLegend II that aims to foster a better understanding of global issues and their economic, social, political, environmental and cultural interconnectedness among policymakers, educators and youth workers. In this regard, the Council of Europe will contribute to the competence development of formal and non-formal educators through pedagogical and methodological support, provide materials and toolkits, grant access to online and residential training courses, and involve a national co-ordinator for Azerbaijan in the work of the Global Education network.

In addition, the NSC intends to involve Azerbaijan in its Women Empowerment programme that uses awareness raising, capacity building and networking activities to build effective regional co-operation between the relevant stakeholders to advance gender equality and women’s rights in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. The activities, such as networking and training of experts, contribute to a human rights-based approach in combating violence against women. These activities could serve as an important complement to the other Council of Europe actions in this area in Azerbaijan.

Expected outcomes:

- ✓ Competences of formal and non-formal educators through pedagogical and methodological support have been developed.
- ✓ A human rights-based approach in combating violence against women is more widely used in Azerbaijan.

Main national partners: the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, National Educators' Professional Development Institute and Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University.

→ Youth for democracy

Co-operation between the Council of Europe and the Ministry of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Azerbaijan was pursued under the previous Action Plans for Azerbaijan 2014-2017 and 2018-2021. Youth activists and leaders living in remote areas of Azerbaijan were introduced to the Council of Europe's approaches and educational resources on youth participation and human rights education within regional training seminars, drawing on the expertise of an informal network of youth trainers (created in 2017-2018) employing non-formal and human rights education approaches. In preparation for seminars of this kind, an e-learning programme was developed and made ready for use.

Under the present Action Plan, Azerbaijan will participate in the Council of Europe Youth Co-operation programme that provides training and capacity building for young people and youth organisations and facilitates their participation in decision making. Training courses for youth empowerment through intercultural and peer learning will be provided with a view to strengthening youth participation and building capacities for human rights and citizenship education. Opportunities for youth to practice democratic competences and skills in their schools and outside of the formal education system, in their communities and on digital platforms, need to be created for these values to be fully embedded in individual mindsets and in the society. Additional activities can be agreed upon with the authorities as regard the implementation of the three recent recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on youth work, access to rights and access to social rights²³.

Expected outcomes:

- ✓ Capacities of young leaders, activists and youth organisations to participate in decision-making processes are enhanced.
- ✓ Intercultural and peer learning opportunities for youth empowerment are increased;
- ✓ Young people are in practice provided with opportunities to engage in the decision-making processes in their schools and in projects affecting their communities.

Main national partners: Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ministry of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan Youth Foundation of the Republic of Azerbaijan, National Assembly of Youth Organisations of Azerbaijan (NAYORA), civil society organisations.

→ Intercultural dialogue

The Council of Europe and Azerbaijan have co-operated on intercultural dialogue in the past, supporting the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue regularly held in Baku. The Forum is organised by the Government of Azerbaijan in partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the Council of Europe and the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO).

²³ Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work <https://rm.coe.int/1680717e78>
 Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on young people's access to rights <http://rm.coe.int/native/09000016806a93e2>
 Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights <http://rm.coe.int/native/09000016805c46f7>

The Council of Europe and Azerbaijan intend to continue their co-operation in this domain, including through the Baku Process - a platform for open and respectful exchanges of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, living on different continents, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect.

Expected outcomes:

- ✓ Council of Europe values and best practices in the area of intercultural dialogue are disseminated, including through participation in the Baku Process.

Main national partners: Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Baku International Multiculturalism Centre.

PART III - IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 METHODOLOGY

The overall co-ordination of technical co-operation carried out by the Council of Europe falls within the remit of the Office of the Directorate General of Programmes (ODGP) which steers programming of and fund-raising for co-operation actions whilst ensuring the proper functioning of Council of Europe Offices in the field.

Action Plan projects are implemented by the Council of Europe's Major Administrative Entity responsible for the relevant area of expertise. In accordance with the Organisation's policy on decentralised implementation of technical assistance and co-operation, the [Council of Europe Office in Baku](#) plays a key role in co-ordinating and supporting the implementation of projects in the field. As of 31 December 2021, the Office had 12 staff members.

The implementation of Action Plan projects involves, as necessary, needs assessments, legislative expertise, capacity building, awareness raising and peer-to-peer reviews. The methodology used, in line with the [Council of Europe Project Management Methodology](#) (PMM), aims to reinforce ownership by national stakeholders and to ensure the sustainability of the outcomes. The PMM, which became mandatory as of 2017, helps enhance the quality of project implementation in terms of planning and monitoring, cost efficiency and effectiveness. It also paves the way for improved risk assessment, the incorporation of a human rights approach and greater attention to the gender dimension.

In addition, the co-operation designed by the Council of Europe follows a "multi-institutional approach", which allows different Council of Europe institutions and bodies to target governmental stakeholders, parliaments, independent governance institutions, such as the Ombudsperson's Office, local and regional authorities and civil society. This creates unique leverage for comprehensive, inclusive, successful and sustainable reforms.

The Council of Europe also prioritises a human rights approach at all levels and stages of its activities. Its *acquis*, including Council of Europe legal instruments and institutions, combined with the principles of equality, non-discrimination, gender-balanced participation and civil society involvement bring further added value to the Council of Europe's activities.

As a component of this human rights approach, the Council of Europe emphasises gender mainstreaming throughout its project activities in line with its [Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023](#). The [Council of Europe Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit for Co-operation Projects](#) enhances the implementation of a gender dimension in co-operation activities within the Organisation as well as by national partners and other stakeholders. The gender mainstreaming approach will be further defined as the actions associated with the Action Plan are developed. It will be applied to actions regardless of the field of co-operation. For example, gender equality and women's rights standards will be taken into account when the various pieces of legislation and national frameworks are revised in the light of Council of Europe standards. The gender equality theme will also be incorporated into training activities and programmes. The impact on women and men will be analysed when projects are designed and implemented. In addition to gender mainstreaming, specific actions will be considered in order to promote gender equality.

Similarly, the Council of Europe promotes the active participation of civil society in project activities. Inclusiveness is approached in accordance with the [Guidelines on civil society organisations' participation in the Council of Europe's co-operation activities](#).

The Organisation is committed to protecting children from harm and ensuring that children's right to protection is fully realised in line with its Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2022-2027.

Another transversal dimension worth mentioning is protection of the climate and the environment. Development co-operation for human rights, the rule of law and democracy makes an inherent contribution to the resolution of many political, legal and social issues that aggravate climate change. The Council of Europe carried out a simplified environmental assessment to help highlight the main opportunities for positive impacts and the risks of environmental vulnerabilities, as well as any follow-up actions. Preliminary conclusions have shown that Council of Europe co-operation has an indirect positive impact on the environment through the support it gives to countries in strengthening their good governance structures and thus enabling them to better deal with their environmental challenges and goals. There is, however, still a need for the Council of Europe co-operation sector to increase its focus on climate-neutral technical assistance. Follow-up steps are now being discussed within the Organisation.

The present Action Plan also takes into account the **lessons learned** during the implementation of the Action Plans 2014-2017 and 2018-2021, including the following:

- The flexibility of the Action Plan made it possible to extensively adapt workplans and working methods to the Covid-19 crisis. On the one hand, the pandemic-related restrictions triggered or accelerated innovation in some fields, especially in the area of IT-based solutions. For example, online platforms, such as the Council of Europe European Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP), have proven a very useful tool for co-operation between the Council of Europe and Azerbaijan. Experience gained can be transferred to future implementation practice. On the other hand, for some activities, especially study trips, and certain training activities in politically sensitive areas, no adequate alternative solutions were found. A proper balance between in-person and online meetings should be sought in the post-Covid-19 period.
- It is important to draft workplans in such a way that a wide combination of activities is envisaged – hybrid, online, desk research and adapted written procedures. This will allow co-operation activities to be more flexible in times of health crises and political instability when access to information technologies can be jeopardised. In addition, the process of internal consultations to ensure effective co-ordination is time-consuming, so timetables for co-operation activities should allow more time for co-ordinating such steps. Early preparation of activities makes for better risk management in unexpected situations involving logistics issues.
- A human rights-based approach to co-operation, which uses the Council of Europe standards and principles both as means and goals of technical assistance, can significantly contribute to the realisation of those rights.
- The Council of Europe plays an important bridging role between various state and non-state actors.
- Capacity building for national partners remains an important element of the technical assistance programmes.
- More awareness raising is needed among civil society representatives and the public at large about the nature and value of technical co-operation work in connection with the Action Plan in Azerbaijan.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed a need to address the rise in gender-based violence as domestic violence cases have increased dramatically in all countries and Azerbaijan is no exception. Particular attention is needed, including in terms of gender mainstreaming. Gender equality is to be continuously incorporated in all project activities and training.

Due to the nature of its mandate, the Council of Europe has to operate at times in complex and unstable environments which expose it to risks. The analysis of risks relevant to the implementation of the Action Plan as well as possible mitigation strategies are identified in Appendix II to the present Action Plan on the basis of the Council of Europe [Risk Management Guidelines](#) and the [Risk Management Policy](#) adopted in June 2016. All projects implemented within the Action Plan have their own risk assessment and mitigation procedures.

3.2 CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Action Plan will sustain the efforts of the Azerbaijani authorities in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 3, Goal 4, Goal 5, Goal 8, Goal 10, Goal 16, as follows:

- **Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages**

Objectives set in the area of preventing drug abuse and illicit trafficking, namely in terms of developing and implementing a national strategy in the area of drug policies, and improving policy responses to drug-related issues in Azerbaijan, will directly contribute to target 3.5²⁴.

- **Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all**

Several objectives of the present Action Plan aimed at enhancing professional capacities and providing knowledge and skills contribute to target 4.7²⁵. As part of its efforts to improve human rights observance in Azerbaijan, the Council of Europe seeks to enhance the capacities of legal professionals and national institutions to apply human rights principles in their work. The European Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) is instrumental in this regard as it ensures lifelong learning opportunities for legal professionals and makes a contribution to human rights education for sustainable development. In addition, capacity-building activities, that are inherently educational, are envisaged in many thematic areas of the present Action Plan, which also contributes to the above-mentioned target. Finally, the objectives identified under the topic “Education for democracy”, namely in respect of promoting the competences of formal and non-formal educators through pedagogical and methodological support, directly contribute to Goal 4.

- **Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**

The current Action Plan will contribute to target 5.1²⁶ and target 5.2.²⁷ This will be made possible through the promotion of the relevant Council of Europe standards among public officials and the general public, and through establishing effective protection mechanisms to address violence against women and domestic violence. It is planned to mainstream gender perspective in such areas as media and the justice sector, while at the same time increasing the capacity of legal professionals to deal with cases involving violations of women’s human rights.

Objectives set in other thematic areas also contribute to the above-mentioned targets. With Azerbaijan having ratified the Lanzarote Convention in 2019, the current Action Plan includes activities for devising and implementing strategies for the prevention and protection of children, including girls, from violence, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. In the area of trafficking in human beings, improved legislative and procedural frameworks, increased awareness among public officials and the general public, and enhanced capacities on the part of relevant professionals and institutions should lead to prevention and better protection against trafficking of women and girls. In addition, strengthening human rights in prisons by reforming the prison management system, improving health care and combating torture and other forms of ill-treatment in a gender-sensitive way will contribute to achieving Goal 5.

Gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures as well as in the implementation of the projects themselves is a priority of the Action Plan and also contributes to achieving Goal 5.

²⁴ Goal 3, target 3.5: Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.

²⁵ Goal 4, target 4.7: By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.

²⁶ Goal 5, target 5.1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

²⁷ Goal 5, target 5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

- **Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all**

The Council of Europe's actions aimed at combating trafficking in human beings will contribute to target 8.7.²⁸ This will be achieved by establishing effective legislative and procedural frameworks, including a comprehensive statistical system, and raising awareness among relevant stakeholders and the general public about the pertinent issues in this area. Special attention is to be paid to the prevention of trafficking in children and improving the identification and referral to assistance of child victims of trafficking.

The activities planned under the heading "Social rights" will contribute to target 8.8.²⁹ In this respect, the Council of Europe will assist Azerbaijan in addressing issues such as freely undertaken work, discrimination in the workplace, prohibition of forced labour, free placement services, vocational guidance, training and rehabilitation. The emphasis on raising awareness of social and labour rights will be of crucial importance in the process.

- **Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries**

The objectives set by the present Action Plan in the sphere of non-discrimination directly contribute to targets 10.2³⁰ and 10.3.³¹ Specifically, it is planned to introduce the appropriate legislative amendments on combating racism and discrimination promoting social, political and economic inclusion of all, in line with Council of Europe standards. In addition, by increasing the capacities of relevant national institutions and civil society organisations working in the sphere of tolerance and non-discrimination, the Council of Europe aims to ensure that human rights and freedoms are better protected for the benefit of all. A crucial area of work in this regard is raising awareness about non-discrimination standards among officials and the general public. An additional contribution to these targets will be provided by promoting inclusive dialogue between the government and civil society organisations representing various social groups.

- **Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels**

By the very nature of the Council of Europe's mandate, all the technical co-operation activities implemented under the present Action Plan, in particular the institutional support provided to the Azerbaijani authorities and bodies, will make an important contribution to SDG 16, and in particular target 6.³² Co-operation with Azerbaijan covers a wide range of areas of support related to the achievement of this goal and several of its targets, including but not limited to the following:

- Activities to establish strategies for the prevention and protection of children from violence, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and to strengthen the capacities of professionals in dealing with child sexual exploitation and abuse contribute to target 16.2.³³
- The Action Plan supports equal access to justice for all in line with target 16.3³⁴. More specifically, the Council of Europe will work with the relevant national authorities to remove the remaining barriers to equal access to justice for women, including through awareness-raising and capacity-building activities aimed at improving the response to women's human rights violations. In addition, specific attention will be given to ensuring access to courts and legal free aid for vulnerable groups of people.

²⁸ Goal 8, target 8.7: Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.

²⁹ Goal 8, target 8.8: Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.

³⁰ Goal 10, target 10.2: By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

³¹ Goal 10, target 10.3: Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.

³² Goal 16, target 6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

³³ Goal 16, target 16.2: End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.

³⁴ Goal 16, target 16.3: Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.

- Objectives set in the area of combating corruption and economic crime contribute to target 16.4³⁵, 16.5³⁶ and are linked to target 16.a.³⁷ This will be achieved through improving Azerbaijan's legislative framework and increasing institutional capacities to fight and prevent economic crime, which should reduce illicit financial flows and strengthen the recovery of stolen assets. By ensuring the operational efficiency and autonomy of anti-corruption bodies and enhancing transparency in public procurement procedures, the Council of Europe and Azerbaijan intend to substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms.
- The objective of enhancing youth participation in decision making will contribute to target 16.7³⁸. With a view to achieving this objective, the training courses for youth empowerment will be provided to young Azerbaijani activists, especially those living in remote areas. In addition, opportunities will be sought for young people to engage in the decision-making processes in their schools and in projects affecting their communities.
- Through the activities aimed at promoting freedom of assembly and freedom of expression and the media, the Action Plan contributes to target 16.10³⁹. Specifically, the Council of Europe and Azerbaijan aim to enhance the protection of fundamental freedoms by improving Azerbaijan's legislation on freedom of assembly and freedom of expression and the media, and by ensuring the effective application of existing legislation compliant with Council of Europe standards.

The Action Plan implementation will contribute to a number of the *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs).

3.3 CO-ORDINATION

Co-ordination to ensure efficient use of resources and the relevance of the Council of Europe's actions is performed at different levels and in different forums, including the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (CM).

The Council of Europe's actions are determined and implemented so as to focus on areas where the Organisation has strong expertise and added value. Joint co-operation with the Azerbaijani authorities is developed on the basis of thorough analysis of the objectives pursued by other international organisations and actors in the field and their work, implemented and/or planned to achieve these objectives.

To ensure the relevance of its actions, the Council of Europe works in close co-ordination with relevant international partners, notably the European Union (EU) and in particular the EU Delegation in Azerbaijan.

Since 2015, Azerbaijan has benefitted from participation in the Partnership for Good Governance (PGG) which has covered the following areas:

- PGG Phase I (2015-2018): protection and promotion of human rights; ensuring justice; combating threats to the rule of law; addressing challenges related to the information society; promoting democratic governance.
- PGG Phase II (2019-2021): better justice for citizens; protection against discrimination; fighting economic crime; combating violence against women.

In addition, Azerbaijan is currently participating in the bilateral European Union/Council of Europe joint programme "Further Support to the Penitentiary Reform in Azerbaijan 2".

³⁵ Goal 16, target 16.4: By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organised crime.

³⁶ Goal 16, target 16.5: Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms.

³⁷ Goal 16, target 16.a: Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international co-operation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime.

³⁸ Goal 16, target 16.7: Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.

³⁹ Goal 16 target, 16.10: Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.

Co-ordination is also ensured with the United Nations (UN) and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and embassies of Council of Europe member States. Whenever appropriate, co-ordination platforms with other international organisations are set up and joint activities undertaken. The Council of Europe also maintains close contact with the development agencies of Council of Europe member States. To ensure efficiency and avoid the overlapping of activities, it also co-ordinates its activities with the relevant development agencies in member States. The Council of Europe Office in Baku participates in the Development Partners Co-ordination platform and co-chairs one of its subgroups on good governance, just and inclusive societies and participates in two others respectively on gender equality and women's empowerment, and on clean environment and "green growth".

3.4 FUNDING

The overall budget for the Action Plan is approximately € 9.6 million. Funding amounting to €1.1 million (11,5% of the total budget) has been secured.

Projects within the Action Plan are to be funded from multiple sources, including Joint Programmes with the European Union (EU) such as facility-type programmes, voluntary contributions (VC) from donor countries and international organisations, as well as the ordinary budget (OB) of the Council of Europe.

The co-ordination of Action Plan implementation incurs general management costs amounting to not more than 7% of the Action Plan's direct costs.

In line with the Council of Europe resource mobilisation strategy, fundraising efforts under the co-ordination of the Office of the Directorate General of Programmes (ODGP) are concentrated on the Action Plan as a whole. Action Plan-level funding, in particular, allows flexibility for allocating funds where they are most needed and where they are most likely to contribute to the sustainability of key policy and institutional reforms.

The present Action Plan structure from 2022 to 2025 is aligned with the structure of the Programme and Budget of the Council of Europe and its two biennial cycles in order to increase coherence, complementarity and co-ordination between activities within the ordinary budget of the Council of Europe and extra-budgetary technical assistance for Azerbaijan.

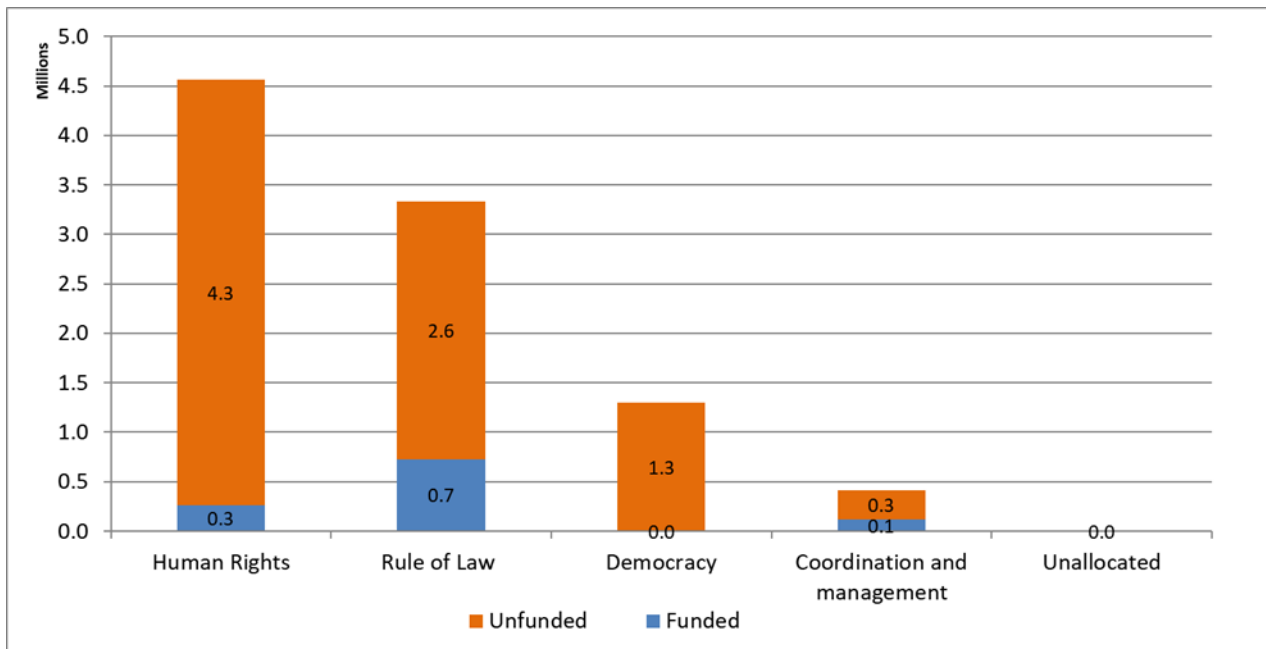


Figure 2: Estimated budget per theme of the Council of Europe Action Plan for Azerbaijan 2022-2025 (in euros)

3.5 GOVERNANCE

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (CM) is responsible, through its Rapporteur Group on Democracy (GR-DEM), for the overall assessment of the results of the Action Plan implementation.

The Council of Europe will provide regular updates on the progress and outcomes of the Action Plan. To this end, the Office of the Directorate General of Programmes (ODGP) will submit interim and final reports to the CM as follows:

- an oral report 12 months and 36 months after the adoption of the Action Plan to outline progress since the official launch;
- a comprehensive mid-term Progress Review Report, 24 months after the adoption of the Action Plan;
- a final Progress Review Report at the end of the implementation of the Action Plan.

Progress made under the Action Plan will also be jointly assessed by the Council of Europe and the Azerbaijani authorities. For this purpose, an Action Plan Steering Committee is established, consisting of representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other national stakeholders, including civil society, involved in the implementation of the Action Plan as well as representatives of the Council of Europe.

This Steering Committee will assess the implementation of approved projects, discuss proposals for future co-operation and challenges encountered, and recommend any measures that might be needed to improve the effectiveness of the Action Plan. Meetings will take place 24 months after the adoption of the Action Plan, to assess the mid-term implementation, and before the end of the Action Plan, to assess the overall implementation. Regarding the Steering Committee's composition, a good gender-balanced representation shall be ensured as far as possible subject to limitations in terms of sectoral knowledge and experience.

In addition, the ODGP will issue annual Action Plan Reports to those donors which contributed to the funding at the level of the Action Plan, in line with reporting requirements.

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APPENDIX I: LOGFRAME

Transversal dimensions such as **gender equality, gender mainstreaming and civil society's participation** are key components of the Council of Europe's human rights approach.

Overall goal: to ensure successful reforms in Azerbaijan which will bring its legislation, institutions and practice further into line with Council of Europe standards in the areas of human rights, the rule of law and democracy, and therefore support the country's efforts to honour its obligations as a Council of Europe member State.

Human Rights	
<p>Thematic outcome: Progress has been achieved and/or the situation has improved on the national level in Azerbaijan in the areas of the effective European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) implementation, equality and human dignity, anti-discrimination, diversity and inclusion, and social rights, in line with the Council of Europe standards, through the well-structured and co-ordinated implementation of co-operation priorities.</p>	
<p>The actions under this pillar contribute to the implementation by Azerbaijan of the following Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 4, target 7⁴⁰; SDG 5, targets 1, 2⁴¹; SDG 8, target 8⁴²; SDG 10, targets 2, 3⁴³; SDG 16, target 2, 6, 10⁴⁴.</p>	
Outcomes	Indicators
<p>1.1. Effective ECHR Implementation</p>	
<p><i>Enhancing the effectiveness of the ECHR system at national level</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The system of adoption of general and individual measures for national implementation of ECtHR judgments is analysed and improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of individual/general measures adopted by Azerbaijan in compliance with the Committee of Ministers' decisions/resolutions;

⁴⁰ Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Goal 4, target 7: Ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

⁴¹ Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Goal 5, target 1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere. Goal 5, target 2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

⁴² Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. Goal 8, target 8: Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.

⁴³ Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries. Goal 10, target 2: Empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status. Goal 10, target 3: Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.

⁴⁴ Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Goal 16, target 2: End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children. Goal 16, target 6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels. Goal 16, target 10: Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of judgments from the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) involving Azerbaijan under the supervision of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (CM); • Number of closed cases involving Azerbaijan in the lifespan of the Action Plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The competence and skills of legal professionals (lawyers, judges, prosecutors, assistants to judges, independent practitioners) are improved, enabling them to apply the ECHR effectively • The role and capacity of the Justice Academy to train legal professionals including through the application of HELP methodology, and with due regard to the gender perspective, is increased. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of legal professionals trained to effectively apply the ECHR; • Number of legal professionals trained by the Justice Academy; • Number of initiatives implemented with the national authorities to enhance the role and the capacity of Justice Academy to train legal professionals; • Number of legal professionals (sex disaggregated) trained in the framework of the Council of Europe Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals Programme (HELP). • Number of legal professionals (sex disaggregated) trained in the framework of HELP gender-specific courses (VAW and WAJ)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The independence of the Bar Association is enhanced. • Reform of the regulatory framework of the Bar Association is facilitated. • The capacity of the Bar Association to ensure smooth entry into profession and to adhere to the code of ethics is strengthened. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of measures introduced to enhance institutional independence of the Bar Association; • Number of measures introduced to support the reform of the regulatory framework of the Bar Association; • Number of practicing lawyers in Azerbaijan; • Number of measures introduced to strengthen the capacity of the Bar Association to ensure smooth entry into profession and to adhere to the code of ethics.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National capacities of existing frameworks that provide free legal aid services are enhanced. • Regulatory frameworks pertaining to the provision of free legal aid services are enhanced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of measures introduced to enhance national capacities to provide free legal aid; • Percentage of Council of Europe recommendations taken into consideration by the national authorities in the adopted/amended legislation on free legal aid.

Supporting the criminal justice system

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The functioning of the criminal justice system is analysed, and recommendations are made on how to align the legislation and practice with Council of Europe standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of Council of Europe recommendations taken into consideration by the national authorities in the adopted/amended legislation relating to the functioning of the criminal justice system.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The amendments to the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure in line with the Council of Europe recommendations are introduced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of provisions in the adopted amendments to the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedures taking into account Council of Europe standards and recommendations.

Freedom of assembly

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The national legislation on public assemblies is brought into line with the requirements of Article 11 of the ECHR. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of Council of Europe recommendations taken into account by the national authorities in the adopted/amended legislation on public assemblies; Percentage of provisions in the adopted/amended legislation on public assemblies taking into account Council of Europe standards and recommendations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The relevant Convention-compliant provisions of national legislation on freedom of assembly are effectively applied in practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of measures introduced to increase the effectiveness of the application of national legislation on the freedom of assembly in practice.

Freedom of expression and the media

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The national legislation and practice are in line with the requirements of Article 10 of the ECHR, and other Council of Europe standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of Council of Europe recommendations taken into account by the national authorities in the adopted/amended legislation on freedom of expression and information; Percentage of provisions in the adopted/amended legislation on freedom of expression and information taking into account Council of Europe standards and recommendations. Number of measures introduced to bring the national practice in line with the requirements of Article 10 of the ECHR; Percentage of media actors participating in the Council of Europe activities demonstrating an increased awareness on the importance of free, qualitative and safe journalism.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional capacities, including self-regulation mechanisms, to ensure freedom and independence of media and safety of journalists are improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of measures introduced to improve institutional capacities, including self-regulation mechanisms, to ensure freedom and independence of media and safety of journalists.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethical standards in the Azerbaijani media are reinforced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of measures introduced to reinforce ethical standards in the Azerbaijani media; Number of media actors trained on ethical standards; Number of media reports complying with professional ethical standards.

Data protection and artificial intelligence

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Azerbaijan moves closer to signing and ratifying the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (Convention 108+). • Legislation compliant with the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (ETS No. 108) is enacted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of Council of Europe recommendations taken into account by the national authorities in the adopted/amended legislation on data protection; • Measures introduced for Azerbaijan to advance towards signature and ratification of the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (Convention 108+);
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A dedicated independent authority is established and operational. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal and administrative texts related to the setting up of the authority; website, press evidence.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council of Europe guidelines on the use of artificial intelligence are disseminated and implemented by the relevant institutions in Azerbaijan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of copies of the translated Guidelines published and disseminated and number of institutions, bodies and entities that received them.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An awareness-raising campaign on the importance of data protection is conducted for the benefit of the local population. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of awareness-raising materials on the importance of data protection developed and number of instances it was disseminated.

1.2. Equality and human dignity

Promoting Gender Equality and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater awareness of standards on violence against women and domestic violence and other gender equality instruments among the Azerbaijani authorities and the general public. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of relevant awareness-raising developed and number of instances it was disseminated;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective prevention and protection standards and mechanisms to address violence against women and domestic violence have been introduced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of prevention and protection measures to address violence against women and domestic violence introduced in line with the Council of Europe standards;

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The justice system is gender mainstreamed resulting in a more gender-responsive and non-discriminatory justice system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of measures introduced to ensure gender mainstreaming in the justice system;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased capacity of law enforcement, legal professionals, including judges, prosecutors and lawyers to address cases of gender-based discrimination, violence against women, and other women's rights violations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of law enforcement personnel and legal professionals trained to effectively apply CoE gender equality standards (ECHR, Istanbul Convention). Number of legal professionals trained by the Justice Academy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacities of non-governmental organisations in the field of social protection of victims of domestic violence are strengthened. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of initiatives undertaken to strengthen capacities of non-governmental organisations in the field of social protection of victims of domestic violence; Number of NGOs professionals trained;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The gender equality perspective in Azerbaijani media is reinforced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of measures introduced to reinforce gender equality perspective in Azerbaijani media; Number of media reports in the Azerbaijani media reflecting gender equality perspective.
<p><i>Children's rights</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies, guidelines, recommendations and legal acts for the prevention and protection of children from violence, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse both online and offline are put in place and implemented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of measures for the prevention and protection of children from violence, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse both online and offline put in place and implemented;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacities of professionals dealing with child sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as working towards combating violence against children in general, are strengthened. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of relevant professionals trained demonstrating enhanced capacity to deal with child sexual exploitation and abuse;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public awareness on the Lanzarote Convention is raised. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of measures introduced, and number of activities implemented to raise awareness on the Lanzarote Convention among professionals, parents, and the general public; Number of awareness-raising materials on the Lanzarote Convention developed, adapted and translated into the national language; and number of instances they were disseminated.

1.3. Anti-discrimination, diversity and inclusion

Non-discrimination

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amendments to Azerbaijani criminal, civil and administrative law in line with the Council of Europe standards on combating racism and discrimination are introduced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of provisions in the criminal, civil and administrative law proposed for Parliament adoption on combating racism and discrimination taking into account Council of Europe standards and recommendations;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ombudsperson's Office staff's capacities to effectively protect human rights and freedoms are increased. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of Ombudsperson's Office staff trained to effectively protect human rights and freedoms;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The role of civil society actors in fighting discrimination is enhanced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of initiatives supported to enhance the role of civil society actors in fighting discrimination; Number of dialogue activities between civil society and governmental actors in fighting discrimination established;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness of tolerance and non-discrimination standards among public officials and the general public is raised. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of activities carried out to raise awareness of tolerance and non-discrimination standards among public officials and the general public; Number of awareness-raising materials on tolerance and non-discrimination standards developed and number of instances it was disseminated; Number of public officials trained;

1.4 Social rights

Social rights

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Azerbaijan has accepted additional provisions of the ESC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of measures introduced to ensure that Azerbaijan accepts additional provisions of the ESC;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of situations of non-conformity with the provisions of the European Social Charter is reduced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of situations of conformity and non-conformity with the provisions of the European Social Charter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Azerbaijan has taken positive steps to improve the rights of persons with disabilities in compliance with Article 15 of the RESC The rights of persons with disabilities are ensured in compliance with Article 15 of Revised European Social Charter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of measures introduced to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities in compliance with Article 15 of Revised European Social Charter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The gender pay gap between women and men is reduced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of measures introduced to reduce gender gap between women and men; Difference between women's and men's monthly nominal wages in by types of economic activity;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women in employment are better protected. Trade unions are empowered and well aware of their rights provided by the RESC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of measures introduced to ensure that women in employment are better protected; Number of measures introduced to empower trade unions and raise their awareness of their rights provided by the Revised European Social Charter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness of the need to promote social rights among general public and public officials is raised. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of measures introduced to raise awareness of the need to promote social rights among general public and public officials; Number of awareness-raising materials on the need to promote social rights developed and number of instances it was disseminated; Number of public officials trained on social rights standards.

1.5 Co-operation in the area of environment and climate change

Co-operation in the area of environment and climate change

<ul style="list-style-type: none">National policy frameworks are in line with the European standards and objectives of the environmental protection;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Percentage of provisions in the adopted/amended legislation, regulations and policy documents relating to environment and climate change taking into account Council of Europe standards and recommendations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Capacities of legal professionals, civil society and human rights institutions to analyse policy impact on environment through human rights instruments are increased;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of measures introduced to increase Capacities of legal professionals, civil society and human rights institutions to analyse policy impact on environment through human rights instruments

Rule of Law	
<p>Thematic outcome: Progress has been achieved and/or the situation has improved on the national level in Azerbaijan in the areas of the rule of law-based institutions, and action against crime, security and protection of citizens, in line with the Council of Europe standards, through the well-structured and co-ordinated implementation of co-operation priorities.</p>	
<p>The actions under this pillar contribute to the implementation by Azerbaijan of the following Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 3, target 5⁴⁵, SDG 5⁴⁶; SDG 8, target 7⁴⁷, SDG 16, targets 3, 4, 5, 6, and a⁴⁸.</p>	
Outcomes	Indicators
2.1. Rule of Law based institutions	
<i>Constitutional justice</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Venice Commission has provided opinions in the area of constitutional justice at the request of the Azerbaijani authorities, including through the Quick Response Mechanism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of opinions/recommendations provided by the Venice Commission at the request of the Azerbaijani authorities.
<i>Independence and efficiency of justice</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The efficiency and quality of judicial services are further improved through the dissemination of the experience of the pilot courts and capacity building for justice professionals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of initiatives taken to improve the efficiency and quality of judicial services; • Percentage of courts in Azerbaijan to which the experience of the pilot courts has been disseminated; • Percentage of justice professionals trained with the view to ensuring the efficiency and quality of judicial services;

⁴⁵ Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. Target 5: Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.

⁴⁶ Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Goal 5, target 1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere. Goal 5, target 2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

⁴⁷ Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. Goal 8, target 8.7: Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.

⁴⁸ Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Goal 16, target 3: Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all. Goal 16, target 4: Significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organised crime. Goal 16, target 5: Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms. Goal 16, target 6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels. Goal 16, target a: Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international co-operation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEPEJ Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and dashboard; • Number of CEPEJ indicators and tools on court efficiency used by courts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Justice Academy's training methodology and curricula for judges (initial and in-service) are further improved in line with Council of Europe standards and good practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of training methodologies and curricula improved with the assistance of the Council of Europe; • Number of human rights modules introduced in the Justice academy curricula.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The system of enforcement of court decisions is improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of measures introduced to improve the enforcement of court decisions; • Number of integrated ICT tools of the enforcement system; • Percentage of measures regulating the enforcement system in line with the European standards.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to justice for women and for groups in vulnerable situations, such as people with disabilities, victims of domestic violence etc. is improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of provisions in the adopted/amended legislation, regulations and policy documents on access to justice for women and for groups in vulnerable situation taking into account Council of Europe standards and recommendations; • Number of measures introduced to improve access to justice for women and for groups in vulnerable situations, such as people with disabilities, victims of domestic violence etc; • Number of peer exchange and co-operation mechanisms between equality bodies and NGOs on addressing complaints through redress mechanism.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A communication strategy for the judiciary has been approved by the authorities and implemented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of measures introduced for the approval and implementation of a communication strategy for the judiciary.

2.2. Action against crime, security and protection of citizens

Fight corruption and money laundering

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legislative framework and institutional capacities to fight and prevent economic crime are improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of provisions in the adopted/amended legislation in the area of fighting economic crime taking into account Council of Europe standards and recommendations; Percentage of Council of Europe recommendations taken into account in the adopted/amended legislation in the area of fighting and preventing economic crime; Number of initiatives undertaken to improve institutional capacities to fight and prevent economic crime.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectiveness of application of the international anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing standards is increased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of measures introduced to improve the effectiveness of application of the international anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing standards; Percentage of MONEYVAL recommendations implemented and COP 198 findings addressed by the national authorities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corruption prevention is strengthened in line with Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) recommendations through effective implementation of an anti-corruption policy cycle, strengthened judicial independence and asset disclosure regime, and integrity of public officials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of measures introduced to strengthen corruption prevention in line with GRECO recommendations; Percentage of GRECO recommendations implemented by the national authorities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transparency of public procurement procedures is further enhanced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of measures introduced to enhance transparency of public procurement procedures;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quality and quantity of economic crime-related investigations and prosecutions are increased. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of measures taken to increase the quality and quantity of economic-crime related investigations and prosecutions; Number of economic crime-related investigations and prosecutions;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of convictions for economic crime, particularly corruption and money laundering;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operational efficiency and autonomy of the competent anti-corruption and anti-money laundering/combating financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) institutions are ensured. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of measures taken to ensure operational efficiency and autonomy of the competent anti-corruption and AML/CFT institutions; Number of implemented MONEYVAL and GRECO findings and recommendations related to autonomy of the institutions and operational efficiency.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional capacities for investigation and prosecution of economic crime are enhanced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of measures introduced to enhance professional capacities for investigation and prosecution of economic crime
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The legislative framework and effectiveness of asset recovery are enhanced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of provisions in the adopted/amended legislation in the area of asset recovery taking into account Council of Europe standards and recommendations; Percentage of Council of Europe recommendations taken into consideration by the national authorities in the adopted/amended legislation in the area of asset recovery; Number of initiatives taken to improve the effectiveness of asset recovery.
<i>Cybercrime</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic legislation on cybercrime is in line with the Budapest Convention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of provisions in the adopted/amended legislation in the area of cybercrime taking into account Council of Europe standards and recommendations; Percentage of Council of Europe recommendations taken into consideration by the national authorities in the adopted/amended legislation in the area of cybercrime;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National strategy on fighting cybercrime is adopted and implemented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of measures introduced to ensure that a national strategy on fighting cybercrime is adopted and implemented;

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interagency and public-private co-operation in the fight against cybercrime is enhanced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of measures introduced to enhance interagency and public-private co-operation in the area of fighting cybercrime; • Number of instances of interagency and public-private co-operation in the area of fighting cybercrime;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacities of investigators, prosecutors and judges to address cybercrime are enhanced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of investigators, prosecutors and judges trained demonstrating increased capacities to address cybercrime.
<i>Prisons and police</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Plans on prison management and prison health care are implemented with technical support from the Council of Europe. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of measures introduced to support the implementation of the Action Plans on prison management and prison healthcare;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new Code of Ethics is approved by the Azerbaijani authorities, and introduced for prison staff across the country. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of initiatives taken to ensure that the new Code of Ethics is approved by the Azerbaijani authorities and introduced for prison staff across the country
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and capacities of prison staff in terms of prison health care and prison management are enhanced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of prison staff trained demonstrating increased capacities in the areas of prison management and prison healthcare;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The system of reintegration of prisoners is supported through vocational training, business mentoring, legal and psychological support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of measures introduced to support the system of reintegration of prisoners; • Number of reintegration programmes put into implementation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The system and the procedures for prevention and protection against torture and other forms of ill-treatment by the police and in prisons are improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of measures introduced to improve the system and the procedures for prevention and protection against torture and other forms of ill-treatment by the police and at the penitentiary institutions;
<i>Trafficking in human beings</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislative and procedural frameworks in the area of trafficking in human beings are improved in line with Council of Europe standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of provisions in the adopted/amended legislation in the area of trafficking in human beings taking into account Council of Europe standards and recommendations;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of Council of Europe recommendations taken into consideration by the national authorities in the adopted/amended legislation in the area of trafficking in human beings; Number of initiatives taken to improve the procedural framework in the area of trafficking in human beings;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A comprehensive statistical system on trafficking in human beings is established. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of measures introduced to establish a comprehensive statistical system on trafficking in human beings;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistance to ensure effective implementation of the National Action Plan for 2020-2024 on combating trafficking in human beings is provided. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of measures introduced to provide assistance to the effective implementation of the National Action Plan for 2020-2024 on Combating trafficking in human beings;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness is raised among the general public and public officials on the issue of trafficking in human beings and effective prevention mechanisms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of measures introduced to raise awareness among the general public and public officials on the issue of trafficking in human beings and effective prevention mechanisms; Number of public officials trained; Number of awareness-raising materials on the issue of trafficking in human beings developed and number of instances it was disseminated.
<i>Drug abuse and illicit trafficking</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drug policies in Azerbaijan are improved in line with international standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of provisions in the adopted/amended policy documents in the area of drug abuse and illicit trafficking taking into account Council of Europe standards and recommendations; Percentage of Council of Europe recommendations taken into consideration by the national authorities in the adopted/amended policies in the area of trafficking in human beings;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A national strategy in the area of drug control has been developed and put into practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of measures introduced to ensure that a national strategy in the area of drug control is developed and put into implementation.

Democracy	
Thematic outcome: Progress has been achieved and/or the situation has improved on the national level in Azerbaijan in the areas of democratic governance and democratic participation, in line with the Council of Europe standards, through the well-structured and co-ordinated implementation of co-operation priorities.	
The actions under this pillar contribute to the implementation by Azerbaijan of the following Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 4, target 7 ⁴⁹ , SDG 16, targets 6 and 7 ⁵⁰ .	
Outcomes	Indicators
3.1. Democratic governance	
<i>Electoral issues</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electoral legislation of Azerbaijan is in line with Council of Europe standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The key recommendations on electoral legislation by the Council of Europe - including the Venice Commission - have been followed; Percentage of other recommendations followed; Legislation in conformity with these recommendations has been implemented, through elections taking place in conformity with Council of Europe standards.
3.2. Democratic participation	
<i>Civil society</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic legislation on NGOs, including registration procedures, complies with Council of Europe standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of provisions in the adopted/amended legislation in this area taking into account Council of Europe standards and recommendations;

⁴⁹ Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Goal 4, target 7: By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

⁵⁰ Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Goal 16, target 6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels. Goal 16, target 7: Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.

<i>Education for democracy</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competences of formal and non-formal educators through pedagogical and methodological support have been developed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of measures introduced to develop competences of formal and non-formal educators through pedagogical and methodological support; • Percentage of formal and non-formal educators demonstrating increased knowledge after receiving pedagogical and methodological support;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A human rights-based approach in combating violence against women is more widely used in Azerbaijan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of measures introduced to ensure that a human rights-based approach in Combating Violence against Women is more widely used in Azerbaijan.
<i>Youth for democracy</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacities of young leaders, activists and youth organisations to participate in decision-making processes are enhanced; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of measures introduced to enhance capacities of young leaders, activists and youth organisations to participate in decision-making processes; • Number of young leaders and activities trained to participate in decision-making processes;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intercultural and peer learning opportunities for youth empowerment are increased; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of measures introduced to increase intercultural and peer learning opportunities for youth empowerment;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people are in practice provided with opportunities to engage in the decision-making processes in their schools and in projects affecting their communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of young people who benefitted from opportunities to engage in the decision-making processes in their schools and in projects affecting their communities.
<i>Intercultural dialogue</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council of Europe values and best practices in the area of intercultural dialogue are disseminated, including through the participation in the Baku Process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of initiatives taken to disseminate Council of Europe values and best practices in the area of intercultural dialogue.

APPENDIX II: RISK REGISTER

Risk description	Mitigation actions
Political related risks	
<p>Best case scenario - increased scope and pace of reforms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Azerbaijani authorities demonstrate political will for reforms and co-operate proactively with the Council of Europe; • Consensus on reforms is established over a broad political spectrum; • Reforms are effectively implemented and widely supported by citizens. 	<p>Discussions to be held on a possible enlargement of the scope of action resulting in:</p> <p>Increased awareness raising of target groups (including citizens) about the Council of Europe involvement in the reforms process;</p> <p>Extended capacity-building activities, especially for the partners promoting standards of the Council of Europe;</p> <p>Stronger support to the institutions of Azerbaijan and other partners.</p>
<p>Base case scenario - sustained political stability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partial implementation of reforms and opposition to their implementation in certain groups of the society and political circles; • Significant influence of political forces in ongoing reforms; • Low awareness of Council of Europe involvement in the reforms process on the part of the citizens. 	<p>Support national authorities to ensure compliance of legislative and regulatory frameworks with the standards of the Council of Europe;</p> <p>Build capacity of institutions to implement these standards, enhance awareness of the population on those standards;</p> <p>Raise awareness of institutional partners who promote standards of the Organisation among population;</p> <p>Facilitate contacts and co-operation between supporters of the reforms within different branches of the power and within civil society.</p> <p>Promote dialogue between authorities and civil society on application of the standards;</p>

Project/programme delivery related risks

<p>Lack of sufficient funding for implementation of the Action Plan.</p>	<p>Increase resource mobilisation efforts in co-ordinated manner within the country and from headquarters;</p> <p>Allocate funding for programmes which have strong potential for synergy with each other, scheduling available resources in the most effective manner;</p> <p>Increase and improve communication of the results of previous and ongoing actions in the country;</p> <p>Continue to address feedback from partners and donors to improve project design, implementation, results-based monitoring, and reporting practices to attract and maintain donors.</p>
<p>Lack of effective co-ordination mechanisms with international partners to avoid overlaps and to ensure synergies among programmes.</p>	<p>Monitor activities of other international donors in the country and actively participate in donor co-ordination meetings in the country in the areas relevant to the Council of Europe's involvement;</p> <p>Increase the number of joint activities with international partners with whom co-ordination of plans is already achieved and in order to strengthen common message, achieve economic efficiency and increase acceptance of the reforms;</p> <p>Increase scope and consistency of communication to inform professional groups, international partners and general public about contribution of the Organisation and donors to the reforms;</p> <p>Continue relying on the contacts and outreach capacity of the Council of Europe Office in Baku to enhance communication;</p> <p>Ensure joint messages with other international partners are delivered (e.g. Partnership with the EU).</p>
<p>Gender stereotypes negatively affecting project implementation;</p> <p>Lack of knowledge and skills to mainstream gender among domestic partners, including in terms of conducting gender analysis.</p>	<p>Conduct gender-sensitive communication and assessment of project materials in order to propose the appropriate language;</p> <p>Conduct awareness-raising campaigns;</p> <p>Support capacity-building of national partners to gather, analyse and utilise relevant information, take awareness-raising measures on gender equality and gender mainstreaming among stakeholders, co-operate with NGOs working on gender</p>

	equality and women's rights, strengthen the capacities of human rights defenders, especially women.
High turnover of governmental and non-governmental staff and key partners during the Action Plan lifespan and a loss of know-how and networking contacts	Continue relying on the Council of Europe Baku Office's close monitoring of national staff changes and immediate re-establishment of contact; Implement procedures for supporting long-term institutional memory for partner institutions and ensure sustainability of knowledge accumulation in the partner institutions; Build confidence and ensure sustainability, ownership and leadership of the project activities on the part of the beneficiaries.
Communication related risks	
Lack of knowledge among international and national partners, the general public and non-governmental organisations of the role, mandate, contribution to reforms, and <i>modus operandi</i> of the Council of Europe; Lack of understanding among target groups about the benefits of the reforms in relevant areas to the quality of life of citizens.	Clear and regular communication messages for the Azerbaijani general public are disseminated primarily through the Council of Europe Office in Baku; Every programme develops its communication strategy/plan to ensure further buy-in for results and impact; Increase professional and public awareness of the Organisation contribution to the reforms; Increase the speed at which information is exchanged; Increase communication in local language to ensure the widest outreach possible; Results-oriented and grassroots communication approach favoured to reach out to different target groups with a clear message on the Council of Europe contribution to change the daily lives of citizens.
Risks relating to the health situation	
Impossibility to conduct events in the field and/or in the headquarters due to social distancing rules, restrictions on gatherings and on international and local travel	Focus on activities that can be performed remotely, until the restrictions are lifted; Closely follow the health situation and the travel rules; Rely on alternative methods of conducting meetings and trainings (videoconferencing, webinars).

<p>Changes in the priorities of national partners due to the unprecedented circumstances</p>	<p>Maintain close communication with the national authorities and respond to the shifting needs, in order to best address the needs of the beneficiaries while maintaining a focus on the core values of the Organisation;</p> <p>Translate and disseminate Council of Europe standards and specific recommendations to ensure that the protection of human rights, the rule of law and democracy remains in the authorities' agenda.</p>
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APPENDIX III: FINANCIAL TABLE

(All amounts in euros)

Sectors	AP budget
Human rights	4,563,471
1. Effective ECHR Implementation	570,000
2. Promoting Human Rights and Dignity	2,493,471
3. Social Rights	1,500,000
Rule of Law	3,328,842
1. Rule of Law Based Institutions	1,275,165
2. Action Against Crime, Security and Protection of Citizens	2,053,677
Democracy	1,300,000
1. Democratic Governance	200,000
2. Democratic participation	1,100,000
IV - Co-ordination, management and reserves	413,438
Co-ordination - Reserve - Quick Response Mechanism	113,438
General management costs	300,000
Unallocated funding	
TOTAL	9,605,751

*includes regional EU/CoE joint programmes

APPENDIX IV: SOURCES/RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

Council of Europe documents

1. Technical co-operation with Azerbaijan

Council of Europe Action Plan for Azerbaijan (2018-2021)
Progress report on the implementation of the
Council of Europe Action Plan for Azerbaijan (2018-2021)

2. European Court of Human Rights

ECtHR case law relating to Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan Country Factsheet by the Department for the Execution of Judgements of the European Court of Human Rights

European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) case law, in particular concerning ill-treatment, arrest and pre-trial detention (including use of such measures for illegitimate purposes), violations of the right to a fair trial, freedom of expression and freedom of assembly and association, and reviewing the lawfulness of elections⁵¹

3. Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (CM) recommendation to member States regarding freedom of expression, media pluralism and transparency of media ownership (2018)

Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (CM) *declaration on “strengthening the rights of the child as the key to a “future-proof” Europe” (2020)*

Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe *declaration on the need to protect children’s privacy in the digital environment (2021)*

Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work

Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on young people’s access to rights

Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights

Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (CM) *recommendation CM/Rec(2018)7 on Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment*

GR-DEM(2019)11, State of implementation of the commitments entered into by Azerbaijan (June 2017-May 2019)

Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (CM) *Decision CM/Del/Dec(2021)1399/2.3* (17 March 2021) concerning the report on the state of implementation of the commitments entered into by Azerbaijan (June 2017 – May 2019)

4. Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

Local and regional democracy in Azerbaijan, *Report of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (2012)*

Local and regional democracy in Azerbaijan, *Report of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (2021)*

5. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) *Resolution 2357 (2021)* on the progress of the Assembly’s monitoring procedure (January-December 2020)

PACE election observation report “Observation of the early parliamentary election in Azerbaijan (9 February 2020)” published on 27 February 2020

6. Monitoring and expert advisory bodies

Venice Commission Opinion on the Legislation pertaining to the Protection against Defamation of the Republic of Azerbaijan, adopted by the Venice Commission, at its 96th Plenary Session, (Venice, 11-12 October 2013)

⁵¹ Azerbaijan Country Factsheet by the Department for the Execution of Judgements of the European Court of Human Rights
<https://rm.coe.int/168070973e>

European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) [2019 conclusions](#) relating to the implementation of the accepted provisions of the revised European Social Charter in the thematic group "Children, families and migrants"

European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) 2020 conclusions relating to the implementation of the accepted provisions of the revised European Social Charter in the thematic group "Employment, training and equal opportunities».

Lanzarote, "Protection of children against sexual abuse in the circle of trust: The strategies" Adopted by the Lanzarote Committee on 31 January 2018

European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) [report](#) on Azerbaijan within the fifth monitoring cycle (2016) containing recommendations on the measures to combat racism and discrimination

ECRI [conclusions on the implementation of the priority recommendations](#) in respect of Azerbaijan subject to interim follow-up (2019) concerning conditions for civil society and alternatives for military service

Advisory Committee on The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) [fourth report on Azerbaijan](#) (2017)

European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) [report on European Judicial Systems \(2020 Evaluation cycle\)](#)

Azerbaijan's [responses to the CEPEJ questionnaire](#) within the evaluation of judicial systems (2018-2020)

Consultative Council of European Judges (CCJE) opinion "[The role of associations of judges in supporting judicial independence](#)" (2020)

Consultative Council of European Judges (CCJE) opinion "[The role of judicial assistance](#)"

Consultative Council of European Prosecutors (CCPE) [opinions with regard to prosecutors \(2007-2020\)](#)

[The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment \(CPT\) report following the 2016 visit to Azerbaijan](#) (2018)

[Guidelines on artificial intelligence and data protection adopted by the Committee of the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regards to Processing of Personal Data \(Convention 108\) on 25 January 2019](#)

Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) - [Compliance report on Azerbaijan, Fourth evaluation round, corruption prevention in respect of members of parliament, judges and prosecutors](#) (2019)

Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) - Addendum to the Second Compliance Report of the Fourth evaluation round on Azerbaijan (2021)

[Thematic Monitoring Review of the Conference of the Parties to Council of Europe Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism \(CETS No.198\) on Article 9\(3\)](#) (2019)

[Thematic Monitoring Review of the Conference of the Parties to Council of Europe Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism \(CETS No.198\) on Articles 7\(2c\) and 19\(1\)](#) (2020)

[Pompidou Group Work Programme 2019–2022 'Sustainable drug policies respectful of human rights' GRETA report concerning the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by Azerbaijan](#) (2018)

[Recommendation CP\(2018\)24 on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by Azerbaijan](#) (2018)

[Pompidou Group Work Programme 2019–2022 'Sustainable drug policies respectful of human rights'](#)

7. Guidelines

[Council of Europe Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit for Co-operation Projects](#)

[Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023](#)

[Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2016-2021](#)

[Guidelines on civil society organisations participation in Council of Europe's co-operation activities](#)

[Guidelines for civil participation in political decision-making](#)

[Council of Europe Project Management Methodology](#)

[Council of Europe Risk Management Policy](#)

[Council of Europe Risk Management Guidelines](#)

Relevant Council of Europe conventions and other instruments of the Organisation such as the Council of Europe's Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education have also been used as reference material for co-operation actions included in this Action Plan.

National policy documents of Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development

Strategy of Socio-Economic Development in 2021-2025

National Action Plan (NAP) to combat domestic violence for 2020-2023

National Action Plan for Open Government 2020-2022

National Action Plan for 2020-2024 on Combating trafficking in human beings



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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.